

# Cablefax Daily™

Thursday — October 17, 2019

What the Industry Reads First

Volume 30 / No. 200

## Big Splash: Mobile-Only Quibi Ready to Shake Things Up

Short-form video venture **Quibi** has already raised over \$1bn to date and sold more than \$1m upfront in ad inventory ahead of its April 6 launch. The mobile-only streaming platform has seen investments from nearly all the major studios and partnered with multiple programmers including **NBC News**, **Telemundo**, **MTV** and **ESPN** for original content. “We are on track for a big bang type launch, which is a little different than a lot of ways that new startups get organic growth,” said Quibi CTO **Rob Post** during a panel at **NAB NY** on Wednesday. “We’ve been leveraging our partners again to scale horizontally, but we’re also architecting our systems to scale vertically.” Post, the former vp of engineering for **Hulu**, has been busy building up a team of engineers to really launch the streamer at scale. “Quibi in general is a joining together of Hollywood and Silicon Valley,” he said. “The goal is we bring the best people that are there to create content, the best names, the best writers, talent. We marry them with technologists and that’s the best from Silicon Valley.” Post’s team comes from companies including **Snap**, **Google**, **Amazon**, **Hulu** and **Tinder**. “We’re trying to really build an A+ team on the technology side in order to meet the demand of making content pop on the mobile platform.” Quibi’s target demographic is 25-35-year-olds who are on-the-go. At launch, the streamer aims to have around 5K pieces of content, premiering 20 to 25 pieces daily in order to keep active daily viewing habits for consumers. Quibi, short for “quick bites,” will launch with two tiers. It will cost \$5 monthly with ads and \$8/month without ads. When asked if Quibi could make money at a low price point with so many OTT options upcoming, Post responded that users would end up answering with their dollars. “It does help when you’re launching these services to have more than one revenue stream, so in that sense it’s great to be subscription and ad-supported,” he said. Quibi’s ads will be entirely pre-roll, targeting ad spots in the 6 to 10 and 15 second formats. Quibi will differ slightly from some of the other OTT services and will share some of its ad data, though emphasizes it will still protect customer privacy. “We’re ensuring that they [users] have control over the data and the ability to view the data and delete themselves from our system,” said Post. “In the beginning, I think there’s a lot of potential for advertisers to come to our platform. They’re hitting a demographic where there’s brand safety, there’s a younger skewed audience and a high quality experience, and that’s attractive to advertisers regardless.” For ease of build, Quibi is not currently developing any live content, but Post says it isn’t out of the realm of possibility. All of Quibi’s content will be produced

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in-house, which Post said benefits the service both fiscally and logistically. "All of our content is what we're considering our premium short form experience. There's no content library for us to go out and license," he said. "The nice part about producing your own content is we have rights cleared worldwide, so it's a matter of taking advantage of them." Quibi will launch in the US and Canada initially, and is experimenting with other markets internationally.

**Xfinity Subs Warned They May Lose Starz:** Some changes are coming to Xfinity customers' lineups with **Comcast** announcing that **Starz** will be removed from all packages and 11 Starz and **Encore** channels will be dropped completely. Customers can opt to subscribe to Starz on an a la carte basis. Comcast has seemingly found a replacement for Starz. Packages that previously included Starz will now include **EPIX**, thanks to an expansion to the pair's current carriage agreement. In addition, starting on Dec 12, EPIX will also launch ScreenPix, a suite of library channels offering up a curated collection of commercial-free and uncut classic movies. Comcast blamed the Starz move on the rise in programming costs and the rise of streaming offerings for the difficulty in reaching a new deal: "Starz has chosen to change its business model in response to these trends by making its content available a-la-carte on **Amazon Prime** and **Roku** and selling its service direct to the consumer through the Starz app. All we are asking for is the same treatment for our customers." Comcast's list of channel drops include **Starz Edge**, **Starz Cinema** and **Encore Classic**. Starz warned customers Wednesday that all 17 of its channels, including Starz and Starz Encore, could go dark. "We continue to try to reach an agreement with Comcast that is fair, reasonable and ensures our shared customers' continued access to a lineup of premium television content that speaks to them," Starz said in a statement. "In the meantime, however, we urge our customers to make it known to Comcast that there is no replacement for Starz and demand that they continue to provide access to all of your favorite Starz shows or demand a refund." The premium programmer kicked off its last dispute with a major distributor at the start of 2018 with **Altice USA** pulling Starz content from **Optimum** customers until a new agreement was reached two months later. Earlier this year, Comcast replaced **Cinemax** in several packages with its own commercial-free, on demand service, dubbed **Hitz**.

