

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Future Forward: Building Networks for the Promises of Tomorrow

It's hard to imagine the last 19 months without **Zoom**. The videoconferencing platform took the world by storm once in-person interactions were replaced by virtual alternatives. At the end of 2019, its daily meeting participant metric came in around 10 million. Once lockdowns and stay-at-home orders were established in March 2020, that number skyrocketed to 300 million.

But Zoom Founder/CEO *Eric Yuan* isn't satisfied with that. His dream: to transform Zoom into a platform company that facilitates virtual interactions that are even better than those people experience in the real world. But it's not there yet.

"In the future, as you deliver a better experience than a face-to-face meeting, after the meeting is over, we can automatically generate a meeting summary, action items, meeting notes, and that's where we are going to live in the future... not to mention with AR integration, you and I will feel like we're sitting together in a local Starbucks," Yuan said during Tuesday's opening general session of **SCTE's** virtual Cable-Tec Expo. "That's why we're excited to keep adding more and more technologies to truly make video communication better."

Now more than ever before, Zoom employees are examining how each new feature they implement can support hybrid work environments. Yuan believes that the future of work for the foreseeable future will have employees splitting their week between an office location and their homes. That will

have massive impacts on the investments companies put into their corporate offices, and ultimately how they allocate space for individual workstations or collaborative ideation locations.

"The future workplace is more like a mentoring or coaching place to facilitate those group activities. I think that's very important, and you really do not need to give every employee a desk anymore because not every employee will go back to the office at the same time," Yuan said.

Education is also a huge area of focus moving forward for Zoom as students continue to learn from home. When Yuan imagines what the journey for students in higher education will look like in the next decade, he doesn't see the typical college move-in days or lecture halls of recent years.

"I think you have students that can come to the classroom. At the same time, you might have students who are willing to join remotely... I think that the future higher ed classroom will be very similar to the workplace," he said. "It will be a hybrid by giving the students flexibility and choice. They can join anywhere."

Powering all of those experiences will be the networks carefully crafted and built out by the cable industry. In his keynote address, **Corning** CEO *Wendell Weeks* applauded all those who are a part of the wider industry, saying each of them are making our lives better every day.

"Our infrastructure is enabling people to express themselves at scale. It's democratizing financial services, widening access to education, empowering creators and entrepreneurs



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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.

to connect directly with new audiences and markets. And, of course, we've kept the world going through the pandemic," he said. "When I reflect on all of these incredible achievements, I'm most proud and humble. And I'm quite sure that I didn't anticipate some of the most exciting innovations enabled by the network today."

It's risky to make a bet today about what will be the groundbreaking technology or innovation that will be shaping the world in 2030 and beyond. While Zoom, for example, was a successful company prior to the start of the pandemic, it has boomed in the less than two years since. No one could have seen that coming. But by investing in our infrastructure, Weeks said, the country and the world is making more than a safe bet on progress.

"New applications will emerge to take advantage of the network capacity that is available. Networks will only become more valuable to human progress," he said. "Specifically, how we get there, what technologies we use to achieve the goal, that is a challenge and open to debate... we want to work together as an entire industry to make the world more connected and make it just a little bit better, and that is what gets us really excited."

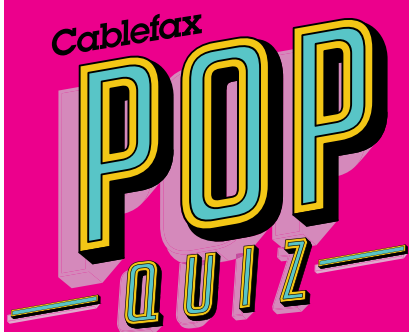
CABLELABS INTRODUCES 10G CHALLENGE

To usher in the next wave of technologies to be powered by 10G networks, **CableLabs** is kicking off what it calls the 10G Challenge. Innovators will submit three-minute videos with an idea for a technology, what problem it solves, why it is dependent on the implementation of 10G and how it fits into one of four categories: Live, Work, Learn, and Play. The final deadline for

submissions is July 1, and CableLabs has set aside more than \$300,000 in cash prizes for winning ideas. "It was actually initiated by the CableLabs board of directors wanting to encourage those outside of our industry—partners, co-innovators, collaborators—who are experts in their own area to think about what would you do with a 1 gig network, a five gigabit network, a 10 gigabit network," CableLabs President/CEO *Phil McKinney* said during a panel at **SCTE's** Cable-Tec Expo. Entries to the 10G Challenge will be judged by a number of outside partners including the **Mayo Clinic**, **Corning** and **Zoom**.

