

# Cablefax Daily™

Monday — April 27, 2020

What the Industry Reads First

Volume 31 / No. 081

## All In: Networks Rally to Provide Support, Engagement to African Americans

For more than a decade as *JC Watts* worked to get **Black News Channel** off the ground, he would explain the need for the network by talking about concerns, such as sickle cell anemia, that disproportionately impact the African American community. When it comes to COVID-19, the numbers speak for themselves. Preliminary CDC data shows 30% of COVID-19 patients are African American, even though the group make up about 13% of the population. This week, Louisiana's governor said that more than 70% of the deaths from the virus in his state were African Americans. "Unfortunately, this pandemic has actually made my case," BNC co-founder Watts told **CFX**. Having just launched in February, BNC has had to quickly adapt, producing daily coronavirus updates, tips from talent on prevention and daily telecasts from chief medical editor Dr *Corey Hébert*, a member of Louisiana's taskforce on the virus' impact to the black community. BNC isn't alone in stepping in to provide information and support to the African American community during the pandemic. "Our mission as a company really stands up at this time—to entertain, engage and empower. Right now, in this moment, it is all three of those things to the 10th power," said **BET's** Chief Social Impact and Communications Officer *Jeanine Liburd*. Wednesday's "Saving Our Selves: A BET COVID-19 Relief Effort" hit all those notes and raised more than \$16mln in commitments—doubling the initial fundraising goal. The money will support more than 50 organizations across the country providing emergency resources directly to African Americans hardest hit by the health and financial crisis. Not only are networks scrambling to create such ambitious content quickly, but they're having to adjust to remote production via smart phones and laptops. The premiere episode of **REVOLT's** live "REVOLT Black News" shifted from Thursday to Sunday (April 19) due to a production issue. "REVOLT the last couple years has not been a live TV programming force. That challenged our teams and technical partners. It hasn't been perfect, but it's getting better every day," said CEO *Roma Khanna*. "We think the information is relevant enough and powerful enough that we think the audience will forgive us a few technical glitches. At the end of the day, it's more important to connect with each other than be perfect." REVOLT's numbers bear that out. The net's been serving up several live productions, with its April 9 live town hall moderated by founder *Sean "Diddy" Combs* garnering 4.6mln viewers across all REVOLT platforms. BET has been hosting virtual townhalls online in conjunction with NAACP that are routinely drawing crowds of 30K-40K. **OWN's** programming has included the hour-long

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## Executives of the Year

- Digital Executive of the Year
- Engineer of the Year
- Innovator of the Year
- Marketing Executive of the Year
- PR Executive of the Year
- Sales Executive of the Year

## Teams of the Year

- Digital Team of the Year
- Marketing Team of the Year
- PR Team of the Year
- Sales Team of the Year
- Social Media Dream Team of the Year
- R&D Team of the Year
- Tech Team of the Year

## PR & Marketing

- Acquisition and upgrade marketing
- Affiliate marketing
- Brand Image and Positioning Campaign
- Content Marketing Campaign
- Community relations
- Corporate social responsibility campaign
- Digital Marketing Campaign
- Influencer Campaign
- Integrated Marketing Campaign
- Interactive Brand Content
- Internal communications campaign
- Marketing of a continuing series
- Marketing of a new series or show
- Marketing of a special or documentary
- Media event
- Media relations campaign
- Multicultural marketing
- Partnership marketing
- PR stunt
- Press kit
- Public affairs campaign
- Shoestring marketing
- Sponsored Content
- Trade show marketing/PR

## Audience Engagement & Experience

- App for Smartphone
- App for Tablet
- Contest/Sweepstakes/Promo
- Editorial Excellence
- Fan Base Cultivation
- Graphics/UX Design
- Mobile Experience
- New Product or Launch
- Online Community
- Online Game/Gamification
- Overall Social Presence
- Social Good Campaign
- Social Media Campaign
- Tchotchke
- Use of Facebook
- Use of Instagram
- Use of Snapchat
- Use of Twitter
- Use of Video/Moving Image
- Use of YouTube
- Use of Other Social Platform
- Virtual reality/augmented reality marketing

## Pandemic Response

- Audience Engagement
- Corporate Citizenship Hero
- Courage Award
- External Communications
- Internal Communications
- Social Media Campaign



Submit Your Entries by May 15!

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"Oprah Talks COVID-19 - The Deathly Impact on Black America" and special editions of "Black Women OWN the Conversation." The premise of the latter is 100 black women in a room conversing with a panel of experts about topics important to them. "We figured out a way to have an audience—not 100 black women, but about 15-17, and tap into them and out while we still have our experts on the screen. And it works," said OWN pres *Tina Perry*. She said there's an appreciation right now for real stories and real people that these production changes are highlighting. Viewers are literally peeking into people's homes. The soft script of reality TV has been abandoned. "To a certain degree, people are seeing more of themselves on screen with that dynamic than even a show we tape," Perry said. "There's something about seeing people in this moment coping or giving real information that you can use." The array of African-American focused content right now touches on everything from critical information to providing that uplifting entertainment desperately needed these days. Networks are also looking ahead to what's next. "When we come out of this, it's not the old normal," said REVOLT's *Khanna*. "It's like coming out of any harsh storm. There's going to be devastation left behind—how we respond and how we support each other and how we build together a new vision of our community is going to matter."