**Senate Commerce to Dive Deep into STELAR:** The rumors are true: there will be a STELAR hearing next week. **Senate Commerce** chmn *Roger Wicker* (R-MS) will convene "The Reauthorization of STELAR" hearing at 10am Wednesday. The witness list includes representatives from **AT&T** and **NAB** as well as **Golden West Telecommunications** CEO/gm *Denny Law* and **The Black News Channel** chmn *JC Watts*. **ATVA**, which reports a record-breaking 276 blackouts have occurred in 2019, applauded Wicker and Sen *Maria Cantwell* (D-WA) for holding the hearing. "The blackout crisis is the worst it has ever been and it will only continue to get worse if Congress fails to reauthorize STELAR and the **FCC's** 'good

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faith' authority," ATVA spokesman *Trent Duffy* said in a statement. "We urge the committee to not only reauthorize STE-LAR, but also fix this broken system that for too long has favored broadcasters at the expense of consumers."

**Happy Birthday, All Access:** **CBS All Access** celebrated its fifth birthday on Wednesday, boasting a sub count north of 4mln with nearly 70% in the 18-49 demo. "We see really healthy consumption across both [free and subscription]," said *Domenic DiMeglio* evp, distribution, marketing & operations at **CBS Interactive**. CBS All Access is leaning into original content, with "Star Trek: Discovery" its most-watched program. Two additional Star Trek programs are coming to All Access, with DiMeglio declaring that it's not an understatement that "Star Trek: Picard" could be the biggest thing to hit the service yet. "In the rankers of top content, broadcast content is extremely important, but when originals are in season we see that jump up to the top of the charts for us," he said. Sports has also been a hit, helping bring new subs into the streamer. "Sports is a great acquisition driver, live events as well," said DiMeglio. "We see that as an opportunity where people surge in for something on demand in the moment, and then it's our job to do everything we can to show the portfolio and breadth of the service and try to retain that." And what's up next for the service? Investing in more content, especially with the pending **Viacom** merger. "[It's] investing in the breadth of content," said DiMeglio. "We've announced we're introducing kids content early next year, and expanding the slate of originals has us excited. As we look forward to the ViacomCBS world, we think there's further content expansion."

**FCC OKs T-Mobile/Sprint:** The **FCC** has reportedly voted 3-2 along party lines to approve the merger of **T-Mobile** and **Sprint**. The road to approval has been long and winding, kicking off in May with FCC chmn *Ajit Pai* announcing his support of the merger long before circulating a draft order on the issue in mid-August. Commish *Jessica Rosenworcel* called the process to reaching the decision "troubling" in her official statement on her nay vote. "Three of my colleagues agreed to this transaction months ago without having any legal, engineering, or economic analysis from the agency before us," she said. Fellow Democratic commish *Geoffrey Starks* again called for the proposed merger to be set out for public comment and criticized the Commission for moving forward "despite our on-going investigation of Sprint for what appears to be the largest unlawful collection of universal service funds in FCC history." "The rush to judgment here is exemplified by the fact that it was only in response to questions from my office that the draft was amended at the last minute to explicitly preserve liability for these and any other potential violations," he said. Republican commish *Brendan Carr* took to **Twitter** to stand against the pair, arguing that voting for the transaction means that 99% of Americans will get 5G on an accelerated basis. "Americans want more of this competition, not less. And the most effective way to do that in wireless is to enable even stronger competition to **AT&T** and **Verizon**," Carr tweeted.

