

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## New Vision: Univision Targets Brands with PrendeTV Launch Next Week

It has been about a year since former **Viacom** CFO *Wade Davis'* **ForgeLight** and **Searchlight Capital** announced their acquisition of **Univision**, and we're getting a better sense of their direction for the Spanish-language programmer. It centers on the notion that advertisers are missing out on a very important market.

"Not a lot of people appreciate that the largest Spanish-speaking market in the world is the US—larger than the GDP of Spain, larger than Mexico. And Univision has over 60% market share with this audience here in the US, twice that of our nearest competitor. For context. If you added up the broadcast reach of NBC, CBS and ABC together, they'd have about 60% share the English language market," CEO Davis said at a Univision virtual presentation that was sort of an appetizer to its virtual upfront slated for May 18.

The new management team's execution will be under the spotlight next week for the launch of **PrendeTV**, billed as the first premium, free, ad-supported streaming service built exclusively for US Hispanics. Former Viacom exec *Pierluigi Gazzolo*, who helped launch **Pluto TV** internationally, is spearheading the initiative in his role as president and chief transformation officer.

PrendeTV, currently in soft launch, features 45 channels with more than 30,000 hours of content. Univision expects to build it to 100 channels by year-end. In addition to partnerships with movie studios, networks, Latin American producers, it's being

advertised as the first time Univision's programming vault has been opened. To help fuel Prende's launch, Univision in February acquired **Vix**, an ad-supported Spanish-language VOD platform available across the US and Latin America.

With an AVOD, advertising is the crux and Davis brought in the big guns, tapping former **WarnerMedia** ad chief *Donna Speciale* as president of ad sales and marketing. During Wednesday's presentation, she decried that only about 400 of the 1900 advertisers on English language network TV advertise to the Hispanic audience in their language.

"I know many of you think you can reach Hispanics with English language advertising. And maybe—but not all impressions are created equal," Speciale said, pledging to help remove barriers, such as the creation of Spanish-language creative. "Connecting in culture and in language is more about engagement, and engagement goes to conversion. And conversion with this audience leads to loyal lifetime consumers."

Just 10 weeks on the job, Speciale's jumped into her new home, kicking off her first virtual event ever with a pretty impressive welcome in Spanish. She credited Babel for helping her, adding "Trust me, I have a long way to go."

In addition to pushing Prende, Univision used the pre-upfront push to tout upcoming programming, such as May 9's "Latin Grammy Honors Women" featuring top female performers, and this summer's "Premios Juventud" (Youth Awards), which Speciale likened to the "Kids Choice Awards meets the VMAs." And then of course, there's soccer. Univision is presenting nearly 100 matches in 90

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days, starting with Copa America in June and continuing on to the Gold Cup with the US and Mexican national teams.

### ISPS DOUBLE DOWN ON LOW-COST BROADBAND

**Comcast** plans to invest \$1 billion over the next 10 years to help close the digital divide. Much of that funding will be directed towards the Internet Essentials program as the company has set a new goal to reach 50 million students and individuals through the initiative. In an accompanying 10-year Internet Essentials progress report, Comcast said it has connected more than 10 million people to the low-cost program. The new funding commitment will also include investments in the company's Internet Essentials program, additional support for the Lift Zone WiFi hotspot initiative and the establishment of WiFi-connected safe spaces in more than 1,000 community centers nationwide for students and adults by the end of this year. **RCN**, **Grande** and **Wave** are also doing their part, announcing the doubling of speeds of their Internet First package for new and existing customers at no additional cost. Customers will now experience broadband speeds of up to 50Mbps. The Internet First program was launched in April to help households impacted by COVID-19. It offers free internet and standard WiFi for the first 60 days of service for all qualifying low-income households who do not already subscribe to internet service, no activation or equipment installation fees and the option to add Whole Home WiFi powered by eero for \$9.95/month. Lawmakers are applauding the individual efforts by companies to make broadband more affordable and accessible while also asking them to do more to promote federal subsidies. Reps **Frank Pallone** (D-NJ), **Cathy McMorris Rodgers** (R-WA), **Mike Doyle** (D-PA) and **Bob Latta** (R-OH) wrote to nine ISPs and their trade associations Wednesday urging them to participate in and help make consumers aware of the Emergency Broadband Benefit program. "For this historic \$3.2 billion program to help the greatest number of people, it will require the cooperation and support of internet service providers like your company. Simply put, the more companies participate in the program, the more we can, together, ensure that all Americans have this crucial connectivity," the lawmakers wrote.

