

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

ICYMI

In the latest episode of CFX Download, CNN SVP of Programming Nima Ahmed breaks down the programming strategy behind the network's relaunched FAST news channel and how it differentiates itself from the linear and DTC platforms. Watch the full interview on [YouTube](#), [Apple Podcasts](#) and [Spotify](#) now!

CHARTER-COX'S SEPTEMBER TO REMEMBER

If all goes according to plan, **Charter** and **Cox** will be combining around the same time the connectivity industry gathers for its annual technical conference **SCTE TechExpo 26** in Atlanta from Sept. 29 through Oct. 1.

The companies are hoping California regulators sign off on the deal in August. That's the last hurdle the \$34.5 billion merger needs to clear before closing. They want to close before Sept. 15, when their Hart-Scott-Rodino Act clearance period expires. If the deal isn't done by then, Charter and Cox would have to submit an entirely new merger notification that would cost millions, but more importantly, they'd face a new 30-day waiting period and the risk of months-long delays if the **Department of Justice** wanted more info on the transaction.

Assuming the deal closes as planned, it won't be the first time Charter's wrapped a merger alongside a major industry conference. In 2016, it closed its \$56.7 billion acquisition of **Time Warner Cable** and \$10.4 billion purchase of **Bright House Networks** on the last day of the industry's **Internet & Television Expo** (INTX). That was the last INTX (previously known as the Cable Show or the National Show), with producer **NCTA** deciding to end the show's 65-year run a couple of months later. In fact, NCTA actually announced it would shutter the show as the 2016 SCTE show was taking place in Philly.

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What was then known as SCTE Cable-Tec Expo became the industry's largest remaining trade show, though it lacked the programmer audience that INTX had. Maybe that's starting to change. **AMC Global Media** signed on as an official co-host and headline sponsor for [TechExpo 26](#), marking the first time a programmer has co-hosted the event. It's expected to have high-level exec participation, focused primarily on the tech around its streaming biz, its hybrid linear-streaming partnership with Charter and the nuts and bolts behind serving content to multiple platforms.

It's safe to assume Charter and Cox will be buzzed about during the show in Atlanta. While some might worry that the merger will keep them from participating, that doesn't seem to be the case. Charter is actually a co-sponsor of the show alongside AMCGM and CEO *Chris Winfrey* will be part of the main stage general session on opening day. Cox also will have a presence with more than half a dozen speakers participating and a slew of employees in attendance. Given the merger, it's fair to assume it won't have quite the same sort of branding it did back in 2024 when the show was also held in Atlanta, where Cox is headquartered.

Speaking of branding, it's important to remember that while Charter is the acquirer, the combined company is set to take the name Cox Communications. That's a notable reversal of the typical M&A playbook, where the acquiring company's name usually survives. However, Charter's Spectrum brand will be the consumer-facing brand throughout the footprint. Charter employees' emails have recently migrated from @charter.com to @spectrum.com. A spokesperson said the change makes sense because a majority of Charter employees work in regions selling Spectrum services, so consistency with that brand is logical. - *Amy Maclean*

INDUSTRY SKIRTS FCC TRANS QUESTION

The **NCTA**, **NAB** and the **Motion Picture Association**—the associations that lead the TV Oversight Monitoring Board responsible for the industry's voluntary TV ratings system—responded to the **FCC's** [notice](#) seeking comment on the transparency of the ratings process. But their joint comments filed late Friday stayed away from addressing the FCC's claims that it has received concerns that shows with transgender and gender nonbinary content are rated as appropriate for children and young children without providing that info to parents. Instead they stressed that the industry created this decades-old rating system with deliberate consideration and continues to seek feedback from stakeholders. The groups trod carefully, but warned against the FCC getting too involved: "As the Joint Commenters have observed in earlier proceedings, Congress did not establish a continuing regulatory role for the Commission and any effort to assert governmental involvement in rating television programming would raise significant First Amendment concerns." The associations outlined practices the Monitoring Board started implementing in 2019 to improve transparency and accuracy of the children's ratings used across TV, cable and streaming, adding that the industry agrees with the Media Bureau that parents "must be empowered to make informed choices when it comes to the type of television programs that are appropriate for their children." Initiatives that they argue are helping with that include issuing annual reports that summarize correspondence and com-

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plaints, establishing a streaming task force to look at best practices across streaming platforms and implementing a spot check program to audit TV ratings. Since the launch of the spot check program, the groups said there have been an average of about two rating/descriptor changes per year—a sign they believe the voluntary, industry-led ratings program is working. Between Oct. 1, 2024, and Sept. 30, 2025, the Monitoring Board received [170 public comments](#)—37 comments related to general content or casting, 11 concerning commercials and ads and 57 regarding scheduling changes. The board said only 11 comments involved TV Parental Guidelines ratings, continuing the downward trend in ratings-related complaints observed since 2021. Of those 11, four involved non-participating streaming services. The board’s annual report provides details on those 11, which included complaints about sexual health advertisements, concerns about a character on a program and a complaint about “excessive dialogue” that resulted in the board re-rating a TV-14 program as TV-MA.

