

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Change Up: New ACAC Chief Spellmeyer Ready to Hit the Field

When *Grant Spellmeyer* was announced as the new President and CEO of **ACA Connects** in May, there was the usual flood of well wishes. But there also was an undercurrent of folks wondering how he would follow in the footsteps of *Matt Polka*, the association's much beloved CEO and the only person to hold that title since the group to assist small and medium operators was created in 1993. Spellmeyer is very cognizant of the respect Polka has and has spent these first few weeks on the job trying to soak up everything he can from his predecessor.

"This is a little bit akin to going in and replacing a legendary football coach in a time of transition. I do believe I'm ready. I've known Matt. We've shared lobbying firms for a long time—*Rhod Shaw* at **The Alpine Group**. I've had an opportunity to sit with Matt at countless fundraisers and other industry events over the last 15 years. I've listened to the issues that have been important to him over time and watched his approach," Spellmeyer told **CFX**. "From the policy side, I feel pretty good about where we're at. I have to grow as a trade association executive. I do kind of get up every day with a little bit of 'how would Matt approach this?' I don't intend to be a carbon copy of Matt, but he's had a lot of success and a lot of it comes from a good honest reputation. I intend to emulate that."

Having traveled around with Polka these last few weeks—traipsing through airports, navigating unfamiliar roads in rental cars while visiting Pittsburgh, Kansas City and Nash-

ville—Spellmeyer joked that he's even found himself starting to get frustrated in traffic and rather than explode, ask, "what would Matt do?"

When it comes to ACAC members' needs, the board feels pretty good about what Spellmeyer would do, deciding on the former **U.S. Cellular Corp.** VP of Government Affairs as its next captain after an extended search. Board chair *Patricia Jo Boyers*, Co-founder and President of **Boycorn Vision**, was looking for a thought leader who embraces servant leadership. Spellmeyer fit the bill. And he's used to fighting for the little guys.

"I have built my reputation in Washington over the last 16 years as being a respected bipartisan person who comes to the table with facts and data and is used to being, let's say, under resourced as opposed to the giants of industry," he said. He's similarly seen ACAC punch above its weight over the years with an effective staff armed with data driven analysis. "The work [ACAC] did with **Cartesian** during the Infrastructure legislation to size the potential need for broadband—I think if you talk to some policymakers, they'll tell you it was pretty important at key times to sizing the \$42 billion that was sent to **NTIA**," Spellmeyer said.

While he's more familiar with 5G than 10G, his wireless years have given him plenty of experience in areas of import to ACAC—competition policy, rural vs urban, mapping, universal services, privacy, network resilience. And the board expects him to keep up Polka's winning tradition. "The association is very highly regarded amongst many of the key policymakers



READ THE DIGITAL ISSUE

Check out the magazine to learn how you could have scored gas for 34 cents a gallon courtesy of ABC's "The Wonder Years," along with what Pluto TV did to help independent movie theaters devastated by pandemic lockdowns, how Spectrum Enterprise encouraged its clients to "Be Unreasonable" and so much more.

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in Congress and at the FCC, and I hope to continue to deliver victories for the association as the need arises,” said Spellmeyer. He knows broadband and BEAD funding will dominate the next year or three in Washington. ACAC will educate its members on state funding, deadlines, as well as keeping them up-to-date on accurate broadband mapping efforts.

“[The board has] asked me to go out and learn the issues that I don’t understand and to continue to advance our messaging on things like retransmission consent. They’ve asked me to be visible in the industry and in Washington, and I intend to do that,” said Spellmeyer. “And they’ve asked me to prepare the association for whatever the future is going to bring. We don’t know what that is, but I certainly have not been hired to come in here and fix a broken association or stand up a new one or transform it into something different than it is. It is very much business as usual, with an eye toward how we see things potentially changing over the years.”

Many members will get their first chance to meet Spellmeyer at ACAC and **NCTC’s Independent Show** in Orlando later this month. “I’m really excited about it and a little nervous. I’m not used to being up on the main stage as much,” he confided. He’s also not used to being as active on **Twitter** as his predecessor, but he’s dived right in. “I have long spent a couple hours a day on Twitter reading it. It’s a tool that I have used for a long time to get my news. What’s new is actually putting out tweets, so I’m learning from the master,” he said. “I don’t have a tremendous amount of followers like Matt does, but we’re going to work on building that over time.”

Give him a follow at [@GrantatACA](https://twitter.com/GrantatACA).

SOHN SUPPORTERS STILL VOCAL

Gigi Sohn’s supporters are standing up once again for the **FCC** nominee, pushing Majority Leader *Chuck Schumer* (D-NY) to finally call a vote. In an [op-ed](#) for *New York Daily News* published Sunday, former FCC commissioner *Gloria Tristani* and **Free Press Action** co-CEO *Jessica González* said it is way past time for Senate Democrats to vote on her confirmation. It has been more than 500 days since Sohn was nominated to the Commission’s fifth seat, and while the pair understand that a successful vote would be 51-50 with Vice President *Kamala Harris* breaking the tie, the Democratic Party still holds control of the chamber. “The absence of a fully functional FCC is a profound liability for the party at a time of multiple crises, when people rely on an internet connection to learn about job opportunities, seek vital healthcare and engage in civil affairs. If Sen. Schumer doesn’t call a vote now, Sohn may never get confirmed,” the op-ed said. “That would not just be a loss for the tens of millions of people whose lives Sohn would improve as an FCC commissioner. It would be an unforgivable failure for a Democratic Party that can’t seem to get out of its own way to serve the public.”

