

Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

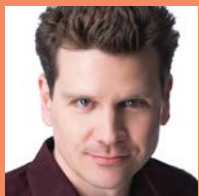
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5Qs with C-SPAN: Co-CEOs Kennedy and Swain Talk Value in a Pandemic

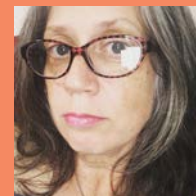
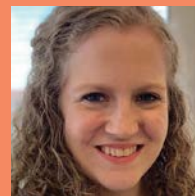
With everyone's world turned upside down the last few months, the thirst for objective and accurate information has never been more intense. It's also not easy to find. One diamond in the rough remains C-SPAN, so we sat down with co-CEOs Rob Kennedy and Susan Swain to find out how this cable mainstay approaches coverage, keeps its staff safe and sees promising signs from the Supreme Court as it tiptoes into more openness. **How has C-SPAN approached its role amid so much news coverage—and frankly a lot of misinformation about the pandemic?** SS: As of [May 15] we had brought in 254 governors' briefings from 41 different states. It became Must See TV for Cuomo in New York [in the morning], and the coronavirus task force with President Trump in the afternoon. With people being at home, it really became a place to gather around and watch all of this stuff in full... I think we feel like our mission hasn't changed, but the value of it has become more obvious to lots more people. **To what degree does it help you prove value with cable operators?** RK: This current situation is just more evidence of why C-SPAN was created to bring material to the public so they can see their elected officials or others directly, without a filter. SS: The biggest amount of feedback [from the C-SPAN board]—and it's no surprise—is when we told them about the Supreme Court's decision to carry their May debates by teleconference... They have always asked, "When is the supreme court going to let you in?" So that was a banner day for us, for sure. **Where do you put the chances of the Supreme Court opening up further, even with live cameras in the courtroom?** RK: That's a tough one, and it kind of depends on their experience with the live audio, which by all accounts seems to have been going really well... But so many things—not just the Supreme Court, but so many businesses including our own—are thinking about how we come out of this how we reinvent things how we reimagine things. SS: And the court has always said it's impervious to public opinion. But I hope that they get a lot of feedback about this. There was really a lot of positivity on social media about it, we all found it fascinating to hear the real time exchanges. The court acquitted itself well, and we really had a better understanding of what they do over there. And that's got to be a positive thing for the institution. **What's C-SPAN doing to adapt internally—and what new habits do you think will stick post-crisis?** RK: One of the big pivots early on was to move so much of our staff to remote work, because that hadn't been something that we've done a lot of in the past we

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have a very collaborative culture just like many newsrooms. SS: That's the part we all miss. You can get a lot of work done, but we all like the people we work with, and it's just not the same not being able to talk to people in the hallways and catch up with their lives, or beyond just the work on a day in day out basis. It's really hard to replicate electronically.

What are some of the specific challenges around all of these webcam interviews and remote feeds, especially in an election year with so many high-profile events—virtual or not?

SS: If the information is good, you adjust to the less than perfect environment that people are in. But this is going to change our business forever because we've really demonstrated we can do a lot more with less... When this is over—whenever that is—we're going to continue to incorporate a lot of this stuff into our daily production. RK: It does emphasize the value because these are big high-profile events, and we've always known that people come to us for these high-profile events. The primary source. It's another opportunity to show the cable industry was onto something when it created this public service.

FCC Divided on Sinclair Settlement: The FCC peeled back the curtain on the \$48mln civil penalty it has imposed on Sinclair and the consent decree the latter has agreed to enter into. The decree puts an end to the agency's investigations into Sinclair's disclosure of information related to its failed merger with Tribune, whether it negotiated retrans consent deals in good faith and violations of sponsorship ID laws. Sinclair has acknowledged responsibility for the last charge, but no others. The Commission said that it was in the public interest to enter into the consent decree and not further investigate whether Sinclair's broadcast licenses should be revoked over character issues, but not everyone at the agency agreed. The Democratic commissioners dissented the decision to adopt the decree and fired shots at their colleagues for agreeing to settle with Sinclair. Commish *Jessica Rosenworcel* said the FCC "ignores its rules and bends the facts" in the consent decree, helping Sinclair by sweeping its past digressions under the rug. Both she and commish *Geoffrey Starks* argued there were still plenty of unanswered questions worth looking into in regards to Sinclair's lack of candor when negotiating its proposed merger with Tribune. "What is clear is that by foregoing a real investigation, we run the risk of sending a message to future applicants that they can get away with almost anything if they can write a big enough check, even without admitting to any wrongdoing," Starks said in his dissent. "It is not clear whether a full examination of Sinclair's actions would result in a revocation of its broadcast licenses, an admonition, or something in between." Republican commissioners *Michael O'Rielly* and *Brendan Carr* celebrated the end of a years-long saga. Carr said many of those upset about the consent decree only want the Commission to go after Sinclair because they disagree with the viewpoints expressed in Sinclair's broadcasts. "We don't do that at the FCC—or at least a majority of us do not do that," Carr said in his statement.