THE RISK WITH BROADBAND FUNDING

Looking specifically at the \$65 billion allocated for broadband as part of the infrastructure bill currently being debated in the House, **NCTA** President/CEO *Michael Powell* said during an Expo panel Tuesday that there is tremendous risk that some of that funding will be given to new entities or government bodies that have no idea how complicated it is to build out a network capable of reliably serving a community. "There's a kind of false narrative that somehow gets into the market that it's just a wire and you put that stuff in the ground and voila, you got broadband. There's a lot of people who really don't know what they're doing, whether it's a municipal government or some new fiber company that founded itself a year ago and is going to solve this problem," he said. "When you look at the money, I guarantee you there's going to be a lot of very inexperienced initiatives that show up looking for that money, and they'll get some of it and they won't deliver." He added that some of Congressional expectations around timing are "absurd," with some parts of the bill insinuating



One winner will be selected each week for a Starbucks gift card

What is the name of the fictional planet featured in "Mork & Mindy?"

[CLICK HERE TO ANSWER](#)

Last week's answer: **Vanilla Ice hosted a house flipping series on HGTV.**

Kudos to last week's winner: Paul Schneider, PSPR

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that the federal government almost expects the digital divide to be closed within three years. "That's not likely for a lot of complex reasons that we'll have to help people understand, all the while proving that we're trying."

SPECTRUM MOBILE INTRODUCES LOWER PRICING

Spectrum Mobile dropped its lowest pricing for Unlimited lines yet Monday. The wireless provider will now offer lines starting at \$29.99/month per line for customers with at least two Spectrum Mobile Unlimited lines. Unlimited plans continue to start at \$45/month for customers with one line. Existing Spectrum Mobile customers are eligible for the new pricing on any new Unlimited lines added to their account. Customers can also qualify for the new pricing if they combine a mix of By the Gig and Unlimited lines.

MORE EMERGENCY CONNECTIVITY DOLLARS

The **FCC** said it's committing \$1,159,681,350.34 for 2,471 schools, 205 libraries, and 26 consortia that applied for support from the \$7.17 billion Emergency Connectivity Fund Program. Nearly \$2.4 billion has been committed to date, with nearly 60% of applications processed—exceeding the FCC's goal of responding to 50% of all applications within 60 days of the closing of the first filing window.

ALTICE OFFERS FLEXABILITY

Altice USA rolled out "Optimum FlexAbility" to **Suddenlink** and **Optimum** customers, allowing them to pick and choose the internet speed, TV package, or mobile data plan they want. Customers can select internet plans of 1 Gig, 500Mbps, 300Mbps, or 100Mbps, with the ability to upgrade or downgrade at any time without penalty. The video options range from Broadcast Basic to packages full of channels. Customers can select "Stream" to receive 50 free, live channels (including **Cheddar**, **Xumo Free Movies**, **America's Test Kitchen**) as well as access to popular streaming apps, such as **Netflix**. Customers can select data options, including 1 GB, 3 GB, and Unlimited GB plans, with the ability to upgrade, downgrade, or switch plans at any time.

PLUME GETS \$300M IN FUNDING

Plume announced a \$300 million Series F funding round from SoftBank Vision Fund 2. The SaaS company said its valuation is now at \$2.6 billion, with \$697 million raised to date. Plume said the investment will continue to drive research and development, sales and marketing, new partnerships and acquisitions as the company looks toward growth and global expansion. More than 240 cable MSOs, telecommunications companies and fixed wireless access operators worldwide use Plume.

CARRIAGE

G4, a cable network dedicated to gaming and fandoms, is officially returning to linear lineups on Nov. 16. Upon relaunch, the network will be available on **Verizon Fios**, **Cox** and **Xfinity**. It will also be available to stream on **Philo**. Additional distribution will be announced closer to the linear launch. The network will collaborate with **Twitch** on a multi-year promotional and commercial partnership through G4's official Twitch channel. It will continue to create channel-specific content across its social media platforms and **YouTube**. – Sports-focused vMVPD

fuboTV will launch **AT&T SportsNet Rocky Mountain** in the coming days. It'll initially launch in Nevada and Utah areas, with additional markets to roll out in the future. The RSN carries Utah Jazz, Vegas Golden Knights and Colorado Rockies games.

