

Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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Multifaceted Approach: HBO Max's Multiple Content Strategies

Since **HBO Max's** launch at the end of May, **WarnerMedia** evp, content acquisitions *Michael Quigley* has been busy building up library content on the streamer, ensuring it complements both Max Originals and the legacy **HBO** brand. "There was some chatter about 'only' six originals at launch," said Quigley, speaking during a keynote session Monday at the **NATPE** Streaming Plus virtual conference. "I think what's been lost is that since that time, we've steadily introduced new shows, new movies, new content to the platform over the course of the summer. We wanted to create the feeling among consumers that each week they're going to find something new."

Quigley said the streamer, which launched in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, now has 30 original titles, with 36 expected to launch by the end of September. The team also has been busy building up library content for HBO Max. While the company hasn't released specific streaming numbers for its programming, Quigley pointed to "superperformer" series such as "Friends," "The Big Bang Theory," "South Park," "Rick and Morty" and "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air." Quigley described teens and young adults as a "sweet spot" for the streamer, adding that "we've seen from an early results perspective that we're bearing some fruit." The focus has been on acquiring content that complements the existing breadth and depth of HBO. "We saw an opportunity to buy content themed at younger audiences, kids and families, as well as content that would bring a more female perspective, whether that's through women content creators, storylines geared towards women... [or] narrative geared toward women," he said.

Quigley pointed to series such as "Pretty Little Liars" and "The OC" as shows that have been particularly successful with women, seeing high rates of binge watching. "We see there is opportunity for there to be shows that aren't necessarily broad, but drive a lot of deep consumer engagement," he said, referencing the two series. "And those pockets of passion are important to having not only a well-rounded service, but really a service that consumers really love..."

Quigley also announced an expanded content deal with **ViacomCBS' Comedy Central**, which will bring major library titles like "Chappelle's Show," "Inside Amy Schumer," "Reno 911," "Nathan for You" and "Key & Peele" to HBO Max in Q4, expanding on the success of "South Park" and recent pickups of "Awkwafina is Nora from Queens" and "South Side." That plays into HBO Max's larger content strategy, which Quigley said is more to think about than just "one-off shows."

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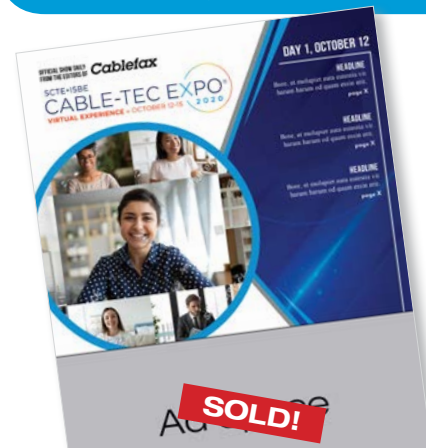
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That includes looking at content in a “hybrid model.” “We’re seeing a real nice symmetry between what we’re buying and what’s happening on the original side,” said Quigley, referencing combinations of original programming like **The CW’s** “Gossip Girl” and its upcoming reboot on HBO Max, as well as Fresh Prince and its future reboot. “We were able to come together and do a deal in which we’re going to have a reboot of the show, but we’re also going to have a library that supports that as well,” he said. “There were some opportunities that came to us where it wasn’t strictly just acquire a piece of content or acquire a library of content. Nor was it just develop or produce or co-produce something that would be original, it was really a combination of both.”

No Court Victory for ACA Connects: The **DC Circuit** denied **ACA Connects’** request for a stay of the **FCC’s** Sept 14 deadline for earth station owners to elect a lump-sum payment as part of the C-band transition. In an order filed Monday, the court said ACA Connects had not demonstrated a likelihood of success on the merits. “Pleased the DC Circuit has denied ACA Connects’s request for a stay, finding the challenge unlikely to succeed on the merits,” FCC chmn **Ajit Pai** tweeted Monday. “The ruling ensures clearing/auctioning process for 280MHz of #CBand spectrum will continue and that the benefits of faster #5G deployment won’t be delayed.” ACA Connects said in a statement that it was disappointed by the ruling, is fully reviewing the court’s order and fully considering its options moving forward. It is also urging members who were planning to opt for the lump sum to file with the FCC right away.

AMC, AT&T Settle Carriage Dispute: The **FCC** granted **AMC Networks’** motion to withdraw a carriage complaint it filed against **AT&T** last month that claimed the latter was favoring its own networks in negotiations. AMCN moved to withdraw the complaint after the two sides reached a new carriage agreement.