**NAB Notebook:** Is the streaming industry going to get even more crowded? **Comcast Technology Services'** *Matt Smith* certainly thinks so. Speaking at a panel at **NAB NY** on Wednesday, Smith, executive director of business development of strategy, said the industry could be on the verge of launching "mini-subscriptions" or channels that focus specifically on certain TV shows. "I think you're going to see specialty channels that spin up. You're going to have a 'Miami Vice' channel, a 'Game of Thrones' channel. I think these channels are going to be new ways of monetizing," he said. And why will this happen? Social media. "You have to think of the viral nature of social media. We're all accustomed to recommendations from our friends and colleagues. Social amplifies that," he explained. **A+E Networks'** svp, distribution business development *Richard Shirley* concurs, pointing out that content publishers are sometimes competing against their own libraries. "Not only are the publishers now competing with everybody else, they're now competing with those vast vaults of content that might not represent as lucrative a profile as things we're publishing on air today," he said. -- We're well on our way to making addressable ads on TV a reality, and a lot of it is thanks to industry consortiums such as Project OAR. The group, led by TV manufacturer **VIZIO** and includes members **Disney**, **NBCU**, **CBS**, **AMC Networks** and **Discovery**, aims to make this a possibility by early 2020. "The hard place was understanding how to bring addressability to the national marketplace," said *Adam Gaynor*, vp, AMCN Agility, AMC Networks. "It wasn't until Smart TVs became more prevalent and we realized they could act like set-top boxes. Project OAR has done a really good job of setting the stage to become an open framework to allow the broadcast networks to finally be able to bring that technology to the national cable arena."

**Honors:** **WICT** revealed the recipients of its Top Companies for Women to Work, with **Comcast Corp** ranking No 1 for operators and **ESPN** taking the honor for programmers. Rankings were made based on the 2019 WICT PAR Employment Survey. WICT will recognize the winners at the 2020 WICT Signature Luncheon to be held at the Plaza Hotel New York on April 30. -- **CTAM** named former **HBO** evp, corporate communications *Quentin Schaffer* the recipient of its 2019 Beacon Award for Communications Excellence. Schaffer started out as a senior publicist with the premium net in 1980 before rising to executive leadership. He and the 2019 TAMI Award recipients will be honored at CTAM Think on Nov 6 in NYC.

## Think about that for a minute...

### The Television Experts

Commentary by Steve Effros

There's nothing quite like a new moniker in the television business to get folks both excited and confused at the same time. Here we go again. Remember the total confusion surrounding "SDTV," "SD," "HDTV," "HD," "Ultra HD," "Ultra HD 4K HDR" and the like? Well, here comes "NextGen TV!"



What is it? The newly coined name for ATSC 3.0 broadcast television technology. Not familiar with ATSC 3.0? That's the Advanced Television Systems Committee's new -sorry- OTA (Over The Air) IPTV (Internet Protocol Television) standard. There, now that should clear it all up for you!

No, seriously, the ATSC 3.0 standard essentially takes the current digital television signal and uses the Internet protocol rather than the current digital transmission used. Oh, never mind. It's not important to understand all the letters and numbers. What you need to know is that the consumer is soon going to be bombarded with a new term: NextGen TV, and they are, as usual, going to be importuned at every opportunity to buy a new television set that works with it.

Now as was the case when we went from analog to digital television, the FCC has required a period of simulcasting so that "older" television sets (note the pejorative there) will be able to still be used for over the air television reception, at least for five years or so after the switch. Quite a deal, right? Buy a new set today and you'll have to buy another one long before the useful life of this one is over because the industry has figured out, once again, how to impose planned obsolescence!

The claim is that the new IP OTA television standard, which we all called ATSC 3.0 until the marketers came along, will have better propagation, meaning it will get

into buildings better, and go farther, and it will theoretically work with mobile devices. It also will provide broadcasters with a sort of two-way capability that will allow them, if the consumer is using broadband, to get more information about who is watching, presumably to target ads. More channel capability will also allow for more "localized" channels and maybe even a sort of OTA streaming capability.