### ANOTHER BILL WITH MONEY FOR DIGITAL DIVIDE

The latest Washington attempt to solve America's digital divide comes in the form of the bipartisan bill that would distribute \$10 billion to states to build out broadband infrastructure in unserved areas. The Eliminate the Digital Divide Act was reintroduced this week by Sens **Joe Manchin** (D-WV) and **John Cornyn** (R-TX). It creates a process to deliver funds directly to states based on their proportion of unserved areas and includes a \$1 billion set-aside for high-cost areas like West Virginia.

The legislation also requires the **FCC** to update its broadband coverage maps and would allow state and local government to challenge those maps. Companion legislation was introduced in the House by **Jim Cooper** (D-TN) and **Roger Williams** (R-TX). **NCTA** is a fan of this bill because it's tech neutral, prohibits excessive pole attachment rates and spells out that there's no Eligible Telecommunications Carrier status required to seek funding.

### VIACOMCBS SHARES PLUMMET

**ViacomCBS** shares took a dive Wednesday after it said it would price 20 million shares of its Class B common stock at \$85/share and 10 million shares of its Series A mandatory convertible preferred stock at \$100 a share. Shares were down more than 20% during trading. ViacomCBS had said earlier in the week it had hoped to raise closer to \$2 billion from the common stock sale instead of the \$1.7 billion it is asking. This may be a bit of 'what goes up, must come down,' given that ViacomCBS stock had more than doubled over the past three months and closed at a record of \$100.34 on Monday.

## Cablefax Executive Round Up

### What was your most groan-worthy March Madness moment?



#### Chris LaPlaca

SVP, Corporate Communications  
ESPN

*"It has to be the very first game played in the 2000 NCAA Tournament, between favored Kentucky and my alma mater, St. Bonaventure, coached by a good friend of mine. We weren't supposed to be close and lost...in double OT. We had a three-point lead late in regulation but couldn't hold it...and we needed three straight free throws at the end of the first OT to tie it. Great heart by our guys. But a brutal loss!"*



#### Damon Phillips

SVP, Strategic Initiatives; Head of Diversity & Inclusion  
NBC Sports Group

*"I have two favorite women's teams. My alma mater Stanford and my adopted team ... Florida Gulf Coast University. FGCU is a scrappy mid-major program and one of best places to watch basketball games. FGCU was on a 25-game winning streak going into the tourney. I was hoping for an upset over Michigan, but it didn't happen."*



#### Hania Poole

SVP, Digital  
Turner Sports

*"When I first took the helm of the MM product team, Duke was playing Mercer in the 2014 tourney, 2nd round. As the game went back and forth, more and more people joined to watch. I was sick to my stomach, both from the game, but also because I didn't know if our products could handle the traffic. Well, we lost the game, but set an industry record for audience!"*

**INSIDE THE BELTWAY**

Bills, bills, bills... There's a flurry being reintroduced this week that intersect with the broadband and media sector. Here's a quick rundown: Sen *Ed Markey* (D-MA) was joined by Rep *Ted Lieu* (D-CA) in bringing back the Cyber Shield Act, which creates a voluntary cybersecurity certification program for IoT devices. IoT manufacturers will certify that their products meet certain benchmarks and can display a "Cyber Shield" label to help consumers. – A bipartisan group of lawmakers reintroduced legislation to study the impact of media and technology on children, focusing on the increase of technology use during the pandemic. The Children and Media Research Advancement Act (CAMRA Act) would authorize the **National Institutes of Health** to research the impact of technology and on the development of young people from infants to adolescents. The bill authorizes \$15 million for fiscal years 2022-2024, and \$25 million each for fiscal years 2025 and 2026. – Also back is the "Protecting Americans from Dangerous Algorithms Act," which aims to amend Section 230 to remove liability immunity for a social media platform if its algorithm is used to amplify or recommend content that leads to violence.

