

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Call to Action: CEOs Urge Programmers, Operators to Team Up for Video

The message from a CEO panel at Diversity Week is that video is not dead—but there's work that needs to be done.

"I think we have, as the cable industry with our programming partners, a long history of partnership that might have been strained in recent years. I think it's up to all of us to pioneer a way forward and think and reinvent how we go to market together. Because right now, I don't believe we're serving our video customers, our joint video customers, particularly well," Cox President *Mark Greatrex* said at a **WICT Network Leadership Conference** session Tuesday. "I think we could do better. We can give them more affordable options. We could give them more flexibility, and we have a compelling interface. And I think with generative AI, you can think about personalized recommendations."

AMC Networks' mantra has been that it's about programming, profitability and partnerships, with CEO **Kristin Dolan** declaring that partnerships are really the biggest piece. "I was a cable operator long enough to know that AMC, while a very important programming company, is too small to really spend time and effort on massive customer service architecture, on processing credit cards, on answering the phone," said Dolan, who was previously COO of **Cablevision**. "These are things that the traditional operators and the new players are very capable of doing. So, there's opportunity for them to present our content to a customer at a very reasonable price point."

Charter rocked the boat last year when it lost **Disney** networks as the two negotiated a new deal that ended up adding streaming services to the traditional video bundle. It's struck similar pacts with **Paramount**, **NBCUniversal** and others. "You were having to take so many rate increases that customers didn't feel like they were getting value, then video was becoming a liability to the broadband business. That was a problem, so we needed to make sure that we could solve it for value and utility," Charter CEO *Chris Winfrey* said. The solution has been working with programmers to include DTCs and launching the Xumo Stream Box, a 4K streaming device that integrates streaming and live TV. But Winfrey said the other piece is having conversations with programming partners to help them understand that DTC is not really a very good business.

"Because you have less money, less revenue and way more operating costs," Winfrey said. "I'm not knocking that business. I'm just saying it's nowhere near as good as the traditional distribution business, where you're not having to be the one who takes the rate increase. That's always been, unfortunately, our job, but you also don't have to do the selling, the subscriber acquisition cost, the billing, all the operating costs associated with that. We are, by far, the most profitable relationship that a programmer is probably ever going to have because it's at wholesale."

AMC Networks' partnership discussions have extended to streamers, with the company doing a deal with Netflix that put 13 original series on the platform in August. But it held



VIEW HONOREES

Congratulations 2024 Diversity & Pride List Honorees!

The Cablefax team is thrilled to announce the honorees for this year's Diversity & Pride List, recognizing the most influential multi-ethnic and LGBTQ+ executives in the industry along with our D&I Champion. New this year, we've interspersed Cablefax's Work Culture Awards to highlight the innovative and attractive work environments alongside the dynamic individuals of our Diversity and Pride Lists. [Visit our site to view the digital issue and read the Q&As from the honorees.](#)

back the most recent seasons for **AMC** and **AMC+**. “If you include other content that was on Netflix, like ‘Breaking Bad,’ some seasons of ‘The Walking Dead,’ they’ve all been put in the AMC branded channel on **Netflix**, and we’re now responsible for 9.5% of the viewership on Netflix,” Dolan said. “Then what we’re seeing now is we just launched Season 2 of ‘The Walking Dead: Daryl Dixon.’ ... We’re seeing all of the viewers that were exposed to it on Netflix are now driving like upwards of 30%-35% incremental purchasing of AMC+ to watch Daryl Dixon Season 2 because they’ve been exposed to it on Netflix.”

Winfrey doesn’t have issues with programmers playing in more than one space. “But I want to make sure everybody understands that if you want a healthy video ecosystem go where the customer goes and make sure that we’re supporting each other in the most profitable piece of the video ecosystem,” he said. “I hope that you’ll start to see some of what we had in the ‘80s and ‘90s... where the programmers and distributors start to really work together and say, ‘how do we sell the product? How do we make this in a way that’s valuable to the customer?’”