Verizon Acquiring Tracfone: Verizon struck a deal with **America Movil** to acquire **Tracfone** for \$6.25bln in cash and stock. Tracfone is the largest US reseller of wireless services, serving approximately 21mln subscribers. Tracfone and Verizon have been longtime partners, with more than 13mln Tracfone subscribers currently relying on Verizon’s wireless network through an existing wholesale agreement. The transaction will include \$3.125bln in cash and \$3.125bln in Verizon common stock. The agreement also includes up to an additional \$650mln in future cash consideration related to certain performance measures and other commercial arrangements. Verizon expects the transaction to close in the second half of 2021, and **New Street Research** believes the approval odds for the deal are high under either a Republican or Democratic administration. “The transaction marks a shift in strategy for Verizon—they have eschewed interest in the prepaid market before now,” New Street said in a note. “It would seem to support our view that value will shift from postpaid to prepaid in a recession.”

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DISH Loses Mission, Gains NFL: DISH has another retrans dispute on its hands, losing **Mission Broadcasting** stations over the weekend. The blackout affects 26 stations in 21 markets across 18 states. DISH lost the stations in January, but the pair agreed to restore the channels in March to give viewers access to local news during the pandemic. Mission has told viewers that it offered a proposal for “fair value compensation” while DISH claims that proposal includes a 50% rate increase. In better news, DISH settled its carriage dispute with the **NFL** just in time for the first Sunday of the 2020 regular season. The pair have signed a new deal that includes distribution of **NFL Network** and **NFL RedZone** across **DISH** and **Sling TV** as part of the Sling TV Blue package.

On Addressability: Founding members of ad initiative “On Addressability” released a playbook designed to help distributors, programmers, media buyers and advertisers “turn on” addressability and take full advantage of their addressable advertising capabilities. **Charter**, **Comcast** and **Cox** first launched the initiative in 2019, and the playbook serves as the next step to increase both the value and effectiveness of advertising. Within the playbook, customers can find an ecosystem overview, as well as common definitions and standards for addressable TV advertising. The guide includes both a buyer’s guide and a seller’s guide to addressable TV, as well as a step-by-step guide for programmers and distributors to successfully launch addressability.

CenturyLink Transforming into Lumen: CenturyLink has rebranded itself by breaking down its operations under three brands: Lumen Technologies, CenturyLink and Quantum Fiber. The new Lumen platform is designed to bring together the company’s fiber network infrastructure, edge cloud capabilities, and security and communication and collaboration solutions. Quantum Fiber is a subscription-based offering made for delivering fiber-based products to residential and small business customers. The CenturyLink brand will continue to be used for residential and small business customers over traditional networks. On Friday, the company stock ticker will change from CTL to LUMN.

Brockman Out at WarnerMedia: WarnerMedia PR exec *Kevin Brockman* is exiting the company following last month’s organizational restructure that saw the exits of *Bob Greenblatt*, *Kevin Reilly* and *Keith Coccozza*. He will remain with the company through the end of the year to help WarnerMedia evp, corporate communications/chief enterprise inclusion officer *Christy Haubegger* with the transition. “I joined WarnerMedia to work with Bob Greenblatt and to take on the challenges he presented to me at the start,” Brockman said in a statement. “I truly appreciate the effort that Christy put into trying to craft a new position for me at WarnerMedia, but this just felt like the right decision at this point in my career.” Brockman joined WarnerMedia in May 2019 after spending 22 years with the **Walt Disney Company**.

New Altice Mobile Data Options: Altice Mobile unveiled three flexible data plans Monday. Customers can now choose between 1GB for \$12/month per line, 3GB for \$20/month and unlimited GB of data for \$30/month with the ability to switch at any time. Customers who choose the 1GB or 3GB options can also choose to add an extra 1GB of data at any time for \$6.

ESPN Strikes Deals with Caesars and DraftKings: ESPN entered into two separate multi-year agreements with **Caesars Entertainment** and **DraftKings**, including co-exclusive link integrations across ESPN digital platforms connecting fans to sportsbooks from both companies.

On the Circuit: One of the last holdouts on moving an event to a virtual platform has folded. The **Fiber Broadband Association** moved its Fiber Connect conference from June to Dec 14-16 and had planned to keep it in-person in Nashville. But on Monday, the org said it would go virtual due to COVID-19, keeping the same dates.

Ratings: HGTV’s series “Good Bones” hit its highest-rated season ever in Season 5 for the net among P25-54 and W25-54. The season attracted 22.6m total viewers since its June 9 premiere, seeing double-digit growth in both demos, a 50% lift to .73 L+3 ratings over the past six weeks and a 22% YOY gain.