**SOCIAL MEDIA HEADS TO WASHINGTON**

Thursday is the day **Facebook**, **Twitter** and **Alphabet's** CEOs testify before **House Commerce** on disinformation in social media. In prepared testimony, Facebook CEO *Mark Zuckerberg* said political posts only make about 6% of what people in the US see on their Facebook newsfeed, with the "prevalence of hateful content people see on our service" clocking in at less than 0.08%. Alphabet's *Sundar Pichai* devoted part of his testimony to lauding Section 230. "Without Section 230, platforms would either over-filter content or not be able to filter content at all. In the fight against misinformation, Section 230 allows companies to take decisive action on harmful misinformation and keep up with bad actors who work hard to circumvent their policies," Pichai wrote. Twitter chief *Jack Dorsey* outlined some of the ways his company is attempting to address misinformation. In January, Twitter launched the "Birdwatch" pilot that allows people to identify information in Tweets they believe is misleading and write notes that provide informative context. Twitter expects Birdwatch data to be publicly available, including the algorithm code that powers it. Last month, the House committee held a hearing on disinformation in media that focused on cable news.

**DISNEY+ UPS PRICING**

**Disney+** is about to get more expensive. Starting Friday, the SVOD's previously announced rate hike will take effect. Monthly rates will rise to \$7.99, while annual plans will cost \$79.99. That's an increase of \$1/month and \$10/year from current prices. Those that subscribe to the Disney Bundle including Disney+, **Hulu** and **ESPN+** will be charged \$13.99/month for Hulu with ads or \$19.99/month for Hulu without ads. Those billed for their Disney+ subscription through a third-party will see the new price on their first billing date on or after Friday, but Disney said on one of the streamer's help pages that those billed through **Verizon** should contact the wireless provider for more specific information.

**DOING GOOD**

**Comcast** and **YWCA Seattle** announced WiFi-connected Lift Zones at four Puget Sound area sites. The Zones will reach more than 140 families living in YWCA housing and upwards of 1,000 community members who use YWCA computers. – **Telemundo** and **Susan G. Komen** launched a two-year partnership to reach Hispanic women with information and resources regarding breast cancer, the leading cause of cancer death among the demographic in the US. Telemundo will run Spanish-language PSAs and on-air interviews with Spanish-speaking Komen experts during its programs. Information and resources will also be provided across both organizations' digital platforms and social media.

**DISTRIBUTION**

Some 21 Yankees games will be available on **Amazon Prime Video** this season to fans within its home team footprint at no additional cost, thanks to a deal with **YES Network**. The first Yankees game on Prime Video is scheduled for April 18 when the team will host the Tampa Bay Rays.

**BUSINESS SERVICES**

**Comcast Business** will partner with the **Colorado Rockies** to deliver increased bandwidth and high-performance connectivity to its fans at Coors Field. Comcast Business will provide the stadium a network infrastructure to give visitors the ability to order food and access tickets on their mobile devices and use cashless payment options. The deal will allow the Rockies to implement dual Gbps Ethernet Dedicated Internet connections and ActiveCore SD-WAN service from Comcast Business across Coors Field, its dugout Stores and Salt River Fields, the Rockies's spring training facility in Arizona.

