

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Help Wanted: NCTC CEO Fickle Exiting, Search Underway for a Successor

After 10 years as CEO of **NCTC**, *Rich Fickle* will leave the co-op this year. He'll make himself available through the end of 2021 to ensure a successful transition.

"I have made the tough decision that it is time to step aside and allow for new CEO to step in who can continue to bring fresh ideas and leadership at the NCTC. NCTC is in a great place coming off several successful years and is poised to do even more for you all in future years," Fickle said in an email to NCTC's more than 700 members in the broadband and cable space.

Fickle is only the third CEO to head the association, taking the reins from *Jeff Abbas* in 2011. Before Abbas was named CEO in 2005, NCTC was run by its founding president *Mike Pandzik*. The group started in 1984 with 12 operators as a project of the **Mid-America Cable Association** with the idea being that more volume would result in bigger discounts.

Under Fickle's leadership, NCTC struck partnerships with vMVPD players, such as **fuboTV**, and entered into a deal with **MobiTV** to allow its members to launch a white label IPTV service. MobiTV filed for voluntary Chapter 11 earlier this month. Those deals were indicative of NCTC members putting their focus on broadband. Fickle helped foster that environment launching a Broadband Solutions Access Program in 2019 aimed at lowering access costs for members.



RICH FICKLE

Fickle isn't planning on retiring, but looking for a bit more flexibility as he pursues projects that he believes are a good fit. NCTC has already begun the search process for a new CEO, tapping executive search firm **Carlson Resources** to assist with recruitment.

The co-op said it is in a strong financial condition. It continues to expand the number of programming agreements it manages for members, while building a strong foundation to assist with broadband and technology purchasing services. NCTC is gearing up for the second round of its SmartClicks, virtual education series. On April 13-14, it will dive into group purchasing, the IPV6 transition, managed WiFi and SMB.

As for who might be NCTC's next leader? The possibilities seem wide open. Abbas was a former Adelphia exec, while Fickle's previous job had him overseeing Cable/Telco/VOD and TVE Services for **Deluxe Entertainment** (previously Ascent Media).

DISH TO DROP MASN ALONG WITH NBC RSNs

DISH has added the **Mid-Atlantic Sports Network** to the list of RSNs it will drop from its lineup and **Sling TV's** offerings come April 1. Other networks to leave DISH's lineup include **NBC Sports Bay Area**, **NBC Sports Washington** and **NBC Sports California**. "DISH's proposal would allow our customers to choose to subscribe to the RSN channels on an a la carte basis, similar to premium channels like **Starz** or **Showtime**."

Mark Your Calendars!

Cablefax Award Submission Deadlines:

The FAXIES Awards

Entry Deadline: March 19
Final Deadline: March 26

Cablefax 100 Nominations

April 9

Top Ops Nominations

April 23

The Diversity List Nominations

July 16

Most Powerful Women Nominations

September 10

Program Awards

Entry Deadline: November 19
Final Deadline: December 3



With this updated RSN model, no customer would be forced to pay for content they don't watch and the RSNs would determine the price customers would pay for their channels," DISH said in a message to customers. "DISH has made this proposal to NBC and MASN, but they haven't been willing to accept, choosing instead to demand payment from nearly all customers." News about the dropping of the NBC RSNs came earlier this month. NBCU claims that the RSNs offered to continue distribution on fair market terms that both DISH and Sling declined.

CUSTOMERS GETTING MORE SPORTS REBATES

Another round of sports credits is starting to hit some customers for games that weren't played because of the pandemic. **Verizon** is following up on its December 2020 round of credits with additional refunds in April. "Verizon Fios has secured additional refunds from Regional Sports Networks and is passing on those refunds to Fios TV customers who subscribe to those RSNs," Verizon said. The amounts vary by market, but the April bill credit in DC tops \$15. It follows a nearly \$14 credit in the DC market from Verizon in December. **Charter** issued a credit of \$17.73 last month for sports programming to residential video customers as of July 31. **Comcast** began applying courtesy adjustments to customers' accounts in their October billing statements. Just last week, NY Attorney General *Letitia James* announced New Yorkers have received more than \$76 million in sports rebates, promising that "tens of millions" more would be coming later this year.

