

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## New Rules: Embracing Technology as a Tool for Connection

Disruption became commonplace over the last 18 months, forcing everyone to adjust to new working and learning environments. Organizations everywhere took to technological platforms to connect with employees and peers, and that's going to stick around long after the pandemic is over.

**MSNBC** President *Rashida Jones*, who ascended into her role in February, said in a keynote conversation at **WICT's** Leadership Conference Monday that embracing technology and being flexible has improved the network's reporting dramatically. While she continued coming to her office at 30 Rock through the entirety of the pandemic, the vast majority of her team ended up returning to their parents' homes or moved to other states.

"We've had a team in Idaho for the last several days, if not weeks, at this point, covering how the pandemic is robbing communities there. That's not necessarily something that would have bubbled up if we all were D.C., New York and L.A.-centric," Jones said. "It is one of the things we want to continue to build upon as we start returning. We're returning to an office, but we also want to make sure we don't lose that kind of flexibility, geographic diversity and the scope on the entire world."

For *Aisha Thomas-Petit*, who joined **AMC Networks** in November as the company's first-ever Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer, having individuals around her company embrace digital tools allowed her to more quickly become acquainted with the programmer's culture and where improve-

ments needed to be made.

"It really accelerated my learning and understanding of what the DEI strategy had been before I had gotten here. And I was able to, in two months time, meet with over 80 employees across the globe," Thomas-Petit said at a later panel. "It really served me well in terms of being able to put pen to paper very quickly on three very important strategic areas of focus: our workforce, our content and our brand."

**Cox Communications** SVP of Corporate Public Affairs *Leigh Woisard* also found ways to become more efficient in her dialogues with team members, the wider company and those that receive their broadband service from the operator. That has included transitioning all-employee meetings to platforms like Microsoft Teams and Zoom and programming them in ways that feel meaningful without taking up too much time.

"If you look at some of the things that were already on the company roadmap, how do we get better at self-installs and servicing customers, meeting them where they are... you hear a lot of talk about businesses not wanting to snap back to the way we used to do it, and I think there are lot of good examples where we've adapted, and it's been better for our customers and better for our business," she said.

**WarnerMedia** EVP and **Turner Sports** GM *Tina Shah* said the "no update" update became more important than ever before. She found that employees in her organization just wanted to be reassured at a time of so much disconnection, and she's been workshopping various ways to fill that void.



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## ABOUT REGIONAL RAINMAKERS

The **Cablefax Regional Rainmakers** honors the operators, programmers, executives, associations and lobbyists who are making outstanding contributions at local and/or regional levels – be it in operations, affiliate sales, news and sports programming, state legislation, lobbying and more.

"It's how many different ways can we utilize communication so that hopefully we cover the entire workforce with something that resonates with them," she said, noting examples like virtual sessions of various sizes as well as newsletters and coffee chats. "I think having a mix of both one-way and two-way communication forums has really been critical."

**A+E Networks** SVP of HR *Ravena Valentine* was planning to utilize many of those tools to reach out to her company when the transition to a remote environment began. She and her team hit a roadblock when they discovered just how wide the digital divide still reaches.

"We realized there were people in our workforce who didn't have internet at home... so we had to figure out how to help people get to the standards that we needed so that we could all be productive," Valentine said.

Many of the ones who were connected were A+E's younger employees, and many began flourishing in a digital environment that allowed them to speak up in front of larger audiences.

"They found it easier to engage, participate and speak up in forums like these... when you get on Zoom, all the boxes are the same size and so there's less of that hierarchical feel that there is in the office," Valentine said. "We're getting a lot of value, learning and fresh thoughts from our up-and-coming generation workforce."

#### CAMPBELL DEPARTS HULU IMMEDIATELY

*Kelly Campbell* is out as **Hulu's** president, effective immediately. She took on the role less than two years ago, stepping into the seat left behind by *Randy Freer*. In a LinkedIn post announcing her departure, Campbell said she will "forever bleed" Hulu's signature green. "To the Hulgans and Xulguns out there... I'm grateful for


the countless memories we created together. From wall photos to wind downs, from huluween to hupalalooza, the memories will live on," she said. "As for what's next, stay tuned..." The rumor mill has already begun on where she's headed, and **NBCUniversal** seems to be her likely destination, according to the *WSJ*. Until her replacement is found at Hulu, Campbell's direct reports will report to *Rebecca Campbell*, Disney's Chairman, International Operations and Direct-To-Consumer.

#### COX SPORTS TV WINDING DOWN

**Cox Communications** is preparing to shutter its 24-hour regional sports network **Cox Sports TV** this month. The RSN covering the Gulf South Region launched in 2002 with live programming and sporting events from the prep, collegiate and professional levels. "After nearly two decades of broadcasting local sports programming, we are shutting down Cox Sports TV, primarily due to the rising costs of content," a Cox spokesperson told **CFX**. "We will move some select content over to our **YurView** linear channel that runs in all Cox markets and will continue to focus on relevant local and national community programming there and on yurview.com. Our few employees that are dedicated to Cox Sports TV will transition into our YurView operations." The channel has broadcast the New Orleans Zephyrs Pacific Coast League franchise, and also televises preseason games from the NFL's New Orleans Saints.

#### NO NHL FOR FRONTIER

**Frontier Communications** dropped **NHL Network** on Oct. 1, telling customers it was unable to reach an equitable agreement with the channel. The NHL-Frontier spat joins several other Oct. 1 carriage impasses. **Comcast** lost **MSG Networks** as the clock struck midnight, with the RSN still dark ahead of Tuesday's




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preseason Knicks opener against Indiana. **AT&T**'s RSNs went dark on **DISH** Oct 1, leaving **NESN** as the satellite provider's lone RSN. **DirectTV** began October without **Bloomberg TV**.