**Stephenson Stepping Down This Summer:** AT&T chmn/CEO *Randall Stephenson* will retire in June after 13 years in the position, the company announced during its annual meeting Friday. Stephenson will remain in the role of chmn until January, after which an independent director elected by the board will take the reins. AT&T pres/COO *John Stankey* will take over the CEO role on July 1 and be named to the board a month earlier. "John has the right experiences and skills, and the unflinching determination every CEO needs to act on his convictions. He has a terrific leadership team onboard to ensure AT&T remains strong and continues to deliver for customers and shareholders for years to come," Stephenson said in a statement. Since rising to his current role in 2007, Stephenson is largely known for building AT&T into the modern media company it calls itself today. AT&T closed its \$49bln purchase of **DirectTV** in 2015 and its even larger \$81bln buy of **Time Warner** in 2018. That history of M&A and Stankey's position as AT&T's heir apparent caused friction with activist investor Elliott Management, but the pair reached a truce in October.

**Verizon Reports Wireless, Fios TV Losses:** Verizon added 59K Fios internet customers, but lost 84K video customers—it's worst customer quarter yet dropping the platform to less than 4.2mln customers. Still, overall earnings were stronger-than-expected, coming in at \$1.26/share, up 5% YOY. Total consumer revenues were \$21.8bln, down 1.7% YOY. Verizon reported 525K wireless retail postpaid net losses in the quarter, made up of 307K phone net losses and 227K tablet losses, offset by 9K other connected device net additions. On the video side, Verizon pointed to the losses as "the ongoing shift from traditional linear video to over-the-top offerings." Business wireline service revenues



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were up 6.9%, with 475K subscriber gain. Unlike **AT&T**, Verizon didn't withdraw its guidance completely, but did pull its full-year sales guidance after a "significant" decline in customer activity due to coronavirus. "Like other subscription-based companies, neither they nor anyone else can forecast bad debt for example (they did take a preliminary \$228M charge to reserve for expected uncollectibles, but, again... who knows?). But the message here – we'll be fine, and we'll emerge from this as strong as ever – is clear," **MoffettNathanson** said in a research note.

**GAO Says FCC ECFS Still Vulnerable:** A GAO Report on the FCC's electronic comment filing system found the agency has made "significant progress" in resolving security deficiencies, but still has work to do. The report was prompted by a surge of comments in the net neutrality docket in May 2017 that caused a service disruption of ECFS. As of November 2019, the FCC had implemented about 63% of the 135 recommendations GAO made in a September 2019 report. It had partially implemented 10 recommendations, but hadn't started on the remaining 41, according to the GAO report released Friday. "Until FCC fully implements these recommendations and resolves the associated deficiencies, its information systems and information will remain at increased risk of misuse, improper disclosure or modification, and loss," GAO said.

**Cable-Tec Expo Moving Ahead:** SCTE-ISBE said planning continues for **Cable-Tec Expo** October 13-16 in Denver. "Our goal in the 25 weeks between now and mid-October is to ensure that all of this takes place in an atmosphere that is safe for all involved," pres/CEO **Mark Dzuban** said in a statement Friday. "We understand that there are uncertainties ahead. We are following the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control, are in constant contact with Denver and Colorado authorities, and are taking extra precautions together with the Colorado Convention Center and our hotel partners. The bottom line is this: we will do nothing that will jeopardize the safety of our guests." The organization said a large portion of the cable telecom and technology event will focus on lessons from the COVID-19 crisis. The Expo program committee is gearing up to review Fall Technical Forum abstracts that are due May 8. SCTE-ISBE pledged to keep attendees abreast of developments so they can manage scheduling and travel plans. **Cablefax** is the Expo Daily partner.

**Draft Ratings Rock:** Round 1 of the 2020 NFL Draft shattered the all-time viewership records Thursday evening. Across broadcast, cable and digital on **ABC**, **ESPN**, **NFL Network** and **ESPN Deportes**, an average of over 15.6mln viewers tuned in, up 37% from 2019.

**WWE Looking Up Despite COVID-19:** WWE escaped the 1Q20 earnings ring looking better than expected thanks to cost-cutting initiatives and a rise in digital viewing. The company reported revenues of \$291mln, up 60% YOY, primarily due to increased content monetization in its media segment. That was partially offset by a reduction in live event ticket revenue and lower merchandise sales. It's also seen digital video views increase 25% to 9.6bln and hours consumed rise 15% to 344mln across digital and social media platforms. On the other hand, **WWE Network's** average paid subs dropped 8% YOY to 1.46mln, and WWE's executive team is confident there are alternatives to the streamer that could be explored. "Our confidence is based on our discussions with multiple potential partners and consideration of broader media industry factors such as the evolution of new streaming services and the increasing value of live sports content,"

We are so proud of our industry and the many ways companies are responding to the pandemic. Free internet, fresh content, employee safety and much more.

