

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Total Disruption: AI Debate Heats Up Across Industry Events

Artificial intelligence was both cause for concern and excitement across media, entertainment and tech events in NYC this week. The consensus was that AI is here to stay and is rapidly changing the way we work, create and consume content and how the public feels about the media ecosystem. But is all this disruption a good or bad thing? It really depends on who you ask.

At **NAB Show New York**, a lineup of “Future of Journalism” panels went back and forth regarding how AI is hurting newsrooms but also how the tech could be leveraged to strengthen them. The conversations felt particularly timely on the same day the NAB released the results of a survey revealing consumer anxiety regarding how AI is affecting news content. 76% of those surveyed said they are concerned about AI stealing or reproducing journalism and local news stories. Meanwhile, only 26% trust information produced by AI, while 68% say it is not trustworthy. 72% said they want the federal government to step in and place guardrails on AI content. The problem is that it’s getting harder to tell what’s human-made and what’s AI-generated, with newer tools, such as **OpenAI’s** Sora 2, making it all that much easier for bad actors to spread disinformation and slop.

Speaking on a panel about rebuilding the public’s confidence in journalism, **CNN** media analyst *Brian Stelter* and *Axios* media correspondent *Sara Fischer* agreed that local news is more important than ever, especially in a digital environment where it’s so easy for AI content to disinform the public. “When there

is a tornado warning or a flood warning, almost everybody still trusts their local meteorologist,” Stelter said. “That local connection is still so valuable. In fact, it’s probably going to be more valuable in an environment where you have so many grifters and liars and AI robots that are manipulating most of the content around you.” Fischer added: “Remember when there was those big floods in Asheville[,North Carolina, in 2024]? It was the local reporters that were coming out and saying what was real versus what was AI.”

Coincidentally, it was also a weather presenter, meteorologist *Amy Freeze*, who demonstrated the most far-out example of how AI can be used to help newsrooms keep up. During a panel discussing automation in news production, Freeze played a video introducing an AI “digital twin” she designed to deliver online weather forecasts. This isn’t just a chatbot you ask questions to; it’s a [fully animated digital avatar](#) in Freeze’s likeness “that can answer questions about the weather, present a script about the weather [and] take weather information from the National Weather Service and create an automated message that can go to viewers and consumers.” The video offered samples of weather reports, including one clip of AI Freeze delivering the forecast in Spanish. Freeze, who stressed that she’s checking all of the AI-generated content before it’s published on her website, said that newsrooms can’t be afraid of AI and instead need to “embrace it in a responsible way and very quickly, or you will be beat, because one person could create that,” referring to her uncanny digital twin. That



VIEW HONOREES

Congratulations 2025 Voices of Impact & Workplace Culture Honorees!

The Cablefax team is thrilled to announce this year’s honorees for the Voices of Impact & Workplace Culture Awards, celebrating the individuals and organizations driving meaningful change, fostering inclusivity, and shaping a more dynamic and equitable workplace across the media and broadband industries.

Visit our site to explore the full honoree list and read their inspiring Q&As.

said, brands need to avoid the mistake of replacing longtime news staffers and reporters with AI, said Freeze, arguing that “they are the ones with institutional knowledge. Allow them to maximize your AI potential in your newsrooms.”

Mark Lukasiewicz, Dean of the School of Communication at Hofstra University, warned “that very capability in the hands of malign actors is very concerning, right? Somebody grabbing Amy’s digital twin, creating a digital twin of Lester Holt or Tom Llamas or David Muir, and declaring that there’s been an attack on the East Coast of the United States, that would be very concerning. We no longer have mainstream media control of the platforms of delivery.”

Of course, AI isn’t just affecting how consumers feel about the media, but the bottom line, too. Big Tech has unsurprisingly had the most to gain as the purveyors of AI in virtually every device you use to consume content today, while publishers are being increasingly cut out of the deal, including on search engines and social platforms.

“We have an anti-competitive problem,” **Hearst Television** EVP Nick Radziul said during a NAB panel discussion about the regulatory environment around AI and what needs to be done to protect news brands. “We have an industry in big tech that is so outsized and disproportionately large in terms of their influence and actions as gatekeepers to the content that we all produce that if Congress doesn’t step in, I’m not sure there is a solution in any other way that comes in time to, frankly, save local news producers.”

The vibes were a bit more positive toward AI at this week’s **WICT Network Leadership Conference**. The major focus of its AI panels was how to implement the technology in a way that works for each organization. The gist was that if your business isn’t already using generative or agentic tools to maximize productivity and make processes more efficient, then you risk falling behind the competition.

One big piece of advice from an Agentic AI discussion: don’t rush it, especially when it comes to the data your org is using to train your shiny new agent. “What I’m seeing as being the problem is people aren’t getting their data right. So at the end of the day, great, you have a CRM system. I’m gonna tell you probably half of it is crap,” said **Accenture** Global Strategy Lead, Software & Platforms Practice **Stephanie Gorski**. “People aren’t taking the time to go slow to go fast. And the best companies I’m seeing enabling a really agentic [AI] in their workforce are going slow first to get the data right.”

Another interesting tidbit came from **Amazon Web Services** General Manager, Media, Entertainment, Games and Sports **Samira Bakhtiar**, citing a Harvard Business School [study](#) that found that there’s a clear gender divide in AI usage, with

women using those applications far less than men. “I just want you to think about the opportunity cost that will occur to us as a collective gender if we’re not leveraging the tools and others are, and they continue to outpace and they continue to create more product propositions. The divide becomes more and more.” The reason for this disparity? “Women felt like they were cheating, [like] they were taking shortcuts...I don’t want to see anyone here suffer from that as well,” she said.

