

Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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WEC Preview: NCTC Upping the Ante at Vegas Show

Broadband was positioned at the heart of last year's NCTC Winter Educational Conference. While the same will be true at this year's show, WEC 2020, which runs Sunday-Tuesday in Vegas, will give small cable operators the confidence to raise the stakes across all they're currently offering consumers. For NCTC, the best way to do that is through educating its members on where they should be placing their bets as the lines that once defined the cable industry continue to blur. "Devices, how people consume, order and manage their content—all that used to be the domain within the cable industry. Now it's stretched out beyond that. That makes a big difference in how people think about the business," NCTC pres/CEO *Rich Fickle* told **CFX**. The conference also gives NCTC a chance to introduce members to its newest partners, including IP transit services vendor **Cogent** and infrastructure provider **Zayo**. Fickle said those relationships will allow members to strengthen their network offerings with better capacity and lower latency, all at a lower cost. That, combined with what fellow partner **Plume** offers, leads to a powerful in-home WiFi experience. Members will be able to receive an introduction to Plume's offering during a Sunday session and hear from a member who has successfully launched Plume in its system. NCTC first announced its partnership with Plume on Oct 1. Continuing to embrace innovation in order to deliver better services will also be at the heart of Monday's keynote from author/futurist *Brian Solis*. "We need to reinvent how we do business as an industry and embrace digital transformation because it matters. It matters how customers will engage with us and how easy it is to do business with our member companies," Fickle said. Throughout the show, members will also hear from folks at **Commscope** and **CableLabs** not only on how to improve the network, but how the state of broadband competition is changing globally. But, importantly, video and programming is not an area that the NCTC is backing off and it continues to have a place at WEC. "For 99% of our members, broadband is probably their primary business driver today, but video is still important to them," Fickle said. "We've seen over the last five years some small companies exiting video, but they're really small for the most part." NCTC has instead focused on offering its operator members alternative ways to offer video via IP-based offerings from **Evolution Digital** and **MobiTV**. "When you move to an app-based world, all of a sudden you do two things. You keep a service in place for that local community that the operator can support, manage, price and market. The second thing is they can do so at a lower cost with features that are very competitive with

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- SCTE•ISBE's President and CEO, Mark Dzuban



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Cablefax Daily (ISSN 1069-6644) is published daily by Access Intelligence, LLC ● www.cablefax.com ● 301.354.2101 ● Editorial Director: Amy Maclean, 301.354.1760, amaclean@accessintel.com ● Publisher: Michael Grebb, 323.380.6263, mgrebb@accessintel.com ● Senior Editor: Sara Winegardner, 301.354.1701, swinegardner@accessintel.com ● Associate Editor: Mollie Cahillane, 212.621.4951, mcahillane@accessintel.com ● Acct. Exec: Olivia Murray, 301.354.2010, omurray@accessintel.com ● Director of Marketing: Kate Schaeffer, kschaeffer@accessintel.com ● Prod. Mgr: Joann Fato, jfato@accessintel.com ● Kerry Smith, Divisional President, Marketing & Media Group, ksmith@accessintel.com ● Group Subs or Subscription Questions, Client Services: 301.354.2101, clientservices@accessintel.com ● Annual subscription price: \$1,749.00/year ● Access Intelligence, LLC, 9211 Corporate Blvd., 4th Floor, Rockville, MD 20850

providers in the streaming and advanced video space,” Fickle said. A breakout session Tuesday will feature NCTC members like **RCN** and **EPB of Chattanooga** that have successfully transitioned to those offerings. They’ll offer advice and insights as to what customers are expecting from the next generation of pay TV. “It’s still a pioneering area,” Fickle said about the streaming. “There’s still learning curves around how to manage that kind of distribution better and better.” And, as per usual, **ACA Connects** will be on hand to bring a little piece of Washington, DC, to Las Vegas. A Tuesday panel will offer updates on everything independent operators need to keep an eye on in 2020, from the upcoming C-band auction to how the **FCC** is working to improve its broadband maps. Few cable conferences remain, but ACA Connects pres/CEO **Matt Polka** said that WEC remains an important forum for independent operators to get a sense of the trends shaping the industry. It also presents ACA Connects with an opportunity to brief its members ahead of its annual lobbying day during next month’s ACA Connects Summit. “Our members tell us that WEC public policy panels with ACA Connects speakers delivering the latest news from Capitol Hill and the Federal Communications Commission are exactly what they need in terms of preparing for their Washington, DC office meetings next month,” Polka said.

Dan York Leaving AT&T: AT&T confirmed that longtime negotiator *Dan York* is leaving the company March 1. The *L.A. Times* first [broke](#) the news, reporting that svp, content and programming *Rob Thun* is expected to replace him. York joined AT&T from **DirectTV** following the acquisition. He’s handled negotiations for **NFL** Sunday Ticket as well as RSNs and managed DirecTV’s original programming efforts.