The Cablefax Editorial Team is reporting on vital industry updates every day. We want to hear from you so please reach out to share your news and stories.

**Content. Community. Daily.**

Amy Maclean, Editorial Director,  
amaclean@accessintel.com or 301.354.1760

**The Collapse of Theatrical Windows?:** With theaters shuttering, will day-and-date releases become the new normal? **Sai Pictures** is the first out of the gate, announcing "Trolls World Tour" will be available April 10 for a rental. Other in-release movie titles are set to be available as soon as this Friday. The movies will be available on **Comcast**, **Sky** and a "broad range of on-demand partners." Titles to be made available include "The Man" and "Emma" with a suggested retail price of \$19.99 for the 10-day rental.

Tuesday — March 17, 2020 What the Industry Reads First Volume 31 / No. 050

**For Now: Providers Set Aside Disputes During Coronavirus Outbreak**

As they face the common enemy that is the coronavirus pandemic, **Cox Media Group** and **DISH** have set aside their retrans dispute for now so that **DISH** can resume its carriage of 10 CMG stations in New York, Oregon, Washington, Arizona, Louisiana, California, Mississippi and Idaho. No word on how long the dispute will be on hold.

**Cablefax Daily™**

Friday — March 13, 2020 What the Industry Reads First Volume 31 / No. 050

**New Normal: Companies Roll Out Contingency Plans in Face of Covid-19**

With a growing number of students and employees working from home, it's mission critical for the nation's broadband providers during the Covid-19 pandemic. Operators big and small are up-ending their day-to-day operations to ensure service to their customers.

Wednesday — March 18, 2020

What the Industry Reads First

**Covering Covid-19: Content Companies Step Up Efforts**

Programmers are shuffling schedules to respond to the coronavirus crisis. **The Weather Channel** is airing live coverage during each hour of live programming at 50 minutes past the hour to share educational content. **Pledge** is airing live coverage due to school closures. Topics include why thunder happens, how rainbows form and more. The coverage is scheduled for Friday at 2pm.

**From the Commission:** Another 116 broadband and telephone service providers have taken **Pai's Keep Americans Connected Pledge**, agreeing to take specific steps to keep Americans connected during the coronavirus crisis. Some notable names taking the pledge include **Hotwire Communications**, **Mild**

interim CFO *Frank Riddick* said on the earnings call. Those discussions have been extended due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, and the company can't estimate when it will have more to announce.

**One Team, At Home:** NBC Sports is launching a new multi-platform campaign #OneHomeTeam, spotlighting all the ways viewers, fans, athletes and commentators are filling the live sports void from home. The campaign is made up of digital and social media content, as well as new content, highlighting anything from professional athletes' at-home fitness routines to amateur broadcasters calling races in their own backyards.

**Distribution:** It's a good time for family friendly nets! **Charter** is providing **Disney Junior**, **Disney XD**, **Game Show Network** and **UPtv** at no additional charge to all Spectrum TV customers through the last week of May.

**Programming:** **Showtime** is offering the premiere of "Penny Dreadful: City of Angels" early for free online, on streaming platforms and on demand ahead of its linear debut Sunday at 10pm. The net is also supporting the Farmworkers COVID-19 Pandemic Relief Fund to help raise funds for farmworkers, similar to the family in the series.

**Editor's Note:** Reminder, midnight Friday (April 24) is the end of the best price deadline for Cablefax's FAXIES Awards, honoring the best in PR and marketing. The regular deadline is May 15. Enter at [www.TheFaxies.com](http://www.TheFaxies.com).

## Cablefax Dashboard

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### Research

- Some 64% of US households with at least one screen have cut the cord with cable TV, are planning to cut the cord or have never subscribed.
- Of those households that do still have cable TV subscriptions, 11% plan to cut the cord by the end of the year. That figure jumps to 18% for those within the 18-34 age group.
- The lack of live sports is likely to accelerate those trends, as 60% of Americans say watching live sports is the primary reason they have kept their cable TV subscriptions.
- Overall, 35% of those in the 18-34 age group would rather watch a free streaming service with advertising or some ads for a cheaper subscription.

(Source: The Trade Desk)

### Quotable

"It's an incredible tragedy for the world... and we too are really unsure of what the future brings. It's super hard to say if there's strategic long-term implications because we've just been scrambling to keep our servers running well, keep the content, get our postproduction done. Our small contribution in these difficult times is to make home confinement a little more bearable." – **Netflix CEO Reed Hastings** talking COVID-19 on its 1Q20 earnings call



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