Cox recently launched Charter and **Comcast**’s Xumo box, offering customers the ability to purchase the product for a one-time price point alongside their internet service. “If we want a different future for the entertainment and TV industry, we need to create it,” said Greatrex.

Winfrey suggested that cable operators piggyback off some of the great brands in the programming space and the two work together to promote wholesale video distribution. And he also made the case for simplifying the password authentication experience through a Xumo box since it’s behind a cable modem.

“Right now, we face a lot of headwinds as a collective industry. I think [we need to be] grounded and objective about the place we’re actually in right now because I think unless you address the reality, your innovations are going to be off the mark,” said Greatrex. “It’s a call to action for all of us to keep getting great consumer insights into the evolving needs,

both functional and emotional of our customers, and then innovating together to bring value propositions to the market that really enable those needs.”

VERIZON COMMITS TO BROADBAND CUSTOMER EXPANSION

It was a packed day for **Verizon** with not only an earnings announcement, but also an update on its broadband plan that covers fixed wireless and its fiber network. The provider closed 3Q24 with 11.9 million total broadband connections, and that includes nearly 4.2 million fixed wireless subscribers. Verizon has now doubled its fixed wireless goals after hitting its previous milestone 15 months ahead of schedule, expecting to hit 8-9 million FWA subs by 2028. In 2025, the team is also targeting an expansion of its Fios builds up to 650,000 prems annually. “What excites me more than anything, after 20 years of doing this, is our business case on Fios is getting better and better, and that starts with the fact that customers demand high-quality broadband services more now than ever,” EVP, Global Networks and Technology **Joe Russo** said on the call. “What we see is when I do a build today, we see higher and faster penetration rates than we have with prior builds, and we pull through mobility benefits on both churn and ARPU. But I’m also finding new and creative ways to bring down the cost of deploying fiber.” Those cost-cutting measures include partnerships with **Corning** and **CommScope** to reduce the overall amount of fiber that has to be deployed and the removal of legacy equipment from the network. Should Verizon close its acquisition of **Frontier**, it expects to count more than 30 million fiber passings in the combined Verizon/Frontier footprint by 2028. The provider is also planning to commercially launch its advanced mmWave solution for apartment and office buildings to high population areas soon to further grow internet subs.

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TELEvisaUNIVISION TURNS DTC PROFITABILITY IN 3Q24

It was a quarter of change for **TelevisaUnivision**, but it's change that stems from progress. The company announced last month that CEO *Wade Davis* would [transition](#) to Vice Chairman of the board and serve on the board's executive committee and *Daniel Alegre* would fill in as CEO. The two spoke to investors for the first time since the news on the company's 3Q24 earnings call, highlighting optimism for the future as TU hits milestones. This quarter, TU's DTC business achieved profitability after two full years in the marketplace, which helped the company record \$852.4 million in total revenue—up 6% YOY from \$806.3 million. “Achieving this milestone was essentially the final step in completing our multi-year turnaround and transformation phase, and with the wheels in motion, the next big opportunity for value creation is to build on this foundation through further integration and operational optimization of the business,” Davis said. He shed light on what TU wanted in his successor, noting the uniqueness of the role and the importance of speaking Spanish and having experience across the U.S., Latin America and Mexico. Alegre, who joins after being CEO of Web3 company Yuga Labs as well as President/COO of Activision Blizzard, grew up in Mexico City and said his childhood was marked by Televisa content. He discussed his views on getting TU to have its brand more prominent across multiple platforms while also noting opportunities to become more efficient. “We are conducting a thorough review of our investments and operations, identifying areas where we can streamline and optimize resources. As a more integrated multi-platform company, we believe there are considerable efficiencies ... allowing us to enhance profitability while maintaining our competitive edge,” Alegre said. TU's total advertising revenue was \$799.2 million for the quarter thanks mostly to U.S. ad revenue growth rising 5% from record-setting 3Q political ad revenue. Subscription and licensing revenue grew 1% overall to \$477.5 million.

