

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Defensive Stance: Streamers

Search to Combat YouTube's Momentum

Throughout the first two days of the **StreamTV Show**, **YouTube** has often been referred to as “the elephant in the room” that folks are a little careful—or hesitant—to address. Day 2’s agenda, however, magnified how much progress YouTube has made in the video space, while detailing how much room it still has to grow within CTV and FAST.

YouTube turns 20 this year, which is on the younger side in the media world. It’s made substantial progress in those two decades, with the platform currently recording 2 billion global logged-in viewers that visit each month, 2 billion hours of content watched each day and more than 92% reach for adults 18-34 in the U.S. Over 500 hours of content is uploaded to YouTube per minute, equating to 20 million videos per day along with 3.5 billion likes and 100 million comments each day.

Media companies have changed their strategies with uploading content to YouTube, just as the platform itself has evolved. It’s gone from a tool for marketing and promotion to a product that companies like **Disney**, **Fox** and **Warner Bros. Discovery** repurpose long-form content on. Soon, YouTube Global Head of TV & Film AVOD Partnerships *Fede Goldenberg* anticipates more companies investing in original content on YouTube.

“The next stage of evolution that we’re starting to see is original content produced by TV companies, by media companies, for YouTube,” he said. “This is creating new IP for YouTube, or spinning off IP for the YouTube audience, thinking

about different formats and thinking and acting like a creator.”

With folks wondering when and how much YouTube will dive into the AVOD space, *Goldenberg* said YouTube already has its own form of FAST. “Fast on YouTube is a live stream that’s just running 24/7,” he said. “We don’t have a FAST product, per se ... If you have a YouTube channel and you have a FAST channel somewhere else, you could just repurpose that same FAST channel on your YouTube channel as a live stream.”

In an earlier keynote, **Wurl** GM of the Americas *Dave Bernarth* likened the current competitive threat level of YouTube to how **Netflix** once was. He used a 2010 quote from former **Time Warner** CEO *Jeff Bewkes*, where *Bewkes* discredited Netflix as a threat to pay TV: “It’s a little bit like, is the Albanian army going to take over the world? I don’t think so.” Safe to say that take hasn’t aged particularly well.

Bernarth doesn’t think the streaming industry is ignoring YouTube’s growth as pay TV once did with streaming. But he does think people aren’t fully grasping the stature as a platform, going as far as indicating YouTube could crush the AVOD market.

“I still don’t think we fully get it,” *Bernarth* said. “I don’t think we’re appreciating the trajectory that YouTube is on and the long-term implications for our business of that trajectory, and depending on where you sit in the ad-supported streaming business, how much more challenging things are going to be for all of us.”

To continue the StreamTV Show theme of analogies, he said YouTube is “kind of a form of a parasite” since it “lives inside these platforms, it derives nutrients from them—audience and monetiza-

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tion—at the expense of the platform.” YouTube disclosed a few months ago that TV became the primary device for viewing content in the U.S. The growth trend is mostly spread evenly across age demographics, but a big driving force is the older groups above 35.

Where Can YouTube Grow From Here?

While YouTube has made more investments in CTV over the past year or so, it still could make an array of improvements to users’ experiences on its app. It’s one of the ways Bernarth sees YouTube potentially growing its muscles. The app itself has functionality with the movies and TV section, “but still operates on an infrastructure built for transaction.” Without a dedicated FAST channel hub, it lacks the premium free TV experience that a **Samsung TV Plus** or **Tubi** provides.

“The scary thing about this is that they’ve really done it, I would argue, without really trying. It’ll be scary the day they actually focus on CTV,” Bernarth said. “I talked to these folks from cable networks, platforms and apps, and perhaps most importantly, for today’s presentation, people at the major studios whose job is to monetize content. All of them agree YouTube could be much bigger on CTV.”

Until YouTube starts paying the big bucks for premium content, Bernarth thinks it’ll remain “second tier” in terms of quality. It might not have big investments in original shows, but it does have the luxury of having live sports rights that coincide with YouTube TV. In September, YouTube will air the Chiefs vs Chargers game for free, which will open the door for monetization opportunities with advertising. Plus, with YouTube plucking *Justin Connolly* from Disney in a legally contentious move, it shows the ambition the company holds to forge its spot in the TV landscape.

How CTV Competitors Can Stand Up

Though YouTube may seem like the boogeyman, there are two main ways CTV competitors can fight back. Bernarth’s first tactic takes some notes from pay TV carriage disputes, suggesting platforms could drop YouTube until it agrees to a new deal that grants them access to inventory or some type of web share.