**PROGRAMMING**

**WarnerMedia** announced a five-year overall deal with *Issa Rae*, giving the distributor exclusive rights to projects developed with Rae's company, **HOORAE**. Programming from this deal includes the fifth and final season of "Insecure," Season Two of "A Black Lady Sketch Show" which will premiere April 23, and five new projects. – **NBC Sports** California will feature its first exclusively women and non-binary announcing and coverage team across its platforms on Saturday for the Sacramento Kings vs. Cleveland Cavaliers game. The team will cover the live-game telecast, pregame and postgame shows, and social content for the game. – **Hallmark Channel's** "Home & Family" will end with its ninth season. A one-hour episode will show three days a week starting April 5 and the last episode will air Aug 4. – **Lifetime** greenlit a third movie in its "Harry & Meghan" franchise. "Harry & Meghan: Escaping the Palace" will begin production this spring and debut in Fall 2021.

**PEOPLE**

**MLB Network** promoted *Marc Caiafa* to svp, production and *Josh Bernstein* to vp, production. Bernstein, who joined the company in 2013, has also overseen the production and content of **NHL Network**. Caiafa spent nearly a decade at **Major League Baseball Productions** and has held roles at **NBA Entertainment** and **ESPN**.



Think about that for a minute...

Tetris

Commentary by Steve Effros

I had a very interesting experience at my local Wegmans Supermarket the other day, and it reminded me of something that should always be passed along to the managers and "front office" folks in our industry. It's simple, and it should be obvious, especially in the telecommunications field: listen to the young!

It all started because I wound up doing the food shopping and got far more stuff than I intended. Being a good and sometimes obedient spouse, I had brought reusable bags with me and had even remembered to take them out of the car and into the store! So when all the stuff was piled up at the cash register, I looked at it and remarked that it was OK if extra bags had to be used. I then watched as this wonderful cashier scanned everything and proceeded to carefully pack it all into perfectly organized constructs in the two bags I had brought.

I told her I thought she was great, and had done a wonderful job of fitting everything in precisely. She looked at me, smiled, and said "Tetris." For those of you who don't know, Tetris was one of the early entrants into the video game business. Little squares drop down from the top of the screen and you have to maneuver them into place to make a solid block once they slide down as far as they can. Eye-hand coordination and spatial awareness are key. Clearly, she was an expert.

Why did this resonate with me? Because it reminded me of how important it is to not simply rely on my own experiences, or those of the folks I have associated with for so long. That there are a lot of really good, important and valuable lessons to learn from folks who are not like me. That means different ethnicities, races, sex, and so on, to be sure, but also different ages.

This young woman had a skill that I dare say could not have been matched by anyone of my age who I know. She learned it, practiced it, honed it through the use of a video game. It serves her very well, and it certainly reflected well on her employer. Now granted, that seems like a somewhat minor

thing, but the lesson it imparts is not minor. The businesses we are engaged in, from the technical infrastructure side to the intensive service and customer support we offer can all benefit from a broadened skill base and perspective. There's been lots of focus in the past decade about more inclusion in the "front office," more diversity. But I rarely hear talk of that applying to age.

While many young folks may not be ready to take on a senior managerial role until they have had more experience in the field, they certainly have perspectives and skills that can not only be useful, but are essential for us to appreciate. We are, after all, in one of the most "bleeding edge" industries. It's foolish for us not to seek out and learn from the cohort that is most likely to be the "early adopters" of what we have to offer. Just remember: "Tetris."

On a somewhat related note, it's hard to miss the noise being created by the various legislative proposals being offered to deal with "Section 230" and what should be done to rein in the power of the search and social network companies. Unfortunately, it appears that we are being treated to a repeat of the shopworn arguments and ideas that have been circulating for a long time, as usual salted with partisan rhetoric. Maybe we should very actively seek the advice of the younger generation on this one. They may see things a bit differently. Just a thought.



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(Steve Effros was President of CATA for 23 years and is now an advisor and consultant to the cable industry. His views do not necessarily reflect the views of Cablefax.)

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