FUBO INTRODUCES STANDALONE SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR RSNS, SVODS

Fubo is offering customers the opportunity to purchase standalone premium subscription plans that are entirely separate from its base channel plan offerings. Individual subscriptions to **FanDuel Sports Network** (formerly **Bally Sports Network**), **NBA League Pass** and **Paramount+ With Showtime** will be the first to be offered, and those networks will continue to be available in Fubo's Pro base plan or as add-on channel packages. Subscribers to the standalone packages will also receive Fubo Free, a collection of nearly 200 FAST channels. Launches of additional standalone premium subscription options, including both SVODs and live linear offerings, will be announced at a future date.

SURVEY SHOWS GAINS FOR PEOPLE OF COLOR, STUMBLE FOR WOMEN

NAMIC and **The WICT Network** released the executive summary for their 2024 AIM/PAR Workforce Diversity Survey, with a key headline being that representation of people of color increased by 5 percentage points from 37% two years ago to 42% now. And 49% of jobs within the surveyed companies were filled by people of color, which is 7 percentage points higher than the national average. “This year was good news in terms of people of color. Conversely, it's not all bad news for women, but this is why we commissioned the survey. We did see a couple of downturns,” said WICT Network CEO *Maria Brennan*. Representation of women in the industry decreased by 1 percentage point from 38% two years ago to 37% today, with the percentage of women across position levels the same as the last survey or slightly lower. However, the percentage of women in board of director positions increased across all industry sectors over the past two years. The largest increase was among programmers (+11 percentage points), followed by suppliers (+8 percentage points) and operators (+2 percentage points). A total of 17 companies participated in the survey, representing 74% of those employed in the industry. During a WICT and NAMIC townhall, industry talent leaders discussed the trends, emphasizing the importance of intentionality, accountability and consistency in DEI efforts. “Women leave for two top reasons—there's either a better opportunity or childcare or some type of care [issue],” said **Comcast Cable** SVP & Chief Diversity Officer *Loren Hudson*. She said the answer is not only to help them navigate that, but to also have a pipeline of women ready to step in. **Warner Bros. Discovery** Global Chief DEI Officer *Asif Sadiq* said a lot of companies have programs in place for development for women and people of color, but added they've also got to fix the environments people work in—a piece he thinks still need a lot more effort. “Diversity is not a problem we're trying to solve. It's an opportunity we're trying to embrace,” he said.

WICT PEARLS OF WISDOM

The Pearls of Wisdom panel—a female-focused TED Talks-like session—is a longstanding tradition at the **WICT Network** Leadership Conference. *Melani Griffith*, **GFiber's** Chief Growth Officer, talked about how she was fired 20 years ago after refusing to make statements that she knew were false. “There are very much things that I wish that I could have done differently. I would have asked more questions. I would probably challenge a bit more. I would have been more confident and stood stronger in the face of authority,” she said. “But I do not for one minute regret refusing to lie. A lot of who you are comes from how you manage in those moments. A lot of who I am today traces back to that moment, that decision, and all the things that I did after that.” **BOYCOM Vision** President and **ACA Connects** Chair *Patty Boyers* implored the audience not to dare to be different, but to dare to be themselves.

"Sometimes you will just be too much woman—too smart, too beautiful, too strong, too much of something that makes a man feel less like a man, which will start making you feel like you have to be less of a woman," said Boyers. "The biggest mistake that you can make is remove a jewel from your crown to make it easier for some man to carry. Now, when this happens, I need you to understand that if you don't hear anything else I say, you do not need a smaller crown. You just need a man with bigger hands."

MEDIACOM RELEASES TOOLS FOR BROADBAND GRANT INFO

Mediacom Communications introduced new online resources designed to inform its subscribers that are located in areas where the operator is expanding using grant dollars from federal, state and local government partners. The tools are designed not only to inform residents about the process of building a broadband network, but also to offer clear updates from Mediacom's construction crews and communications from the company's government partnership team. Customers can use the newly-launched grant project [website](#) to pre-order a high-speed fiber line to be installed from the street to their home for free, and new social media pages on Facebook and Instagram will increase overall engagement with impacted communities.

