

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

In Limbo: AMC Networks' Search for Stability Continues After Spade Loss

AMC Networks is in its transition era, for better or worse, losing new CEO *Christina Spade* after three months on the job. She'll receive \$10 million in severance, in line with the employment agreement she signed in August, and the board is finalizing who it will name as a replacement.

Layoffs across the media landscape have also seemingly created a pool of free agents that have plenty of experience developing and growing streaming products. That list includes former **HBO Max** head *Andy Forssell*, known for launching the streamer's ad-supported tier. Perhaps an even better pick would be *David Nevins*, **Paramount** Premium Group Chair and CEO/Chief Creative Officer, **Paramount+** Scripted Series. He has the experience of working across linear and streaming, recently celebrating successes like "Yellowjackets," and is set to leave his current role at the end of the year. All indicators have him remaining in the entertainment ecosystem.

"Quite simply, over the past several months I've come to the conclusion that I am ready for the next phase of my life and my career," Nevins said in the October staff memo announcing his impending departure. "The industry is transforming rapidly, and I am genuinely excited about what the future holds." Who knows—maybe AMC Networks will mimic the Mouse House and ask Executive Vice Chairman *Josh Sapan* to take a break from his producing work and return for a stint in the CEO seat.

Whoever takes up the mantle will be tasked with trying to re-

create the magic that existed at the programmer when Sapan's leadership team included the likes of COO *Ed Carroll* and Entertainment Group President *Sarah Barnett*. They heralded in the hits that had viewers flocking to the company's linear networks, including "The Walking Dead," "Breaking Bad" and "Killing Eve."

The departure of Spade is also sure to respark rumors of a potential sale, many of which have been brewing since Sapan's decision to step down in August 2021. But the economic downturn could dampen interest or the dollar figures put forth in acquisition negotiations.

Any new leadership will have to work hard to maintain morale across the company with AMC Network Chair *James Dolan* also revealing Tuesday that layoffs are coming that could impact as much as 20% of its U.S. staff. Those cuts were announced in a memo circulated Tuesday shortly after news of Spade's departure broke.

"It was our belief that cord cutting losses would be offset by gains in streaming. This has not been the case," Dolan said. "We are primarily a content company and the mechanisms for the monetization of content are in disarray."

AMC Networks counted 11.1 million paid streaming subscribers at the end of 3Q22, but its pivot away from linear is more dramatic than some may realize. Its portfolio includes at least 14 FAST channels including Stories by AMC, AMC Thrillers, The Walking Dead Universe, Portlandia, AMC en Español and IFC Film Picks. The channels are being carried on platforms like **Pluto TV**, **Sling TV**, **Roku** and **Comcast's Xumo**.

"These channels are drawing a very fast-growing, younger new



Cablefax
MOST POWERFUL WOMEN
Celebration Luncheon

Thursday, December 8 | 11am - 2pm
 Edison Ballroom, NYC

Join us as we salute the women who have made their mark on the industry with their leadership and innovation.

Register Your Team at
www.CablefaxWomen.com



The WICT Network

Empowering Women
in Media, Entertainment and Technology

THE WICT NETWORK GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES OUR

2022 TOUCHSTONE PARTNERS

*Your support makes a critical difference to women
in media, entertainment and technology.*

STRATEGIC PARTNERS



INSPIRE PARTNERS



INDUSTRY PARTNER



MEDIA PARTNERS



INDUSTRY SPONSOR



Interested in becoming a sponsor?
Visit WICT.ORG for more information.



audience or viewers to our content,” AMC Networks COO *Kim Kelleher* said on the programmer’s 3Q22 earnings call earlier this month. “Our programming strategies continue to drive the different verticals that we see, and we see a lot of opportunity for growth. We have other genres and segments that we have yet to launch in, and we see this continuing to be a big opportunity.”

MCEACHIN MOURNED IN WASHINGTON

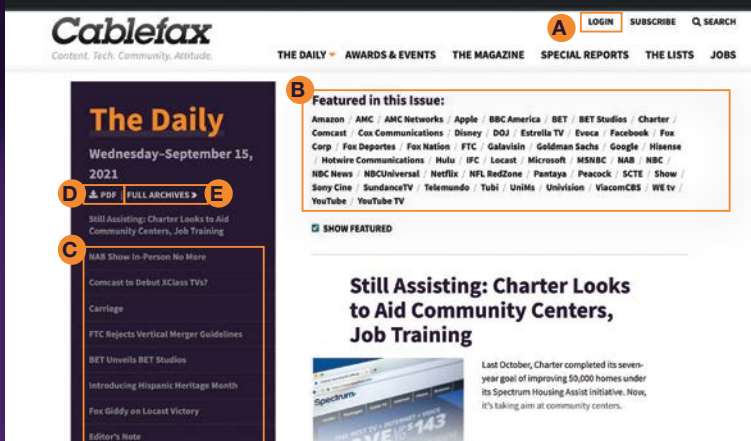
Lawmakers and Capitol Hill mainstays mourned the loss of Rep. *Donald McEachin* (D-VA) Tuesday. The Democrat passed away at the age of 61 Monday evening after a years-long battle with colorectal cancer. McEachin was re-elected to Congress earlier this month, beating out Republican challenger *Leon Benjamin* with 64.4% of the vote. That seat will now be empty at the start of the new Congress and remain so until a special election is conducted to determine a new representative for Virginia’s 4th Congressional District. He served on **House Commerce** with Chair *Frank Pallone* (D-NJ), who said McEachin’s voice on issues ranging from the climate crisis to broadband availability will be “greatly missed.” Long known as an advocate for closing the digital divide in Virginia, McEachin’s allies extended into the lobbying and public interest spheres. **Public Knowledge** President/CEO *Chris Lewis* called him “smart, personable and relationship-focused” in a statement, adding his advocacy for quality broadband made him an important champion for Virginians and consumers as a whole, particularly those that are located in rural areas. **NCTA** President/CEO *Michael Powell* concurred, saying he will be remembered as a “steadfast and dedicated” advocate for residents of central and southeastern Virginia. McEachin’s passing doesn’t change the amount of votes required for House Minority Leader *Kevin*