AVOD PRENETV DEBUTS

Univision launched ad-supported streamer **PrendeTV** Tuesday. The service has 40 streaming channels as well as 10,000 hours of VOD content from Univision and **Televisa** as well as from partners

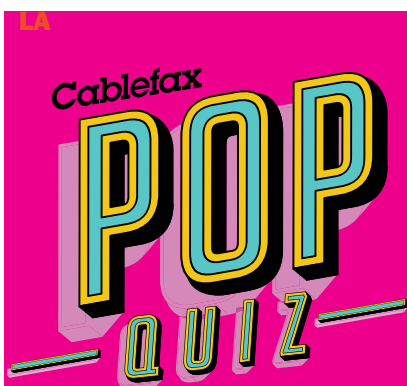
like **Banjay**, **Blue Ant Media** and **Calinos**. Soon, the service will also have movies from studios including **Disney**, **Lionsgate** and **MGM**. The launch comes soon after Univision's acquisition of **VIX**, a Spanish-language ad-supported VOD streamer targeted at Latin American audiences and US Hispanics. When combined with PrendeTV, Univision's AVOD offerings deliver a combined 30,000 hours of content. PrendeTV is available on Amazon Fire TV, Apple and Google devices as well as on the web at prende.tv. The app will be available on Roku in the coming weeks.

MSNBC, FOX NEWS WIN 1Q

MSNBC ranked at the #1 cable network in total day for 1Q21, its first time ever to win the quarter. It was a tight race though, with MSNBC averaging 1.367 million viewers compared to **CNN's** 1.347 million and **Fox News'** 1.321 million. MSNBC's total day quarterly ratings topped Fox News for the first time since 2001, when MSNBC was #2 and Fox News was #4 in cable news. Fox News took the top spot in prime for 1Q, delivering 2.481m viewers vs MSNBC's 2.239m. Meanwhile, CNN is boasting that it's #1 in all of cable for 25-54s in 1Q total day, averaging 352K. That puts it ahead of **ESPN** (276K), **TNT** (227K) and Fox News (225K).

DISH SUED OVER MUST-CARRY

DISH and the **Minority Television Project** still aren't getting along. Last November, the **FCC** Media Bureau **dismissed** the Minority Television Project's petition for reconsideration of a must-carry complaint filed against DISH over **KMTP**, a noncommercial broadcast station in the San Francisco Bay area. On Tuesday, Minority Television Project, the nonprofit owner of KMTP, filed suit against DISH in federal court, claiming the satellite provider has refused to carry KMTP's signal since Jan 1, 2021. A bit of history: Minority



Who launched the nation's first pay-TV network in 1972?

[CLICK HERE TO ANSWER](#)

Last week's answer: Trio was the now defunct-network that had the slogan 'pop, culture, tv.'

Kudos to last week's winners:

Thomas Bailey, Sparklight, Jonathan Bullock, Hotwire Communications; Paul Schneider, PSPR

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Television Project filed its original must-carry complaint with the FCC in 2017, but it was denied because its must-carry election notice was not sent to DISH via certified mail. The broadcaster asked the FCC to reconsider, with the Media Bureau ruling in November that the request is moot because a new, three-year must-carry election cycle would start in January 2021 and DISH would begin carrying KMPT. Except the broadcaster says DISH isn't carrying the channel. "At all times, beginning January 1, 2021 through and including the present, Minority has been injured and continues to be injured by DISH's failure to carry KMTP TV's signal in violation of the FCC order," the broadcaster told the court.

WOW! REPAIRING NETWORK IN GEORGIA

WOW!, operating as NuLink in Newnan, Georgia, is working as quickly as possible to repair damage to its network caused by last week's tornado. NuLink engineers and field technicians are repairing multiple fiber connections in order to restore network connectivity. At this time, the provider has restored all services to approximately one-third of customers. NuLink has made free community WiFi hotspots available for residents in need of connectivity.

FCC APPROVES TELEHEALTH PROGRAM ROUND TWO

The **FCC** unanimously voted to adopt a Report and Order and Order on Reconsideration to establish a second round of the COVID-19 Telehealth Program. Some \$249.95 million has been designated for Round 2 of the program, which supports health care providers as they continue to serve their patients using telecommunications services, information services and the connected devices necessary to enable telehealth during the COVID-19 pandemic. Round 2 will also distribute funding to each state, territory and DC and will have an application filing window. The application window is expected to open within 30 days of release of the order.