WANGA PUSHES NAMIC AUDIENCE TO MOVE BEYOND CONVERSATIONS

In front of a packed audience at **NAMIC's** Annual Conference in New York City Tuesday, **EssenceVentures** CEO and founder of **WangaWoman**, *Caroline Wanga*, delivered a powerful keynote address on the evolving landscape of DEI in the workplace. Wanga critiqued current DEI practices, warning against the misconception that courageous conversations alone create a utopia. Instead, she emphasized the need for workplaces to foster a "democratized authenticity environment." "We allow a scenario to exist that makes it seem like when we get to inclusion, and everybody has belonging, it'll be utopia," Wanga said. "It's actually the most misleading narrative about this work that can exist, and the most dangerous... The world that's going to come when we accomplish our goals is the hardest world you've ever lived in. It is not a utopia." Wanga shared her "Guardrails for Inclusion and Empathy," outlining three key strategies for approaching DEI conversations and solutions in the workplace. Drawing on her experience as a DEI leader at Target, she recalled taking CEO *Brian Cornell* to a Black barbershop for a meeting. The visit highlighted the importance of safe spaces for young Black professionals and led to an increase in promotions and retention during a time when the company was losing a significant number of Black male employees. "When he chose to be the one who went into discomfort and do this conversation in the environment that

prioritized the young men that we wanted to better understand how they could be happy here... this led to a discovery that significantly impacted the retention of Black men," Wanga noted. Wanga also addressed the shifting perspectives on mental health and workplace culture, sharing a personal story of emotional distress in the workplace. She highlighted how an unknown colleague gave her the space to process her emotions and move forward, stressing the importance of creating an environment that prioritizes psychological safety as part of a work culture. Wanga concluded her keynote with a strong message, quoting *Mike Tyson* to emphasize the urgency of changing how different industries approach DEI efforts. "For all we do to talk about this... map to create equity in the way that people exist, we are completely underprepared for how we're going to teach people to coexist there," she said. "Everybody has a plan until they get punched in the face."

RATINGS

TBS made a baseball-filled surprise the week of Oct. 14-20 after topping the primetime chart among cable networks. After hosting the five-game **ALCS**, TBS led in prime with 3.28 million viewers P2+. **Fox News** followed with 2.62 million, and **Fox Sports 1** won the battle of the sports nets with 2.52 million compared to **ESPN's** 2.12 million. FS1 was helped by the Dodgers' NLCS-clinching win over the Mets recording 6.8 million viewers across FS1, **Fox Deportes** and Fox Sports streaming services. The 6.27 million who tuned in on FS1 made it the most-viewed game on the network since 2019 during the Astros vs Yankees series. MSNBC rounded out the top five with 1.28 million. Fox News claimed the total-day crown with 1.63 million. MSNBC came second with 881,000 and TBS third with 800,000. ESPN (768,000) and FS1 (593,000) filled out spots No. 4 and 5.

PEOPLE

Sinclair EVP/CFO *Lucy Rutishauser* was selected to the Business Advisory Council of **ATSC**. She'll contribute insights to help connect the business and technology sectors as well as expand the range of ATSC standards across different industries. Rutishauser has been at Sinclair for nearly 27 years.

OBITUARY

Michael Malone, who most recently served as content director at **Broadcasting+Cable** and **Multichannel News**, passed away Saturday in New York at the age of 55 following a lengthy illness. He first joined B+C in 2005 as a deputy editor, rising through the ranks and celebrating nearly two decades with the **Future Media & Entertainment** brands until their shuttering last month. Malone was an active member of the **Television Critics Association** and was also known for his bylines in *The New York Times*, *The LA Times*, *The Boston Globe* and *New York Magazine*.

GUEST COLUMNIST

The Resilience of Traditional TV in a Multi-Screen World



Betsy Rella

By Betsy Rella, VP of Research and Data, New York Interconnect

The narrative around TV viewership often centers on its decline. But the truth is more nuanced. Despite the rise of streaming, people still watch traditional TV for an average of four hours daily. eMarketer expects that to continue well into 2025, with time spent remaining above four hours daily. This isn't just a lingering habit—it's a significant opportunity for marketers.