“We all know the playbook, the operator or the programmer drops a bunch of channels. There’s some bad press, a little bit of churn and angry customers. It’s damaging for a moment, but then a deal gets made, the channels get turned back on and customers move on and forget,” he said. “While those negotiations can be contentious, each side is invested in each other’s success. Not so [much] here, and if I’m YouTube, actually, I make this deal. The television ecosystem works best when everyone in the supply chain has a piece of the action.”

The second, less-confrontational approach, is for platforms to monetize around the YouTube app. That could be allowing certain ads to run from the platform, despite potential impacts to consumer experience.

DIRECTV’S FAST LANE FROM FREE TO PAY TV

If there’s a belief that FAST channels pose as [a potential replacement](#) for cable, **DirecTV** is getting ahead of the game through its **MyFree DirecTV** venture. The MVPD recently crossed the six-month mark since launching the FAST platform, amassing over 110 channels spanning a variety of genres. Though it’s still too early for MyFree DirecTV GM *Kent Rees* to disclose specific insights, he talked about DirecTV’s goal with extending into FAST during a fireside chat at the StreamTV Show. It boils down to the idea of enticing TV viewers to try the free product, with the eventual goal of turning that customer into a paid DirecTV subscriber. Central to that funnel is the centralization of what the MVPD has to offer across linear and streaming. “What’s really key about that, too, is that it’s all on one app. So if you download the DirecTV app, you sign up, you give us a password for MyFree, you’re in and that experience plays across that app,” Rees said. “We’re not trying to drive people from one place to another. It’s really that front door and that front porch ... to pull people into the larger ecosystem, get them excited about content [and] give them a sense of what’s available for them as a consumer.” Rees elaborated that the action of signing up with an email and password is what allows DirecTV to start collecting data on users, giving it a better idea of how to tailor each customer’s experience. That’s opposed to competitors **Tubi** and **Pluto TV**, which don’t require log-in credentials to view content on their respective platforms. “That’s been part of that connected tissue, and really finding ways to use that as part of the invitation in. The upside of that is it gives us a really quality customer, and so if you’re giving us an email, you’re already invested, and you already have an opportunity,” Rees said.

ON THE HILL

The House voted largely along party lines Thursday to rescind \$1.1 billion in federal funding for the **Corporation for Public Broadcasting**, which doles that money out to public radio and TV stations across the country. Four GOP members joined Dems in voting against the measure: Reps *Mark Amodei* (NV), *Brian Fitzpatrick* (PA), *Nicole Malliotakis* (NY) and *Mike Turner* (OH). The rescissions bill, which also takes back \$8.3 billion in foreign aid, heads to the Senate, where it needs only a simple majority to pass. – Washington continues to try and figure out how to overhaul the Universal Service Fund. On Thursday, Senators *Deb Fischer* (R-NE) and *Ben Ray Lujan* (D-NM) announced the reconstitution of the USF Working Group. In the House, Communications and Technology Subcommittee Chair *Richard Hudson* (R-NC) and Ranking Member *Doris Matsui* (D-CA) are leading the effort.

STREAMTV SHOW NOTEBOOK

The term “short-form content” is taking on a myriad of meanings nowadays. Some view it as the shorter clips seen on **TikTok** or **YouTube Shorts**, but it's also the cut-up parts of premium content. For **Peacock**, it's long been in the short-form game, whether it's highlights of sports or segments from “Saturday Night Live” that live on its own sites or **YouTube**. However, the streamer is largely focused on the premium side of the content equation, but short-form content is still key to getting folks in the **NBCUniversal** streaming ecosystem. “When you think about Peacock, it is really NBC in the digital form,” said Amy Geary, EVP, Platform Distribution & Partnerships for NBCU. “There can be content that's both, so I don't need to make those opposing things, but I think you see niche content versus mass content. We're probably more on the mass side, but we're trying to reach really as large of an audience as we can, and that's where we play.” She added that there's more interest coming from collaborations with content creators or celebrities, citing the success NBCU had with the 2024 Summer Olympics (has *Snoop Dogg* left Paris yet?). – **Stingray** CRO *David Purdy* is a big fan of the historic themes at **StreamTV Show**, but he thinks more companies from the advertising side of things need to be invited to the table if the media industry wants to move past the Dark Ages and into the Renaissance. During a panel, Purdy polled the crowd to see what type of companies were in attendance beyond those involved with the streaming side of things. “How many people here are with an agency,” he asked. “Five people in the room. So we're kind of talking to ourselves right now as an industry. We need to bring in the advertisers to the conversation, because they want better metadata choices, more contextual advertising. We need to include them in this great Renaissance.”