Going to Next Gen is not mandatory for broadcasters. It's a voluntary conversion, but the expectation is most major broadcasters will ultimately do it because it gives them more business opportunities. Viewers will be able to get 4K signals, UHD, HDR and all those other letters and numbers which will guarantee that the advertising will say they are providing what cable provides. That only makes me more convinced that we should stop distributing broadcast signals and let folks get those via an antenna or broadband (a column on Locast is in the works!)

So while the telephone folks are hyping "5G," which simply stands for the next generation of telephone transmission, arguably faster, but less efficient than what we have now, and cable has launched "10G" which actually relates to the speed and capacity we are building in to our systems, broadcasters will be rolling out "NextGen" which will deliver more capable digital signals. Got all that?

The truth here is that I have cut a lot of corners to try to explain all this, and the promotional material and consumer press write-ups will likely create a whole lot more fog. I'll try to break this all down in more precise detail in future columns. Why? Because we have to continue to be the "television experts" in our communities.

*Steve*

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*(Steve Effros was President of CATA for 23 years and is now an advisor and consultant to the cable industry. His views do not necessarily reflect the views of Cablefax.)*

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## JULIE LAULIS

President, Cable ONE

"I read Cablefax every morning to help stay tuned in to industry happenings. It's a quick read that gives me a great overview of all things in and related to our industry."

## ANDY ALBERT

SVP, Content Acquisition, Cox Communications

"Cablefax is one of the first things I read because almost every day I will get an early morning email asking for feedback about something happening in the industry that was covered in Cablefax."

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President & CEO, Discovery

"Cablefax does a great job keeping me up to speed on the latest industry news."

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"Cablefax keeps me apprised of important trends and industry dynamics."

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"I read Cablefax as there is no better way to stay on top of our industry on a daily basis and be able to rely on the content with confidence."

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"I'm a long-time reader and fan. It's essential to any media executive."

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"I consider Cablefax a must read every day. It keeps me informed and up-to-date on the important daily highlights of our industry and presents the information in a succinct, easy to read fashion."

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"Reading Cablefax feels a little like eavesdropping on the most important decision makers in our business — including my competitors."

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## Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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**Speed of Change: Media Deregulation Moving Too Fast for Some**

One year into its media deregulation campaign, the FCC is forging steadily ahead, but the agency is suddenly receiving calls to slow down—calls from small town America and from the halls of Congress alike. Under chair Ajit Pai, the Commission rules to chipping away at information access rules in its "media modernization" initiative. Within the latter effort, it recently proposed scrapping a cable channel lineup filing rule, and in May it plans to send broadcast license posting rules to the chopping block. Regulators contend that this kind of information is readily accessible online, but not everyone is in such a hurry to cut more local ties to operators. Since 1972, cable operators have been required to keep a current listing of channels delivered to subscribers on file at their local offices. The requirement is redundant to the point that operators now compete to provide hundreds of channels, and competition requires them to make sure subscribers are aware of them. While viewers may not be strolling down to the local office to check their channel lineup, "The question here is about making sure there's a public record for analysis of how these channel lineups are available over time," said Mike Wassenaar, pres/CEO of the Alliance for Community Media, a promotional website showing where to find local channels.

# C2HR Excellence in HR Awards

Content & Connectivity Human Resources (C2HR) is shining a spotlight on four with its annual recognition program. New this year is the Social Impact Award, an honor C2HR was compelled to create given the number of employers embracing corporate social responsibility. Read on to learn about all of the 2019 winners.

## Social Impact Award: Charter Communications

With a presence in millions of homes across the country, Charter understands the importance of a safe and healthy home. “We read a study several years ago featuring data from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development reporting that there were 2.5 million low income homes that were deemed unsafe and unhealthy,” said *Rahman Khan*, vp, community impact for Charter. From that, Charter created Spectrum Housing Assist in 2015, with employees helping make critical home repairs. The company is on track to meet its goal of improving 50K homes by the end of 2020. Charter works with national nonprofit Rebuilding Together on the program.