RATINGS

ESPN saw 11.4 million for MNF's Colts-Ravens game. That's up from last season's Week 5 Chargers-Saints matchup, which drew 11.2 million viewers. The Colts-Ravens audience is ESPN's second-best Week 5 viewership in the past six seasons, and MNF is up 20% season-to-date from 2020 and 2019.

COMCAST TAKES AIM AT ROBOCALLS

Comcast added Spam Blocker to Xfinity Voice to help customers combat unwanted spam, spoofing and robocalls. This follows Comcast's rollout last March of Verified Caller ID, which was the nation's largest landline voice implementation of the STIR/SHAKEN-based technology. Spam Blocker categorizes calls as low, medium, and high risk and by default blocks high risk calls, sends medium risk calls to voicemail and allows low risk calls to come through.

DISCOVERY SINGS O CANADA

Discovery+ will launch in Canada on Oct. 19. It will be available starting at Can\$4.99 per month, with an ad-free version available for Can\$6.99 per month. Each account will include up to five user profiles and four concurrent streams, among the most offered in the streaming video category. Platforms available at launch include Amazon Fire TV, iOS and Google devices.

COMSCORE NAILS YOUTUBE MEASUREMENT

Comscore announced it is the first measurement provider to deliver deduplicated audience measurement across **YouTube** and **YouTube TV** on all devices. That also includes co-viewers of Connected TV screens. The announcement is part of the measurement firm's partnership with **Google**, which was announced in August.

LIVERAMP DOUBLES DOWN ON DATA

Data Connectivity platform **LiveRamp** added streaming inventory forecasting and enhanced collaboration capabilities to its TV platform. Media sellers and advertisers will now be able to use the LiveRamp TV platform to activate, collaborate on and quantify media campaigns across linear, streaming and digital video inventory. The platform's partners include **DISH Media**, **Univision** and **Philo**.

PROGRAMMING

FX ordered new comedy series "The Bear," about a young chef who returns to Chicago to run the family restaurant. The half-hour series from FX Productions will debut next year. – **Newsmax** has opened a Middle East Bureau with veteran news anchor **Daniel Cohen** ("Good Day L.A.") based in Tel Aviv.

ON THE CIRCUIT

A+E Networks Chairman Emeritus **Abbe Raven** was named to the 25-member Smithsonian Institute's Advisory Council of a forthcoming Women's History Museum. Raven, who served as A+E's President & CEO from 2005-2015, will help advise on the location, planning, design and construction of the museum. Other council members include actress **Lynda Carter**, tennis legend **Billie Jean King** and **National Geographic Society** chairman **Jean Case**.

BACK IN ATLANTA

Stronger Together: Cable TV Pioneers Reunite for a Celebration of Perseverance and Strength

By Sara Winegardner

It has been 55 years since the Cable Pioneers were formed during an NCTA convention in Miami, and the group now counts more than 700 among its storied ranks. Those that are welcomed into the Cable Pioneers' ranks are part of a club full of trailblazers, innovators and, for lack of a better word, pioneers.

It's because of that bond that connects all Cable Pioneers that the organization decided to push forward with its plans for an in-person Annual Banquet rather than a virtual fête like the one it threw in 2020. And it's also what kept the group committed to the event when SCTE's Cable-Tec Expo decided to transition from a hybrid show based in Atlanta to a completely virtual affair.

"We lost Ted Hartson, a great engineer and pioneer, and a lot of people were saying look, I don't know how many years I've got left. Yes, I don't want to shorten it by doing something stupid, but I really miss the camaraderie and the colleagues and the club portion of what the Pioneers are," said Dave Fellows, the chair of the Pioneers. "It just made sense to have this gathering, to space people out, follow protocols and guidelines, but to have an in-person meeting."

Monday night's celebration at the Ritz-Carlton in Atlanta saw a crowd of nearly 300 welcome 24 new Pioneers. The evening began with the reading of a letter from Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp. "Cable TV is one of the defining industries of our time, launching innumerable careers while informing and entertaining countless individuals across America and the world. To be where you sit tonight, you each worked hard to rise to the top of your field," he wrote.