Univision in Talks with Investor Group for Sale, Report: Univision is in exclusive sale talks with a consortium of investors that include former **Viacom** CFO *Wade Davis* and **Searchlight Capital Partners**, according to a [report](#) from the *WSJ*. Univision is seeking a sales price of about \$10bln, including debt. The company, backed by private-equity owners such as **Saban Capital Group**, **Madison Dearborn Partners** and **Texas Pacific Group**, has been exploring a possible sale for months. Univision declined to comment.

Higginbotham Joining ACA Connects: *John Higginbotham* is joining **ACA Connects** as evp, membership/finance and chief of staff, reporting to pres/CEO *Matt Polka*. He succeeds 16-year vet *Rob Shema*, who is leaving the organization on March 23 to lead **Com Net** of Ohio as CEO. Higginbotham spent 23 years at Kentucky municipal electric, water and telecom provider Frankfort Plant Board, serving as assistant gm, telecom from 2014-17. He retired in November 2017 and has been working as an industry consultant. He starts immediately, working with Shema on the transition. “I am truly privileged and humbled to have this opportunity at ACA Connects, following Rob who has done so much for our Members and our association,” Higginbotham said in a statement. “Our ACA

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Connects team is so committed, and I look forward to being a part of this team and serving our Members in every way that I can.”

HBO Max Launches Teaser: WarnerMedia’s upcoming streaming service **HBO Max** dropped its first teaser on Friday, and it isn’t shy about reminding customers how much content it owns. The commercial highlights content such as “Friends,” “Wonder Woman,” “The Big Bang Theory,” “The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air,” “South Park” and of course “Game of Thrones.” From the ad, it looks like the streamer’s slogan is going to be “HBO Max, where HBO meets so much more.”

Programming: Showtime is presenting comedy showcase “More Funny Women of a Certain Age” March 14 at 10pm. The special is headlined by *Caroline Rhea*, and features *Carol Leifer*, *Carole Montgomery*, *Julia Scotti*, *Tammy Pescatelli* and *Thea Vidale*. The show is a the follow-up to “Funny Women of a Certain Age,” which was the net’s highest-rated premiere of a stand-up special in 2019. -- **Science Channel** is bringing back “Mega Machines” for a new season, premiering Feb 26 at 9pm.

Editor’s Note: Your next **Cablefax Daily** will arrive Tuesday evening due to the holiday. We’ll keep you updated on any breaking news at Cablefax.com. Follow [@SaraWinegardner](#) on **Twitter** for updates from WEC.

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Up Ahead

Feb 16-18: [NCTC Winter Educational Conference](#); Las Vegas

March 5-6: [MFM CFO Summit](#), Ft Lauderdale

March 10: [FSF 12th Annual Telecom Policy Conference](#); DC

March 17-19: [ACA Connects Summit](#); DC

March 25: [T. Howard Foundation 27th Annual Diversity Awards Dinner](#); NYC

April 2-5: [Adaptive Spirit](#); Vail, Colorado

Research

> The 4Q19 weighted average broadband usage in the US was 344GB, 27% more than the 4Q18 average of 270.2GB.

> Median usage rose 32% from 144.8GB to 190.7GB during the same period.

> Power usage continued to rise in 4Q19 with more than 7.2% of subscribers consuming more than 1TB/month, an 80% increase YOY.

> Extreme power users of more than 2TB/month rose 123% to 0.76% of all subs.

(Source: [OpenVault](#))

Quotable

“The early learnings on Disney+ blew us away, and I think what it says is content is alive and very healthy. When you think about the amount of scale that’s being attracted to these platforms, you might have thought that viewers were being drawn to the platform because there were no ads, we actually think they’re being drawn because of the content. When you see 28mln subscribers in a very short amount of time, a small percentage of it was actually due to the deal we did with Verizon. That again speaks to the health of content.” – **Disney evp, client & brand solutions Linda Valentino at the VAB Impact Video Leadership Summit**

Cablefax: March What’s happening...

- EDITORIAL: Amy Maclean • amaclean@accessintel.com
- Sara Winegardner • swinegardner@accessintel.com
- Mollie Cahillane • mcahillane@accessintel.com
- ADVERTISING: Olivia Murray • omurray@accessintel.com
- AWARDS: Mary-Lou French • mlfrench@accessintel.com

ACA Connects Summit. Cablefax will cover this annual gathering in Washington, DC, where small- and medium sized operators make their voices heard in the halls of Congress and beyond.

State Legislature Round-up. A look at what’s happening at the state regulatory level

Cablefax: The Magazine – March Issue | The Work Culture List. Cablefax’s newest magazine shines a spotlight on companies for their work on continuing education, D&I, employee benefits and more.

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