McCarthy to become Speaker. The new Congress will start with 434 members, and an outright majority, or 218 Republican seats, is needed for him to take the seat.

RETRANS PAIN IN THE RUMP

Here’s the thing about retransmission consent spats. They’re kind of like hemorrhoids. Once they flare up, they often come back again. So is the case with **DISH** and **Cox Media Group**, with the satellite provider losing various ABC, FOX, CBS and NBC stations Monday evening in nine markets, including Atlanta, Pittsburgh and Seattle. DISH lost the same Cox Media stations during a retrans dispute in July 2020 after a temporary restraining order was dissolved that enjoined **Apollo Global Management** from interfering with DISH’s right to transmit the stations (this was a complicated one with Apollo acquiring the Cox stations in late 2019). With history tending to repeat itself, it’s worth looking back at what deals didn’t get done in late 2018 since retrans pacts are usually a few years in length. Case in point, **DirectTV** is facing the potential loss of **Fox**-owned broadcast stations on Friday. It signed a deal with Fox in late 2018. Stepping back in time, **Charter** lost 33 **Tribune** stations in 24 markets for 9 days at the beginning of 2019 (**Nexstar** now owns those stations). **Verizon Fios** lost **TEGNA** stations for a couple days (**Standard General** is trying to close the acquisition of TEGNA and bat down concerns of Apollo’s involvement). Verizon averted a blackout at the last minute with **Disney/ESPN**. **TDS** lost **Nexstar** stations at the start of the year—with the month-long blackout marking the operator had gone down with a major affiliate station group. We’re not saying any of these are destined for blackouts, but keep an eye out.

Guide to Your Online Cablefax Daily Issues



- A** Subscriber Login: Gain access to every Cablefax Daily story PLUS the archives
- B** Every issue includes a list of companies featured. Easily navigate to the stories by clicking on the company name.
- C** The issue headlines are featured on the left nav bar.
- D** Access the pdf version quickly from the website.
- E** Missed an issue or doing some research? Search Cablefax Daily archives

Subscriptions Available for Groups and Corporate Site Licenses.
 Contact Ellen Kamhi at ekamhi@accessintel.com or www.cablefax.com/subscribe

Cablefax Daily (ISSN 1069-6644) is published daily by Access Intelligence, LLC | www.cablefax.com | 301.354.2101 | Editorial Director: Amy Maclean, 301.354.1760, amaclean@accessintel.com | VP/Group Publisher, Cablefax and Synopsis: Robbie Caploe, 917.974.0640, rcaploe@accessintel.com | Managing Editor: Sara Winegardner, 301.354.1701, swinegardner@accessintel.com | Associate Editor: Noah Ziegler, 301.354.1704, nziegler@accessintel.com | Director of Business Development, Cablefax: Ellen Kamhi, 917.626.5574, ekamhi@accessintel.com | Dir of Marketing: Kate Schaeffer, kschaeffer@accessintel.com | Production Manager: Joann Fato, jfato@accessintel.com | Kerry Smith, Divisional President, Marketing & Media Group, ksmith@accessintel.com | Group Subs/Subscription Questions, Client Services: 301.354.2101, clientservices@accessintel.com | Annual subscription price: \$1,799.00/year | Access Intelligence, LLC, 9211 Corporate Blvd., 4th Floor, Rockville, MD 20850

PENNSYLVANIA DEBUTS BROADBAND PLAN

At least 250,000 locations in Pennsylvania lack access to 25/3 Mbps, according to a broadband plan released by Governor *Tom Wolf* Monday. Another 140,000 locations do not have access to speeds of 100/20 Mbps. The plan laid out four pain points that are preventing the closure of the Commonwealth's digital divide: broadband service infrastructure and availability, device and technology access, digital equity and affordability and digital literacy and technical support. Prior to the creation of the FCC's Emergency Broadband Benefit Program and the Affordable Connectivity Program, approximately 527,500 households (9.7%) did not have access to a wired low-cost home high-speed broadband subscription. Pennsylvania's Broadband Authority described the ACP as still undersubscribed, noting more can be done to increase enrollment and drop barriers to participation. An estimated 1.6 million households (31.2%) lack a computer or smartphone, and as many as 1.2 million adults (14.6%) may lack the digital skills and literacy needed to take advantage of services even after they become available. Pennsylvania's Broadband Authority is aiming to align its mapping efforts with the FCC's maps moving forward, and said the Commonwealth must conduct a gap analysis to identify unserved/underserved populations, facilitate a review of permitting issues and other reported challenges to broadband buildouts and collect and disseminate data on current service options and rates, among other first steps, to create real change.