Programming: HBO renewed “Last Week Tonight with John Oliver” for an additional three seasons, keeping the show on the net through 2023. -- **Travel Channel** announced the lineup for the third annual “Ghostober” programming event. The week kicks off Oct 25 at 9pm with the two-hour countdown “Paranormal Caught on Camera: Top 100” and culminates with the crossover event from “Ghost Nation” and “Kindred Spirits” on Halloween. “Ghost Nation: Reunion in Hell” will premiere Oct 31 at 8pm, followed by a new episode of “Destination Fear” at 10pm. -- **Starz** is developing two new series from *Curtis “50 Cent” Jackson*. The first is an untitled female sports agent drama inspired by *Nicole Lynn*, the first female agent hired at a top NFL agency. The second series, “Moment in Time: The Massacre” (wt) is a seasonal anthology series following true stories when hip hop moments collided with events behind-the-scenes. -- **National Pro Fastpitch** softball and **All Sports Television** teamed up for a broadcast agreement. All Sports will air NPF’s prior season league games, which serve as a prelude to the upcoming Olympic games.

THE WORK CULTURE LIST PROFILE:

MENTORING CHAMPION Kathy Davis, SCTE•ISBE



Got a question about a new software package? Trouble with your computer? Or just in need of a pick-me-up during a tough day? At SCTE•ISBE, accounts receivable manager Kathy Davis is your woman.

“Kathy Davis’ impact is felt far beyond ledgers, receivables and payables. Kathy is the go-to source for help whenever someone is struggling with an issue—often professional, but oc-

asionally personal,” says Davis’ manager SueAnn Cox, SCTE•ISBE director of accounting. “She makes herself available to anyone that needs assistance and if she does not have the answer, she finds one. She does this with an excellent attitude, thus demonstrating how to assist others in the organization.”

For Davis, who joined the organization in 2013 in an accounts payable role, a seemingly bottomless capacity to support her co-workers is just part of her DNA. “I’m willing to try anything pretty much. I’ve always been curious about things, about taking things apart and seeing how they work. It’s a natural curiosity that crosses various areas,” she says.

“I think back to the mentors that have been in my life, people I’ve looked up to, that I want to emulate. They are gregarious, they are outgoing, and again they are willing to try. And they’re willing to bring you along on the way, and help you to be able to do it as well, leave that fear behind and be willing to try. What’s the worst thing that can happen?”

Among the key mentors along Davis’ journey are her stepmother, whom she says demonstrated honesty and a straightforward approach to a blended family. She also cites her high school physical education teacher, who instilled confidence during a challenging personal time—and who landed the plum role of maid of honor at Davis’ wedding. Both instilled an ethos Davis brings daily to the halls of SCTE•ISBE.

“I think the important part of a mentor is giving someone confidence to be able to try,” Davis says. “If you fail, you

fail. But I think sometimes we learn more when we fail than when everything goes smoothly.”

A master at keeping all the plates spinning, Davis prior to SCTE•ISBE worked at a small elementary school in a nearby Pennsylvania town, where her job swelled from IT services to also include training teachers and teaching students in grades K-5 computer literacy. What ended up as a nearly 24/7 schedule helped shape her work ethic—“You have to be flexible every day, you never know what’s going to be coming your way and you have to be ready to go”—but also started to take a toll.

It was at that time Davis’ sister, who worked in accounting at SCTE•ISBE, was planning a move out of state, and suggested her sibling for the role. Davis interviewed with operations chief Cathy Oakes, who passed away in late 2013, and finance exec Cathy Karch, who retired last summer. “I said, ‘I have an accounting degree, but I’ve done a number of different things. You find the fit for me in your organization and I promise you will always get my best every day,’” she says.

The rest, as they say, is history. “Kathy has been instrumental in sharing with other SCTE employees all of her knowledge she has gleaned about how SCTE•ISBE works and our systems. She trained her replacement in AP when Kathy moved onto to her current AR role and continues to work with the replacement on issues that arise relating to AP and other accounting issues,” Cox says. “She is currently managing our accountant assistant, and she is always ready to jump in when customer care needs a hand or has questions about individual member records.”

And there’s one more thing Cox notes: Davis’ uncanny ability to know when someone needs assistance, even before they approach her.

“My husband and I joke about that; we call it the Spidey senses,” Davis says. “I don’t know what it is—either there is static in the air or something that seems not right with the universe—but I can just see when someone is struggling with something. I don’t know how or why that happens, but I appreciate that it does.”

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THE HONOREES!



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