

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

No Free Ride: CuriosityStream Leads the Pack in Eliminating Trials

It's been two years since **CuriosityStream** founder *John Hendricks* and CEO *Clint Stinchcomb* appeared at **TCA**, touting a nonfiction streamer that had just closed on a \$140 million funding round in private placement. Today, the streamer feels even better about its position.

"Our annual revenue has more than quadrupled. Our paying subscribers have grown more than 10x. Our content library has grown by more than 1,000 titles. Seventy five percent of those who subscribe to CuriosityStream select our annual plan, we've built an elite, veteran-led management team, and unlike most streaming services, we've developed multiple avenues of content monetization," Stinchcomb said during a TCA presentation Tuesday.

And unlike a lot of the streamers out there, CuriosityStream began taking down its free trial offer about a year ago. "A lot of people internally and externally thought this was a misguided and even dumb exercise. It proved to be quite smart," Stinchcomb said. A few others have followed suit, with **Netflix** eliminating its free trial period in October and **Disney+** nixing its trial in June ahead of the premiere of "Hamilton." **HBO Max** discontinued its free trial period in December.

Not everyone has abandoned the free sample cart. The month-and-a-half-old **discovery+** continues to advertise a seven-day trial, as does **Acorn TV** and **CBS All Access**. Maybe we'll learn if **ViacomCBS** plans to switch strategies

as it rebrands CBS All Access to **Paramount+** with a streaming event planned for media and investors next Wednesday.

CuriosityStream pulled the plug on the trial at the urging of *Devin Emery*, chief product officer and evp, content strategy. Originally hired from **Cheddar** as head of growth, he was just a couple months into the job when he convinced leadership to throw out the free period.

"Free trials are a great de-risker of a purchase decision when the technology is untested, the IP is unknown and the pricing is risky. It is a tool you can use to get people to sign up for your service. We're not a risky decision in terms of our price point. Our IP is very strong, even if you're just browsing the library and the technology of streaming is not a novel concept that people don't understand," Emery said. "It was kind of a relic of people not wanting to make a move away from something that had been more traditional, but it wasn't serving audiences and it wasn't serving streaming services, honestly."

Looking ahead, CuriosityStream is looking to develop some personalities that can help its content stand out. Stinchcomb believes *Doug Thron* might be a breakout star. Thron, a drone pilot, stars in upcoming series, "Doug to the Rescue." He's on a mission to save animals stranded or left behind when natural disasters such as wildfires or hurricanes hit.

And while the streamer prides itself on being a repository of nonfiction content—particularly history, science, technology and natural history—it acknowledged there's room to grow when pressed by one critic on a lack of LGBTQ content. "We

THE FAXIES

RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE IN PR & MARKETING

Submit your entries by **March 19**

Your hard work is done – and now it's time for you and your team to get recognized!

Honoring those people, shows, and networks who excel in digital content, marketing, advertising, social media and online content.

Categories include Audience Engagement & Experience, PR & Marketing, Executives and Teams of the Year.

www.TheFAXIES.com



know we can do more in that space, and we will do a lot more,” Stinchcomb said, days after TCA attendees pressed **Crown Media** chief *Wonya Lucas* on efforts to bring more diversity to **Hallmark Channel**. Emery acknowledged that there isn't documentary content about LGBTQ issues. “We definitely have people in the LGBTQ community that are in our content and producing our content. We do understand that there are a lot of areas we want to increase the depth and breadth in. That is absolutely one that we're excited about with the new resources we have as a company,” he said.

CABLE ONE'S \$2.2 BILLION HARGRAY DEAL

Cable One's M&A tear continues with the purchase of the remaining 85% of **Hargray Communications** that it doesn't already own in a deal valued at \$2.2 billion. Cable One picked up 15% of Hargray in October in exchange for its Anniston, AL, system. The purchase price represents 17.2x multiple of Hargray's 4Q LQA adjusted EBITDA before taking into account estimate run-rate synergies and 12.7x after assuming the immediate realization in full of the \$45 million in estimated run-rate synergies that Cable One expects to realize within three years of closing the transaction. **Moody's** affirmed Cable One's Ba3 Corporate Family Rating and the Ba3-PD Probability of Default Rating (PDR). It also affirmed the B2 senior unsecured rating and Ba3 senior secured bank credit facility rating. “We expect this transaction to add scale and geographic diversity, but also initially increase leverage and capital intensity, and reduce EBITDA margins,” Moody's said, adding to the extent the financing mix for Hargray includes a significant component of unsecured debt, there could be upward rating pressure on the Ba3 senior secured rating.