WICKER WANTS CLARITY ON BROADBAND MAPPING

Sen Roger Wicker (R-MS) sent a letter to **Senate Commerce** chair Maria Cantwell (D-WA) requesting that the committee hold a **FCC** oversight hearing to discuss timelines for developing new broadband maps. "The FCC recently suggested they would not have new maps ready until 2022, despite previous statements from Acting FCC Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel that the agency could complete new maps in 'just a few months.' However, at our March 17, 2021 hearing, you stated that Acting Chairwoman Rosenworcel had intimated to you that we could have an answer for mapping in four months," Wicker wrote. "These conflicting timelines clearly need to be resolved."

VEVO LINKS UP WITH FREEWHEEL

Music video platform **Vevo** has integrated with **FreeWheel, A Comcast Company's** Strata platform. This will allow Strata's local spot buyers to access 18-49 audiences to augment traditional TV's reach.

INDUSTRY LEADERS VOW TO #STOPASIANHATE

Regulators and distributors alike are launching initiatives to #StopAsianHate in the aftermath of the Atlanta Spa Shootings. **Verizon** is donating \$5 million in ad inventory from Verizon Media to advocate for Asian rights and mental health and promote small businesses across the Asian community. The company is also committing a \$5

million contribution to Asian Americans Advancing Justice/AAJC, the National Council of Asian Pacific Americans and the Asian/Pacific Islander American Chamber of Commerce & Entrepreneurship. **AT&T** and WarnerMedia committed \$7 million in support of #StopAsianHate – A Day of Action, on March 26. This included a multi-platform campaign starting with four PSAs featuring talent and executives from WarnerMedia and AT&T focused on the companies' ongoing commitment to empowering the AAPI community. Each PSA ended with the opportunity for viewers to donate \$10 to the Asian American Chamber of Commerce and Asian Americans Advancing Justice. The PSAs will run for the next several months. Employee contributions from both companies to organizations supporting the AAPI community nationwide will be matched up to \$1,000 per eligible employee. The companies are also donating to Southeast and East Asian Centre in the UK, European Network Against Racism and Australians Against Racism. The **FCC's** Advisory Committee on Diversity and Digital Empowerment released a statement Tuesday condemning the acts and words of hate and violence and extended its full support to the AAPI community. The committee also invited members of the public to engage with the Committee in its efforts to promote policies encouraging diverse media voices and advancing the public interest.

RATINGS

The "52nd NAACP Image Awards" on Saturday drew 3 million total viewers P2+, up +72% from last year. The awards were simulcast live across 13 **ViacomCBS** networks. The program generated over 4.1 million social interactions, up +166% YOY across Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. It also became the most social primetime program on cable this March, excluding sports. – Sunday's Formula 1 season opener, the Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix, had an audience of 879,000 fans. This gave it a larger viewership than all F1 races run during the 2020 season. It was also the most-viewed live Formula 1 telecast on **ESPN2** on record dating back to 1995 and the most-viewed Bahrain Grand Prix on record. The race was up 72% in viewership over last year's Bahrain race and 21% over the 2019 race. F1 will return April 18 at 8:55am with the Pirelli Emilia Romagna Grand Prix on **ESPN**.

PEOPLE

fuboTV named *Ali Ghanavati* head of regulatory technology for its Fubo Gaming subsidiary, effective immediately. He joins from the Technical Services Bureau of the State of New Jersey Division of Gaming Enforcement. The company plans to launch its sportsbook in 4Q21. – **Comcast** promoted *Shakira Shanks* as director of customer experience in Washington. Shanks worked at **Verizon** for 20 years before joining Comcast in 2019. – **Charter** promoted *Mike Reid* to svp, corporate services. Reid joined Charter in 2018 from **CenturyLink**.

ADAPTIVE SPIRIT AUCTION IS ON

Ready, set, bid... **Adaptive Spirit's** virtual event kicks off next Wednesday, but its silent auction is open [now](#). Money raised goes to support the US Paralympic Ski and Snowboard teams. Items up for bid include a weekend in Sonoma for two, a suite with 12 tickets to a Lakers game and a round of golf in Phoenix with **Cable One** CFO Steven Cochran.