Orlando Hampton, **Invisible Technologies** SVP Enterprise Technology, AI Contact Centers, summarized the pro-AI feelings of the group best, getting a few snickers from the audience when saying, “We’re still at this point where it’s still kind of cool not to use AI... What I would say is, about a year from now, that’s going to sound like a plumber trying to tell me that they do work without tools [or] an accountant who doesn’t use spreadsheets.”

CFX DOWNLOAD REPORTS ON INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP CHANGES

CFX was on the ground during **Leadership Development Week** in NYC, which marked a changing of the guard for several industry associations. **Maria Brennan**, who is stepping down as **WICT Network** President/CEO next year, led her final Leadership Conference in the role, while **NAMIC** welcomed its new President/CEO **Sandy Nunez** at its own annual gathering. **NCTA’s Cory Gardner** is only weeks into having the top job at the association and he had a full dance card at LDW, speaking at WICT and NAMIC as well as the **Kaitz** fundraising event, which also honored **Michael Powell** with the leadership award. **CFX Download** reports back on everything all of these leaders had to say to their members as well as what these changes in leadership mean for the future of the industry. We also look at a few changes coming to the wireless world, including at **T-Mobile**. Watch the new episode [here](#).

COUNTDOWN TO YOUTUBE TV AND DISNEY’S DEADLINE BEGINS

YouTube TV can’t seem to escape the headlines lately, particularly with its carriage renewals and threats of a network blackout. The vMVPD had brief spats with **Fox** and **NBCUniversal** and is currently in a dispute with **TelevisaUnivision**, and now it’s **Disney** that’s rolling out warnings of a looming deadline with YouTube TV. The two’s current deal will expire Thursday at midnight, meaning **ABC** stations, the **ESPN** nets, **FX**, **Disney Channel** and others could go dark if a renewal or short-term extension isn’t reached. That puts events like the Georgia-Florida game on Nov. 1 at risk for YouTube TV, as well as **NBA** games, **NHL**, Monday Night Football, “Dancing with the Stars” and other programs. Plus, college basketball tips off Nov. 3.

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"We've been working in good faith to negotiate a deal with Disney that pays them fairly for their content on YouTube TV. Unfortunately, Disney is proposing costly economic terms that would raise prices on YouTube TV customers and give our customers fewer choices, while benefiting Disney's own live TV products—like **Hulu + Live TV** and, soon, **Fubo**," a YouTube spokesperson said in a statement to **CFX**. If Disney nets are pulled for an extended period of time, YouTube TV will issue a \$20 credit to subscribers. YouTube claims Disney's proposals use a legacy business model, which puts the vMVPD at a disadvantage. However, it noted it'll continue to negotiate ahead of Thursday's deadline. Meanwhile, Disney continued the trend of programmers pinning the blame on YouTube TV's parent company, **Google**, saying it has offered flexible packages and rates. "For the fourth time in three months, Google's YouTube TV is putting their subscribers at risk of losing the most valuable networks they signed up for," a Disney spokesperson said. "This is the latest example of Google exploiting its position at the expense of their own customers. We invest significantly in our content and

expect our partners to pay fair rates that recognize that value." Another twist in this dispute: recall in May when *Justin Connolly* left Disney after multiple decades to join YouTube as its Global Head of Media and Sports. Connolly isn't part of these negotiations, but there might be some bad blood considering Disney [tried to block his move](#) in the courtroom.

NEXSTAR-VERIZON DEADLINE TODAY

If the current **Nexstar-Verizon** Fios [retransmission standoff](#) feels familiar, it's because we've been here before. The two had a dust-up in October 2022 that saw stations dark on Fios for two weeks. Ahead of today's deadline, we're told they are in active discussions. It looked to us like Verizon was the first to notify customers of the potential loss of channels, but Nexstar has caught up. It's running warnings that viewers could lose **NFL** and college football, and encouraging them to call the provider and make some noise.



CABLEFAX DASHBOARD

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A lively crowd of current and future leaders in media, entertainment and tech packed the Marriott Marquis in NYC to kick off the WICT Leadership Conference. We recapped what Day 1 had in store and the conversations shaping Leadership Development Week:



WICT Network Opens Leadership Development Week | Associations | Cablefax

Quotable

"NIL and college sports is a very big opportunity. It feels like TikTok 2020. What people aren't really realizing is the opportunity is not just in the main revenue sports—football and basketball. There's a lot of kids—rowers or volleyball players—who have a pretty decent following that you should be tapping into. The conversation of how to do that is reframing marketers' brains to realize it's still the same thing—influencer marketing. The key thing is they are an athlete first before creator. There's a very big opportunity, especially when it comes to regional plays and targeting specific DMAs."

- **Sosani Consulting Co-Managing Partner Tinashe Chaponda** at a **NAMIC Gen Z** panel.

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NAMIC kicked off Leadership Development Week by announcing Sandy Nunez as its President/CEO. She made her big debut in that role Tuesday.

"Platforms, audiences and opportunities are shifting every day, but what endures is the power of diverse voices."



NAMIC, WICT & NCTA Take the Stage on LDW Day 2 | Associations | Cablefax



Up Ahead

OCT. 28: [FCC October Open Meeting](#), D.C.

OCT. 30: [Comcast 3Q25 Earnings Call](#)

OCT. 31: [Charter 3Q25 Earnings Call](#)

NOV. 5: [Future of Television](#), L.A.

NOV. 5: [Go Addressable 2025 Summit](#)

NOV. 12: ["The People's Oversight Hearing" by Public Knowledge](#), D.C.

NOV. 18-20: [Parks Associates' Future of Video: Business of Streaming](#), L.A.