Hargray serves 14 markets across Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina, with gigabit-capable services available to approximately 99% of its customers. The transaction is expected to close in 2Q21, with Cable One financing it with a combination of existing cash resources, revolving credit facility capacity and proceeds from new indebtedness and/or equity capital. Cable One has received \$900 million of definitive bridge loan commitments from J.P. Morgan and Credit Suisse to finance a portion of the purchase price.

SIMINGTON STAYS NEUTRAL ON NET NEUTRALITY

FCC commissioner *Nathan Simington* used his maiden address at the **Free State Foundation** to caution those who are looking to resurrect the long-fought battle over net neutrality. The Commission's new kid on the block didn't declare his support for any one type of regulation over another, but did put forth a number of concerns he has for the marketplace should Title II rules for ISPs be restored. Still, he said there's a chance that a type of Title II regulation could be put forth that he would vote for. “My view is that Commission decisions, even ones that ultimately do not command a consensus, are nonetheless formed organically by conversations, discussions, analysis, etc internally within the Commission,” Simington said. “I am not bringing an unchangeably closed mind to the Commission on any topic, and certainly not on the highly-fought topic of net neutrality.” Turning to spectrum policy, Simington, a former **NTIA** senior advisor, said that things are relatively positive when it comes to coordination between NTIA and the FCC. Even so, there's still plenty of room for improvement overall on inter-agency coordination. “The NTIA is the agency within the executive branch that directly liaisons

Corporate Licenses
Cablefax Daily
WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST.
 Get reduced subscription rates for multiple readers in your organization.
 Find out more! Contact Client Services at ClientServices@accessintel.com
www.cablefax.com

The advertisement features a large, bold headline "Corporate Licenses" in yellow and white, followed by "Cablefax Daily" in white. Below this is the tagline "WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST." and a call to action: "Get reduced subscription rates for multiple readers in your organization." At the bottom, it says "Find out more! Contact Client Services at ClientServices@accessintel.com" and "www.cablefax.com". On the right side, there is a smaller image of the Cablefax Daily magazine cover, showing the date "MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2020" and the headline "Direct Talk: RCN/Alto/Grande CEO".

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, Cablefax and Synopsis: Robbie Caploe, 917.974.0640, rcaploe@accessintel.com | Managing Editor: Sara Winegardner, 301.354.1701, swinegardner@accessintel.com | Executive Director, Strategic Partnerships: Albert Nassour, 917.545.3129, anassour@accessintel.com | Dir of Marketing: Kate Schaeffer, kschaeffer@accessintel.com | Production Manager: Joann Fato, jfato@accessintel.com | Kerry Smith, Divisional President, Marketing & Media Group, ksmith@accessintel.com | Group Subs/Subscription Questions, Client Services: 301.354.2101, clientservices@accessintel.com | Annual subscription price: \$1,799.00/year | Access Intelligence, LLC, 9211 Corporate Blvd., 4th Floor, Rockville, MD 20850

with the FCC on various matters in its capacity as the agency regulating federal spectrum, but that's not to say that federal spectrum interests only reside at the NTIA," Simington said. "That's a point of difficulty that, while I'm working on it, I don't think we can expect overnight success."

ALLEN'S WEATHER CHANNEL NOT STAYING NEUTRAL

Entertainment Studios Networks founder *Byron Allen* isn't interested in **The Weather Channel** acting as a Switzerland of sorts when it comes to topics like global warming. It was a decision that came after Allen's 2018 purchase of the network and a conversation with Weather's scientists. It has shaped the network's programming ever since. "The Weather Channel had a way of making sure that they didn't offend folks, and they would never talk about climate change and global warming because there were some people who said it wasn't happening, and some people said it was happening," Allen told **TCA** press tour attendees Tuesday. When Weather's scientists told him how devastating climate change could be for humans as a species, Allen decided the network couldn't hold back any longer. "I'm going to go with the scientists because people don't truly understand that climate change and global warming is the greatest threat to human beings on planet Earth. We have to inform folks so we can help save their lives."