CHSN SAYS ‘GAME ON’

Chicago Sports Network, the RSN for White Sox, Bulls and Blackhawks content, is introducing mobile gaming to its broadcasts. With the help of tech company **Aquimo**, CHSN will launch a new branded game called “CHSN Home Run Derby,” which viewers can access by scanning a QR code that will appear on-air during White Sox games as well as the pregame and post-game shows. Players can participate

in timed events and special challenges and will also have the chance to win exclusive prizes and signed White Sox memorabilia. The game launches during the White Sox vs Houston Astros broadcast on June 12 and will be available through the rest of the **MLB** season.

NCTA'S CHESSEN, BELL TO RETIRE

A couple big retirements are coming to **NCTA**. *Rick Chessen*, who as SVP, Legal and Regulatory Affairs and Chief Legal Officer manages the legal department and the association's relationship with the **FCC**, is gearing up to retire. He joined NCTA in 2009 after more than 14 years at the FCC. Selfishly, we're hoping retirement allows him to devote more time to his D.C. food blog, with his recent [review](#) of Dogon by Kwame Onwuachi leaving us daydreaming of rum cake and soaking in the flavors of Afro-Caribbean delicacies. NCTA tapped *Russ Hanser* as his successor. We're not sure if Hanser is a foodie, but he certainly knows his way around broadband infrastructure subsidies. He previously served as **NTIA** Associate Administrator for Policy Analysis and Development, Senior Policy Advisor to former **Commerce** Secretary *Gina Raimondo*. Hanser also spent 15 years at **Wilkinson Barker Knauer** and has held various senior FCC roles. Also joining the NCTA retirement party is *Mark Bell*, SVP, Creative Services. Bell has been with the association since 1990, playing pivotal roles in producing its annual tradeshow (RIP) and the development of its Capitol Hill headquarters. Most recently, Bell has led NCTA's experiential storytelling and live events production division, reminding his team continuously that “everything has a story.” In retirement, Bell is looking forward to boating, fishing and cooking what he catches. Stepping into his role will be *Kristin Buch*, who has been with NCTA since 2012. She previously held marketing and public affairs positions at **Discovery Communications**.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Cablefax is searching for **Voices of Impact**, individuals who elevate underrepresented voices, foster inclusive environments and build stand-out cultures. Nominate yourself or a member of your team before early bird pricing ends at 11:59pm ET Friday, June 13. Honorees will be featured in the October issue of **Cablefax: The Magazine**. CFX is also accepting nominations for Chief People Officer of the Year, Best Learning & Development Initiative, next-gen “Rising Voices” standouts and more. Visit [Cablefax's Voices of Impact website](#) for all the details.

BASIC CABLE P2+ PRIME RANKINGS* (06/02/25-06/08/25)		
MON-SUN	MC US AA%	MC US AA (000)
FNC	0.743	2356
ESPN	0.378	1199
MSNBC	0.298	946
TNT	0.281	890
HGTV	0.194	614
CNN	0.183	580
USA	0.141	449
TBSC	0.141	446
HALL	0.136	431
HIST	0.135	429
INSP	0.130	414
TLC	0.130	411
FOOD	0.121	383
DISC	0.118	373
TVLAND	0.100	318
HALLMYS	0.092	293
GSN	0.092	291
ID	0.091	288
A&E	0.089	281
WETV	0.083	263
LIFE	0.080	254
BRAVO	0.079	252
PRMNT	0.078	246
ESPN2	0.075	237
FX	0.073	231
REELZ	0.070	223
OXY	0.068	215
NWSMX	0.064	204
AMC	0.063	201
ADSM	0.063	198
NAN	0.059	186
SYFY	0.057	181
TRUTV	0.057	181
FRFM	0.055	176
COM	0.055	174
TRAVEL	0.054	170
BET	0.052	166
SNDNCE	0.051	162
LMN	0.048	152
FETV	0.045	143
NATGEO	0.045	142
MLBN	0.043	137
CMT	0.043	135
HLN	0.041	129
MGNLA	0.040	127
IFC TV	0.040	127
MOTOR	0.037	118

*P2+ L+SD rankers are based on national Nielsen numbers, not coverage.