In years past, inductees and their sponsors gave remarks. To keep the program moving, the group changed it up with each honoree submitting various personal photos along with a video featuring 30 seconds of remarks. The biggest laugh of the night came for longtime MotorTrend President Bob Scanlon, who used his video to suggest more programmers should be invited into the Pioneers. "As a content guy, we too have a lot to offer in addition to the myriad of engineers and technicians who are already members. In fact, I have a 30-second clock in my head developed over the years, so I know exactly when to..." Before he could finish, his video cut to a TV test pattern with the words "out of tape."

Cablefax Editorial Director Amy Maclean was among this year's honorees. After years of covering the dinner, she said it was surreal to be in the inductee seat. "I have had so many fun, amazing experiences covering this industry. This is kind of



Cable Pioneers chair Dave Fellows (R) and incoming chair Yvette Kanouff (L) served as hosts of this year's Annual Banquet

like hearing the rock concert, and then the band inviting you backstage," she said. Fellow inductee Wonya Luca, CEO of Crown Media Family Networks, wowed the crowd when she revealed she represents the second generation of cable within her family. "My final thank you goes to the first generation, my mother, Rubye Lucas, who was the VP of Community Affairs and a board member at Turner Broadcasting."

As for what safety precautions the organization took, the first was to shorten the length of the program overall. There was a cocktail party for guests to attend at 6pm ET Monday ahead of the night's festivities, but the dinner and ceremony together clocked in under the two-hour mark. Beginning at 7:15pm ET, various dinner courses were served at dedicated times within the program, and certain courses of the dinner were pre-plated to minimize the number of high-touch surfaces.

The number of folks attending the banquet at the Ritz Carlton Atlanta was also reduced from previous years, and tables were spaced out to encourage social distancing. And for those that didn't feel comfortable making the trip to Atlanta, the Pioneers live streamed the event on its website and on its YouTube channel. An encore of the presentation is available now on CableTVPioneers.com.

This year's annual banquet was the first time that many in the industry were able to come together after more than a year-and-a-half of isolation and unprecedented disruption. During that time, they had to be more flexible than ever before while pushing themselves to provide faster, stronger broadband service to more people than ever before. That is the true spirit of pioneering.

"The world would not have survived this without broadband, without the ability to work," Fellows said. "We in cable always thought highly of ourselves, but the world now realizes that cable is indispensable."

CABLE TV PIONEERS CLASS OF 2021



Mark Adams
Cox Communications



Michael Adams
Broadband Semantics



Richard Amell
Bright House Networks



Peter Barton
(Posthumous)



Pat Baughman
Cable One
(Sparklight)



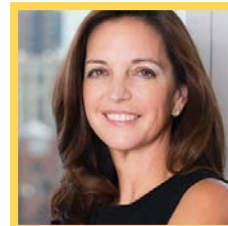
Tracy Baumgartner
Comcast/NBC
Universal



Jack Capparell
Service Electric



Sherita Ceasar
Comcast



Kristin Dolan
605



Dale Elifrits
Comcast



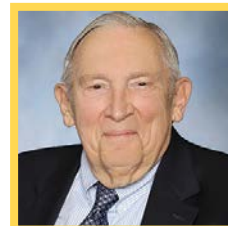
Diego M. Gastaldi
Vmware, Inc.



John Higginbotham
ACA Connects



Jim Holanda
Astound Broadband



Richard (Dick) Kirsche
Kirsche Consulting



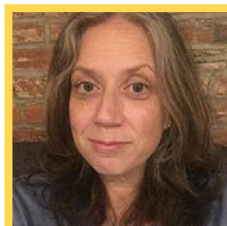
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Wonya Lucas
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Amy Maclean
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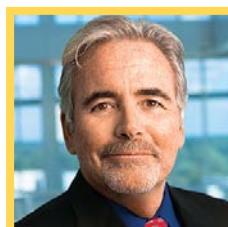
Jim McCauley
dB Communications



Tom McMillin
Nevis Advisors



John E. Roos
INSP



Robert (Bob) Scanlon
Shelter Cove, LLC



Patricia (Patsy) Smullin
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