COMMERCE GOP RELEASE BROADBAND AGENDA

House Commerce Republicans released 28 bills Tuesday designed to help close the digital divide. Among other things, the legislation looks to streamline permitting processes, remove requirements and red tape tied to environmental and historic preservation and speed up the deployment of projects to replace or improve communications facilities after natural disasters. Some of the proposals call for government agencies to work together to speed up the deployment of broadband in unserved areas. For example, the Expediting Federal Broadband Deployments Reviews Act, led by Rep *Jeff Duncan* (R-SC), would direct **NTIA** to lead an interagency strike force to prioritize reviews for requests to deploy infrastructure on federal land. "To make a strong comeback from this pandemic, every House Republican on Energy and Commerce is leading in the Boosting Broadband Connectivity Agenda so America closes the digital divide," Commerce Republican leader *Cathy McMorris Rodgers* (R-WA) said in a statement. "This agenda will get education back on track and promote economic opportunity for all Americans across the entire country."

SCTE-ISBE ASKS FOR EXPO PAPERS

SCTE-ISBE issued its call for papers for the 2021 Cable-Tec Expo's Fall Technical Forum. The event will be focused on the future of cable, including the promise of 10G and emerging tools for the workplace of tomorrow. SCTE-ISBE is seeking subject matter experts in 10 key categories ranging from security and privacy to video services and home networking. **Cox Communications** chief product and technology officer *Kevin Hart*, who will also serve as the Expo's program chair, will review all submitted technical abstracts. Abstracts must be submitted for consideration by April 9, and Expo is scheduled as a hybrid event Oct 11-14 at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta.

DISH BUYS MORE TOWERS FOR 5G

DISH signed seven new tower deals Tuesday that will help it in its quest to deploy a 5G wireless network. The agreements signed with **Harmoni Towers**, **Mobilite**, **Parallel Infrastructure**, **Phoenix Tower International**, **Tillman Infrastructure**, **Tower Ventures** and **Vogue Towers** will give DISH access to more than 4,000 towers and wireless infrastructure assets. Each of the vendors will also provide services meant to help accelerate the installation of 5G radios on the acquired infrastructure.

UNIVISION'S NEW VISION

Univision plans to hold a virtual upfront on May 18, but folks won't have to wait that long to get a glimpse of what the company is up to under its new leadership. Univision will hold "A New Vision at Univision" virtual presentation March 24 with updates from CEO *Wade Davis* and ad sales chief *Donna Speciale*. Speciale has added two of her former **WarnerMedia** colleagues to her team, tapping *Dan Riess* as evp, chief growth officer and *Dan Aversano* as svp, data, analytics and advanced advertising. Both start next week.

TIVO SCORES TWO RENEWALS

TiVo renewed multi-year agreements with **Vodafone** and **Sharp** Tuesday. Vodafone's deal gives it access to products like Content Discovery, Conversational Voice and Insight Data Analytics as well as access to TiVo's patented products. Sharp's renewal will allow it to continue using its programming guide, but also includes an expanded multi-year license to TiVo's patent portfolios that will allow the TV manufacturer to build customizable content discovery services across its devices.

TCA NOTEBOOK

Discovery+ revealed an expanded documentary slate for the first half of 2021 at the **TCA** press tour. Exclusive premieres include "My Beautiful Stutter" (March 11), "Groomed" (March 18), "Miracle Fishing: Kidnapped Abroad" (March 25), "Future People: The Family of Donor 5114" (April 10), "Genius Factory" (May 20), "Apocalypse '45" (May 27) and "Yellowstone: Super Volcanoes" (June 3). – **Hallmark's** "Spring Fling" programming event is back and will offer five new original movie premieres every Saturday night starting with "Chasing Waterfalls" on March 20 at 9pm. Over on **Hallmark Movies & Mysteries**, March will see the return of "Aurora Teagarden Mysteries" (March 14, 8pm) and "Mystery 101: Killer Timing" (March 21, 8pm). – Season Two of **BYUtv's** "The Wizard of Paws" will premiere on the network on April 28 at 9pm ET.

PEOPLE

Kayla French was named vp, marketing operations at **Buckeye Broadband**, while *HeidiJoy Harnegie* was promoted to vp, customer experience. – **Alliance for Women in Media** and its Foundation announced their 2021 board. New members include **NCTA's** *Svetlana Gans* and **Vice Media's** *Marsha Cooke*. **Weiss Agency's** *Heather Cohen* will serve as board chair, with **Crown Media's** *Annie Howell* serving as incoming chair. – **FCC** acting chair *Jessica Rosenworcel* appointed *Palona Perez* to serve as press secretary. She last served as communications director for former Rep *Xochitl Torres Small* (D-NM).