WOW! READY FOR ECONOMIC STORM

In years past, **WOW!** has endured economic struggles that came with the company's operations. It's now in the midst of its "shrink before growth" plan, and while it faces obstacles as the country braces for a potential recession and economic downturn, it isn't drastically changing its plans. CFO *John Rego* said at an investor conference Tuesday that the company's greenfield markets are a cornerstone in its growth plan. "We're the overbuilder, the challenger brand, so we're usually number two number three into a market. We tend to do best in markets where there's a single one-gate provider and perhaps a DSL provider," Rego said. "Our penetration across the entire network is about 28% on average, but there are markets when we're 50% penetrated markets were 40% penetrated. So we try to replicate those." WOW! also had the luck of being well prepared for its buildouts before supply chain and inflationary issues grew. The company has two warehouses filled with materials that Rego said would "take us through a year." While it still has to manage enlarged shipping times, WOW! got its orders in well in advance. Other areas of opportunity during these tumultuous times are WOW!'s commercial business and edge outs. About 19% of the company's revenue is from small- or medium-sized enterprises.

VIDGO GETS A MAKEOVER

The sports and entertainment streamer **Vidgo** pulled the curtains on its new look, logo and content Tuesday. The company's new tagline "Freedom to be Entertained" coincides with its fresh red, white and blue logo as Vidgo claims it offers one of the most diverse channel lineups. As for the platform itself, the recently updated UI features tile navigation that's consistent across different devices

and an improved search feature that lets users filter live and on-demand content by genre, title, popularity, language and more. The rebrand comes after the vMVPD partnered with **Cinedigm** in Sept. to distribute the FAST platform **Cineverse**. Vidgo's plans begin with the English Plus Package at \$59.95/month, with other options including the English Premium Package at \$79.95/month and an English & Spanish package at \$99.95/month.

GRAY, DISNEY RENEW ABC AGREEMENT

Gray Television and **Disney** agreed to extend the network affiliations for all of Gray's **ABC** stations in 25 markets. No financial terms were disclosed, but the deal will run through Dec. 31, 2024.

CARRIAGE

AXS TV-owner **Anthem Sports & Entertainment** is partnering with **DAZN** to bring **IMPACT Wrestling** to the service. Starting today, DAZN viewers can access the flagship series "IMPACT!" as well as PPV events and **IMPACT Plus** specials. DAZN can be found on smart TVs, video game consoles, Amazon Fire TV and Apple TV. – **FuboTV's Fubo Sports Network** is now available on **Amazon's Freevee**. The agreement means the channel is available on more than 155 million devices across different platforms. Programs on the channel include "Airing It Out with Housh and Scandrick" and "The Young Person Basketball Podcast with R.J. Hampton."

FIBER FRENZY

Bluepeak struck a franchise deal with the city of Yukon, Oklahoma, to build its fiber network to over 10,000 residences and businesses. Bluepeak already has service available in other areas of the state and expects the Yukon project to cost roughly \$10 million. Once complete, customers can get 1 Gbps for \$50/month or speeds up to 5 Gbps, with businesses eligible for up to 10 Gbps.

AWARDS

ViX was recognized as **Apple TV's** App of the Year. Launched March 31, the app comes with more than 50,000 hours of free and paid content and over 6,000 hours of live soccer. This was helped by the platform securing rights to stream the 2022 FIFA World Cup to viewers based in Mexico. ViX is available in the U.S., Mexico and most of Spanish-speaking Latin America.

PEOPLE

Former **Comcast** exec *Shane Portfolio* is joining **Charter** as SVP, Network Engineering & Technology. He'll manage the architecture and engineering for Charter's core access network infrastructure. Charter also promoted *Gary Koerper* to SVP, Emerging Technology, and *Mike Baldino* to SVP, Data Platforms. Koerper will be responsible for researching and assessing next-gen technologies, while Baldino will oversee a team responsible for creating and operationalizing access to data sets within the company's product and technology sector. – *David Preisman* is joining CTV gaming and video platform **Play.Works** as SVP, Distribution and Product. Preisman previously spent over 20 years at **Showtime** crafting advanced video products, helping him earn three Emmy Awards for his work. In his new role, he'll be tasked with running Play.Works' U.S. operations and expanding its AVOD and FAST products. Play.Works has distribution agreements with **Comcast, Roku, LG, Vizio, Cox** and more.