**Charter volunteers, Rebuilding Together, community partners and elected officials gather for a Spectrum Housing Assist event in L.A.**

**An important part of this initiative is Charter employees volunteering their time. How do you foster and encourage volunteering?**

**Khan:** Serving and supporting communities within our footprint is a core element of our business strategy, and we view employee volunteerism as an important means to support local communities. We invite all of our employees, from leaders to front line employees, to participate. We send personal invitations to employees and many leaders encourage participation in staff meetings. We also showcase stories of employees volunteering as well as share the impact of our efforts throughout our internal communications channels. In addition, we’ve developed another program that rewards employee volunteers for their service. This effort, our Spectrum Employee Community Grants, provides financial support to nonprofits with which our employees have volunteered for at least a year.

**What advice do you have when it comes to partnering with nonprofits?**

**Khan:** We partner with nonprofits that align with our mission of improving communities. There are thousands of important nonprofits in our footprint doing great work, but we really strive to have deep and sustainable relationships in which we both can add strategic value to each other. We also look for organizations that can help us provide a tangible, meaningful impact to our communities. We believe in partnering with nonprofits that are flexible and are able to grow and adapt to our needs.

## Aspiring Leader: Mediacom’s Jennifer Znaniecki

As senior director of learning and development for Mediacom, *Jennifer Znaniecki*’s mission is to drive training, diversity and workplace behavior efforts across the company’s 22-state footprint. One of her accomplishments is building out Mediacom’s RESPECT program, which encourages engaging those with different perspectives and supporting one another. “I’ve seen first-hand individuals from departments that traditionally didn’t interface when problem solving reach out asking for ideas and opinions,” Znaniecki told us. “While we mean well, sometimes our preconceived notions can have a very real impact on our peers and co-workers.” Her passion for her work family led to the development of a confidential training session on “intimate partner violence and the workplace,” giving people an avenue for assistance that they might not have sought otherwise.



**What is your number one tip for developing in-house learning and development programs?**

**Znaniecki:** First and foremost, know your audience! That seems pretty elementary, but by knowing my audience, I can help relate the content thus creating a more engaging experience. We also like to have fun and keep it simple—ensuring employees get what they need and putting a smile on their faces is a win-win in my book.

**You saw a need for a confidential domestic violence training session. How do you deal with a delicate**

subject like that and communicate its availability?

**Znaniacki:** It's a very delicate subject so we opted to communicate the availability of the program in person when delivering our broader topic of Workplace Violence Awareness and Prevention. We wanted to ensure that our employees knew about the program, but just as importantly that anyone opting to view it could do so anonymously. Having a personal conversation regarding how to access the content seemed best given the levity of the topic. We also used this opportunity to better promote our Employee Assistance Program.

## Team Innovator Award (Connectivity Provider): Cox Communications

Each year, C2HR recognizes a connectivity company for a forward-looking HR approach that has positively impacted company culture or the bottom line. Taking home the gold this year is Cox's HR Service Delivery Team, which was formed early in 2019 to serve as a conduit to HR's internal clients. Though still relatively new, the group has already made big impacts—including freeing up the HR Business Partners to focus on work directly supporting their internal clients' business goals by moving organizational transformations and severance processing to the Employee Service Center. Other wins have included a review to better align HR goals with business goals, with quarterly report cards. "This team has direct accountability for being guardians of the employee experience in partnership with our HR COE's," said *Michele Parks*, vp, HR Service Delivery for Cox.



**What advice do you have for other professionals in the HR industry?**

**Parks:** Design thinking can be a valuable tool in improving the overall experience. Especially

the "listening or empathy phase." Your employee already knows how to make things better. You just need to ask and then actively listen.