Lionsgate Led by Starz: Lionsgate reported \$50.2mln in costs in Q420 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but saw a bright spot in Starz. CEO *Jon Feltheimer* described Starz as "thriving" during the company's earnings call Thursday evening, and said the OTT service grew its domestic subscriber base to 6.8mln, above expectations. Internationally, Starz, **Starzplay** Arabia and **Pantaya** increased subs to 10.6mln, and Feltheimer predicts international OTT subscriptions will reach between 13 and 15mln paid subs by the end of the fiscal year. "The goal of combining Lionsgate and Starz was to build a premium global subscription platform backed by the full resources of our companies. Today that effort is achieving results," said Feltheimer. "We are increasingly able to control our destiny through the continued rapid growth of the direct-to-consumer Starz app, which is now our third largest distribution platform in the U.S." The company said that while Starz has experienced an increase in viewership across all platforms, it may not be indicative of future results and growth may slow "as governmental and other restrictions are relaxed, and as a result of the current and possible longer term negative economic impact of the pandemic." As for upcoming productions, Feltheimer said the company shut down nearly 20 series and pilots "virtually overnight" when the pandemic hit, but Lionsgate has set up over a dozen virtual writing rooms and has seen a "significant uptick in backup script orders for pilots and current series, paving the way for our productions to shift into high gear when it's time to start." Feltheimer said the company has over 20 Lionsgate TV series either in production, postproduction or development for the platform, "ready to resume or begin production when production can resume safely."

Editor's Note: Your next issue of **CFX Daily** will publish Tuesday because of Memorial Day weekend. Have a safe, long weekend!

Cablefax Dashboard

Hero of the Week



Hotwire Communications, Maria Tijerino: Tijerino, Hotwire Communications' business planning manager, led the charge that would enable the company to maintain operations while protecting customers and employees during the pandemic. In the weeks before a work-from-home policy was implemented, she was instrumental in catering two hot meals a day for on- and off-site employees, coordinating daily deep cleans and weekly disinfecting spray-downs of the company's HQ, installing sanitization stations, and overhauling the access layout to the building, partitioning areas used by frontline employees to secure them from outside contamination. Tijerino singlehandedly drove the entire market sourcing of masks, disinfectant wipes, and boot coverings, equipping techs with everything they needed to perform their essential functions while taking every precaution to protect themselves and the customers they served.

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Research

- With Election Day six months away, 52% of Americans are paying fairly close or very close attention to news about the presidential candidates.
- Meanwhile, the overwhelming majority of Americans (87%) are following news about the COVID-19 outbreak fairly closely or very closely.
- More Americans say it is not at all important (24%) than say it is very important (18%) to hear messages related to the election and other important issues from the Trump and Biden campaigns themselves.

(Source: [Pew Research Center](#))

Quotable

"The original thesis of live events representing perhaps the best place to be on content for television or for digital distribution, I think, remains intact. Unfortunately, we've had this pandemic. I personally believe that there will be a therapy and/or a vaccine, sooner rather than later, that will get us back closer to normal... I believe that there will be a health solution here, not a structural solution, that will return these events. Human beings are gregarious by nature."

-- **Liberty Media chmn John Malone** at the company's annual shareholder meeting

We Want to Feature Your Heroes!

On Fridays, Cablefax will feature a local hero. We're looking for stories of employees who are going above and beyond. Maybe they are volunteering in their community, sewing mask covers for hospitals, spearheading supply donations, etc.

Hero of the Week



Please send a photo and 150-200 words about the person to amaclean@cablefax.com

Contact Olivia Murray at omurray@accessintel.com to sponsor this feature section