### NBCU, YOUTUBE TV FRIENDS AGAIN

As we predicted, no fireworks with **YouTube TV** and **NBCUniversal** over the weekend. Instead, the two reached a renewal that includes continued carriage of the full NBCU portfolio, including the NBC Sports RSNs. "YouTube is a valued partner and we never want to involve our fans in a dispute, but we felt obligated to let them know what was at stake," an NBCU spokesperson said.

### INDY SHOW RIDES AGAIN

**ACA Connects** and **NCTC**'s 16th annual **Independent Show** gets underway [online](#) this week, with a general session Tuesday featuring the heads of each organization as well as their board chairs. It is a bit of a welcome party for *Lou Borrelli*, who took over as NCTC CEO in June following *Rich Fickle*'s departure. "It would have been nice to see everybody in person in Minneapolis, but since I got here I've been reaching out and having intro calls with members. I try to do a few a week," he told CFX. "I think clearly we made the right call taking the show virtual. There was a lot of trepidation, calls from attendees and from sponsors and partners. The good news is we've probably exceeded our targets when we converted from in-person to virtual, and I think the content we've packed in is pretty powerful stuff." The agenda includes author and **TrendHunter.com** CEO *Jeremy Gutsche*, **Land O' Lakes** President/CEO *Beth Ford*, and operators such as **Cable One** COO *Mike Bowker*, **ALLO Communications** President *Brad Moline* and **Buckeye Broadband** GM *Geoff Shook*. "I think we have some very practical sessions about the most important decisions operators will face over the next five years, particularly in light of COVID and what's taking place in Washington and elsewhere in our business," ACAC President/CEO *Matt Polka* said. "We're on the cusp of a bill that could inject \$65 billion into our world of communications and broadband, and what a difference that will make for our members that are already doing the job, but also have the very hard-to-reach, unserved and underserved areas where the \$40 billion that will be made available to states for broadband deployment could be the difference between connecting a community or not."

### OCTOBER IS INFRASTRUCTURE BILL MONTH

With the House failing to pass the bipartisan infrastructure bill last week, it has until Oct. 31 to get it done. Senate Majority Leader *Chuck Schumer* told colleagues Monday that the goal is to pass both the infrastructure package and the multi-trillion social spending bill done by the end of the month. He added that extending the nation's debt limit needs to happen by the end of the week vs waiting until the debt ceiling deadline of Oct 18. "It is our responsibility to re-assure the world that the United States meets our obligations in a timely fashion and that the full faith and credit of the United States should never be in question," he wrote in Monday's missive. While **New Street Research** believes Congress will eventually pass the infrastructure bill with its \$65 billion allocation for broadband, the firm said talks with local governments for funding

are well underway. It cited a report that **AT&T** beat out **Charter** in Vanderburgh County, Indiana, for \$9.9 million of support for a fiber build to 21,000 residents (the money is from an earlier Congressional appropriation). "There were four bidders for the project, while a similar, previous project in that area attracted only one bidder. We think ISPs, understanding the money now likely to be available and, as our colleagues have detailed, in combination with the market value of having fiber networks, will be more aggressive in competing for the funds," New Street said in a research note.

### THREE OPERATORS INVEST IN OPENVAULT

**Service Electric Cablevision**, **Service Electric Cable TV & Communications** and **Blue Ridge Communications** have made a "significant" investment in **OpenVault**, a provider of cloud-based software as a service (SaaS). Details weren't disclosed, but OpenVault said the money would fuel its next stage of growth domestically and internationally, most notably in Europe and Latin America.

### NAMIC READY TO START THE SHOW

The 25th Annual **NAMIC Conference** kicks off [virtually](#) Tuesday, and it's all about removing obstacles and magnifying potential opportunities. Grab a drink and join **Cablefax** Tuesday at 6pm for a welcome reception where you can connect with co-workers while celebrating the honorees of the 2021 **Cablefax Diversity List**. And you certainly won't want to miss the opening session Wednesday at 11am ET. NAMIC President/CEO *A. Shuanise Washington*, **Charter** Chief Diversity Officer *Rhonda Crichtlow* and *Errol Louis* and *Ybeth Bruzual* of **Spectrum News** will discuss diversity and the role of journalism in American life. Thursday's Town Hall Meeting on the Power of Corporate Influence and Social Justice at 11am ET will also be a showstopper with panelists including *ViacomCBS's George Cheeks*. The Walter Kaitz Foundation will hold a virtual [celebration](#) and fundraiser Wednesday from 5-6pm. Speakers include **NCTA** chief *Michael Powell* and **Vice Media's Daisy Auger-Dominguez**.

### REDBOX TAPS FREEWHEEL FOR PROGRAMMATIC

**Redbox** teamed up with **FreeWheel** to integrate programmatic advertising technology into Redbox's free streaming platforms. The partnership will allow advertisers, demand side platforms and buyside systems to access Redbox's national and local inventory. Advertisers will also be able to target specific audiences on Redbox's AVOD and FAST platforms.

### CASA IN MEDIACOM'S HOUSE

**Mediacom** selected **Casa Systems'** fixed wireless and packet core solutions to expand high-speed internet into underserved homes and businesses in remote areas. Mediacom will be the first cable company to widely deploy Casa Systems' new hybrid fiber-fixed wireless solution and cloud-based core, which uses CBRS spectrum to bridge the rural digital divide.

### PEOPLE

**Frontier** named *Charlon McIntosh* as Chief Customer Operations Officer, reporting directly to CEO *Nick Jeffery*. McIntosh has spent time at **Charter**, **Time Warner Cable** and **Comcast** and was most recently **Humana's** SVP of group military special service and business operations.