**What are some of the benefits of this initiative?**

**Parks:** Amplifying the strategic role of the HR Business Partners. Getting the HR work in the right place. Severance transactional processing moved into the ESC. Quarterly HR Business reviews with our business clients. Improving the overall employee experience.

## Team Innovator Award (Content Developer): Discovery

Discovery's People & Culture team earned C2HR's other Team Innovator award for not just integrating Scripps Networks Interactive into the company, but creating a new global organization. When the legacy companies came together to form the new Discovery, the team created a set of guiding principles to set the culture. "The principles grounded our employees in a common purpose that was so valuable to the process of building a new corporate culture," Discovery chief people and culture officer *Adria Alpert Romm* explained. This year, the People & Culture team launched its first enhancements—new wellness centers, a digital well-being app and more. The group's already hard at work on 2020's new products.



**How did you incorporate employee input?**

**Alpert Romm:** We enrolled employees in the design, development and testing of all the new products we have created across the People & Culture function, including a brand new feedback and performance tool. This has allowed our team to build products that meet our customers' needs and enhance their experience at Discovery. Earlier this year, we fielded an employee survey to understand, in broad terms, the priorities and challenges across the organization and set a baseline we can work from as we design programming to fit the needs of our dynamic work force. From there, we have started to roll out shorter pulse surveys around specific focus areas, most recently around Learning and Development, to help us understand what our employees want and build tools and products that meet their needs.

**What's your best advice for working with a large company that has many different campuses?**

**Alpert Romm:** As a global company with nearly 10,000 employees working in 40 offices around the world, it's really important to stay connected to your employee population and to understand their needs while also staying connected to other offices/campuses. We use a collaboration and information platform called Workplace, where employees can learn about company priorities, share information and collaborate on projects and initiatives. This helps create a consistent employee experience across different locations and enables employees to feel connected to each other and to the broader organization. We approach everything as global but also respect the local differences of each of our locations to provide an opportunity to customize as needed.

In the 2019 issue, Cablefax honored innovative & engaging employers who are making work more than a job. This recognition program pulls back the curtain to give a glimpse at the culture behind the company names, shining a light on the magic that happens when work enhances your life.

# The WORK CULTURE List

Cablefax is seeking nominations for The 2020 Work Culture List, the definitive guide to the most innovative and attractive work environments in the business, creating a benchmark of excellence in a number of specific categories.

## THE WORK CULTURE LIST

This recognition program evaluates companies based on a number of criteria, honoring those who excel in specific areas such as:

- What makes your organization a top place to work in the industry.
- How growth opportunities at your company make a real difference when it comes to retention, continuing education, mentorship, recruitment and other worthy initiatives.
- How your company or agency offers unique or noteworthy benefits above and beyond traditional health insurance, 401K programs, etc.
- How your diversity initiatives help shape your corporate culture and environment, including how it affects senior positions and your board of directors.
- How your company gives back to the community.

We also want to hear about other noteworthy areas where your company truly excels in:

- Retention
- Mentorship
- Recruiting
- LGBTQ Initiatives
- Veterans Initiatives
- Continuing Education
- Community Connection
- Unique Work Environment
- Corporate Wellness
- Any Other Awesome Initiative

**Tell us what else we should know about your work culture.**

## Nominate a Vendor or Partner that Enhances Your Work Culture. Who would you recommend to someone else?

- Corporate Healthcare Provider
- Training/Education Vendor
- Payroll Vendor
- Research Partner
- Executive Coach
- Recruitment Firm
- E-Learning Tool

## Which Employees are Cornerstone to Your Work Culture? Tell Us About Them.

### Examples:

- Mentoring Champion
- Employee Spirit Hero
- HR Professional of the Year

All companies that touch media, content, cable and broadband are eligible for inclusion on this prestigious list. In today's fast-paced environment amid record low unemployment, top talent can pick and choose where to work and live. The Work Culture List is the perfect tool for job seekers, as well as a way for employers to tout their commitment to workplace excellence.



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**Free to Nominate. Deadline: December 13, 2019**