GOOGLE, DOJ IN TALKS SURROUNDING AD BIZ

Google may soon look like a very different company. It’s been in active talks with the **DOJ** about concessions it could make to avoid facing an antitrust lawsuit for the size and activities of its advertising tech business, according to a [WSJ report](#). Should that come to be, the lawsuit would allege that Google uses that business and its power in the marketplace to direct business back to itself rather than distributing it equally across itself and its rivals. Google has put a number of offers on the table, includ-

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ing one that would see it place the advertising business that puts ads on websites into a separate entity owned by **Alphabet**.

FCC REVEALS QUALIFIERS FOR 2.5 GHZ AUCTION

The **FCC**'s Wireless Telecommunications Bureau revealed the 82 applicants that have been deemed qualified to bid for approximately 8,000 flexible-use geographic overlay licenses in the 2.5 GHz band. The county-based licenses will support 5G wireless services. Among the qualified applicants are **AT&T**, **Verizon** and **T-Mobile**. Some 11 applicants failed to qualify including **Big River Broadband**, **KGI Communications**, **Pine Belt Cellular** and **WISP Spectrum LLC**. The auction is scheduled to begin on July 29, but bidders will be able to access the bidding system from July 22-25. They'll also be able to participate in one of two mock auction dates on July 26-27.

UEFA OPENS U.S. RIGHTS FIGHT

European soccer's governing body **UEFA** is preparing to receive pitches for the U.S. rights of its competitions, including the UEFA Champions League. UEFA submitted a tender offer to major media companies for a broadcast and streaming rights deal that would begin in 2024. Bloomberg [reports](#) the federation is eyeing a six-year deal that could surpass \$2 billion, which would double **Paramount** and **Univision**'s current deal. The bidding process is being handled by Relevant Sports Group, and the deadline for bids is set for August 15. UEFA, RSG and European Club Association representatives have reportedly met with Paramount, Univision, **Amazon**, **Apple**, **DAZN**, **Disney/ESPN**, **Fox**, **NBCU**, **Peacock** and **Warner Bros. Discovery**. Pitches from media companies will include how matches are distributed—including the number of matches broadcast on linear or streaming—and marketing tactics.

PLUTO MAKES CHANNEL CHANGES

Free TV service **Pluto TV** added categories, channels and programming to its redesigned U.S. channel lineup built for easier navigation. Viewers now have access to 18 categories such as entertainment, crime, reality, home, gaming and anime. The two new channels are "Let's Make a Deal," a new channel featuring an updated version of the classic game show, and "The Judge Judy Channel." Details for the upcoming "Wheel of Fortune" and "Jeopardy" channels are to come.

MEDIACOM EXPANSION UPDATES

Mediacom is partnering with Lakewood Township and St. Louis County in Minnesota to build a 60-mile fiber-optic network that will give broadband service to over 1,200 homes and businesses. The project will cost around \$3.7 million, with St. Louis County contributing \$345,000 through Broadband Grant dollars and Lakewood providing \$50,000. Mediacom will pay the remaining \$3.3 million from its own private capital. Additionally, the provider completed the expansion of its network in Edgewood, Illinois. Nearly 250 homes and businesses can get download speeds of up to 1 Gbps. Residents can attend an open house and meet Mediacom employees on July 20

from 2pm-7pm at the American Legion Hall.

PRIME DAYS BRINGS DEEP SVOD DISCOUNTS

Amazon Prime Days are almost here, and with them are deals on Prime Video Channels. We spotted **Paramount+**, **Hallmark Movies Now**, **Starz**, **Showtime**, **EPIX**, **BET+**, **AMC+**, **Acorn TV**, **discovery+** and a slew of others available for 99 cents/month for two months. The [deals](#) are available through July 13.

BRAVO CON RETURNS

Three-day tickets for **BravoCon 2022** will be [available](#) Friday at noon. This is the first time the event will take place since 2019 as the 2020 and 2021 iterations were postponed due to COVID-19. The event will feature over 60 live events highlighting the network's franchises such as "Below Deck," "Million Dollar Listing" and "Southern Charm."

CARRIAGE

Magnolia Pictures and **Spotlight Cinema Networks** struck a partnership with **Allen Media Group** to make linear channel **CineLife** available on AVOD Local Now. Local Now offers more than 420 free streaming channels as well as a catalog of more than 14,000 movies and TV shows.

SHARK WEEK RETURNING FOR YEAR 34

Shark Week is returning for its 34th year on **Discovery** starting July 24 at 7pm. *Dwayne Johnson* will be the Master of Ceremonies as the network will broadcast 25 original episodes of unseen shark footage. This year, Shark Week-themed programming and promotion will appear on **Warner Bros. Discovery**'s linear and streaming platforms. "Return to Headstone Hell" will kick the celebration off at 7pm on Discovery, followed by the world premiere of "Great White Battleground" at 8pm, also available to stream on **Discovery+**. Special guests for this year's Shark Week include *Tracy Morgan* and the casts of "Impractical Jokers" and "Jackass."

PROGRAMMING

CNBC greenlit "Money Court" for another season that'll premiere in early 2023. *Kevin O'Leary* will host alongside *Bethenny Frankel*. – **Tennis Channel** and its platforms are the home for the U.S. Open Series for the second year, starting with the Hall of Fame Open in Newport, Rhode Island. The channel will broadcast over 255 total live hours of matches and 240 encore hours. **Tennis Channel Plus** will let viewers select which court they want to focus on, and **Samsung TV Plus** viewers can see every event for free on the recently launched **T2**. The series concludes August 27 in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, for the men and in Cleveland for women. -

PEOPLE

Crown Media Family Networks made a trio of promotions. *Maureen Barrett* is now VP of Talent Relations & Events, *Cynthia Raza* was promoted to Director of Publicity and *Megan Van Tine* was elevated to Director, Corporate Communications. Barrett and Raza will report to Chief Communications Officer *Annie Howell*, and Van Tine will report to VP of Corporate Communications *Allison Bennett*.