There's a misconception that no one subscribes to traditional TV anymore while the data tells a different story. On average, according to Nielsen, households in the New York market watch 18 networks monthly, with 92 percent of ad-supported cable viewing done live. This live viewing is critical for advertisers, ensuring their messages are seen in real-time, not skipped.

Thus, marketers focusing solely on streaming miss a large and lucrative segment. In markets like New York, Nielsen estimates 64 percent of households still have traditional TV service, compared to 57 percent nationally. Even when broadband-only households are increasing, most stick with cable, satellite, or telco services, and, more importantly, 44 percent of households in the NY DMA are "cord stackers," meaning they kept their traditional pay TV service while they also use streaming services to watch TV content – thus allowing themselves the best of both worlds.

Consider the time spent. While traditional TV's share of daily viewing time is slowly declining, it's still substantial. In 2024, eMarketer estimates that traditional TV accounts for 43 percent of daily video consumption. Compare that to subscription OTT at 27 percent, social media at 12 percent, and YouTube at 9 percent. Traditional TV remains a key player, given its signature programming and core audience.

Sports play a big role in this. Live sports events are still a major draw, with large numbers tuning in to watch games in real-time. In 2024, Nielsen estimates that the Knicks' Round 2 playoff games averaged 393,000 impressions among the A25-54 demographic in the NY DMA, with peaks reaching 528,000 impressions during crucial moments. This is important for advertisers as live viewing means ads are being seen, not skipped. It's also about the co-viewing experience. People don't watch sports alone; they watch with family and friends, amplifying the reach and impact of ads.

The audience sticking with traditional TV isn't limited to just one group, as older and younger audiences continue

to watch ad-supported TV shows either live or time-shifted. While A18-34 rely on traditional TV for college and professional sports, it's important to note that the A50+ group has the greater purchasing power. They are the ones with the money. They spend on everything from high-end goods to everyday necessities like banking, insurance, and credit cards. These are the people who have the financial power to drive markets. In addition, traditional TV continues to be a core element for political advertising as older people tend to vote in more significant numbers than younger adults. This older audience is vital for candidates looking to get elected or re-elected.

Moreover, traditional TV viewers are not just passive watchers but active spenders. These households in the NY DMA have a higher net worth, with an average of \$775,711, compared to \$635,779 in broadband-only households, according to Scarborough data. They're more likely to own their homes outright and plan to make significant purchases, whether it's a new car or a home renovation. For example, they plan to spend an average of \$34,500 on a new or leased car in the next 12 months, compared to \$25,100 among broadband-only households. They're also active in the economy, spending on dining, travel, and sports betting. The younger, broadband-only audience might get more attention, but the traditional TV audience is just as valuable, if not more so. They're engaged, watching live, and have greater purchasing power. Ignoring them would be a huge mistake.

This brings us to the concept of multi-screen advertising. It's not about choosing between traditional TV and streaming. It's about leveraging both. The hybrid viewing environment we live in today demands a hybrid advertising approach, as advertisers need to reach consumers via both TV and streaming. The median age of viewers might vary between traditional TV and streaming, but the content is often the same. It's just the method of consumption that changes. Traditional TV offers tremendous reach, live tent-pole events, and premium, brand-safe content such as FX's *Shogun*, Paramount's *Yellowstone* series, and USA's pending series *"The Rainmaker"* based on a John Grisham novel.

On the other hand, streaming captures the younger audience as they engage with live and on-demand TV content. Together, they create a comprehensive strategy that ensures you deliver on bottom-funnel objectives.

The challenge in this dynamic, shape-shifting landscape isn't about adapting to a new reality. It's about recognizing that the old one hasn't disappeared and is still extremely valuable for marketers. Traditional TV is still a compelling medium. It's where the money is and where advertisers need to be. As the media landscape shifts, marketers who embrace a multi-screen strategy will be the ultimate winners.