13 AGS WANT RATINGS BOARD SCRAPPED ENTIRELY

Republican Attorneys General from 13 states—Iowa, Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Montana, Ohio, South Carolina and South Dakota—said the industry-led TV ratings system should be eliminated. “Continuing to allow media-industry technocrats—whose moral systems are misaligned with the viewing public’s—to form moral judgments about the suitability of their own content is a system that cannot be fixed through small tweaks or public meetings. Rather, it should be scrapped entirely and the power to evaluate content should be given directly to the viewing audience,” the AGs said in joint comments to the **FCC**. They note a 2019 FCC report on the ratings system didn’t address the “widening divergence in beliefs about gender identity and religion,” significant because the FCC has specifically asked whether shows featuring transgender and gender non-binary content are being rated appropriately for children. The AGs make the case for democratizing the content rating process by empowering viewers to rate the content of programs on a public forum. The idea is that through disparate world views, median ratings would emerge, with the AGs comparing it to online reviews for businesses and products. They suggest a webpage to house a repository of TV program ratings contributed to by the viewing audience. The states made no mention of it, but a model for what they’re describing already exists. Nonprofit **Common Sense Media** [allows website visitors](#) to look up a show, book, video game or other media to read parents, kids and Common Sense reviews and age recommendations. The site used to be completely free, but now access to unlimited reviews is \$3.99/month or \$39.99/year.

TEGNA NAMES NEW CEO AMID NEXSTAR SAGA

Times are changing at **Tegna**, even as its \$6.2 billion merger with **Nexstar** sits in legal purgatory. The broadcaster announced *Patrick Paolini* as its new CEO, replacing *Mike Steib*, who stepped down after Nexstar-Tegna closed in March. Steib had led the company since Aug. 2024, one year before the Nexstar deal became public. Paolini joins after being EVP, Ad Sales for **Fox Television Stations** since 2023, in addition to prior stops leading Fox affiliates in D.C., Philadelphia and New York. In total, Paolini spent 26 years under the Fox Stations umbrella, but now he’ll be tasked with overseeing Tegna’s day-to-day operations, business strategies, local journalism and production and growth initiatives. Not to mention steering the company through a preliminary injunction that has [paused](#) the Nexstar combination. Although the two companies are operating separately for now, Tegna described itself as “a wholly owned subsidiary of Nexstar” in its press release. Paolini will begin Monday and report directly to Tegna’s board.

FOX ONE JOINS ROKU’S SUBSCRIPTION LINEUP

Distribution is a key differentiator for today’s SVODs, and **Fox One** is making sure to have a presence on a TV platform with more than 100 million streaming households. **Roku** added the **Fox**-owned streamer to its Premium Subscription offering for **The Roku Channel** users in the U.S. That means folks can sign up for Fox One without having to leave The Roku Channel. It also comes just before the **FIFA World Cup** kicks off June 11. Since **Fox Sports** holds the tournament’s rights (for a fee below \$500 million, [per](#) *The New York Times*), all 104 matches will be available to stream live or on demand via Fox One. Live sports on Fox One will be accessible through the Roku Sports Zone and other sport-centric hubs.

GRACENOTE: HBO MAX LEADS IN SPORTS CONTENT

Data from **Nielsen's** content intelligence division **Gracenote** revealed that sports account for 5% of overall programming across leading streaming services, but among them, **HBO Max** stood out with the most sports content available. Gracenote's Data Hub tracked major global streaming platforms throughout 2Q26, finding that HBO Max claimed 35% of available sports content and 42% of individual games and events. Following in the No. 2 spot of sports share was **Prime Video** with 25%, while **Netflix** and **Disney+** came in at 16% and 14%, respectively. Meanwhile, **Paramount+** takes up 30% of sports games, events and show episodes. Other findings from Gracenote include the number of FAST channels increasing by 19% YOY, with entertainment, sports, news and reality being the most popular channel genres. Specifically, news had the largest YOY growth at 57%, while 37% of programming on sports-specific FAST channels are now live events.

FOX SPORTS' WORLD CUP COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

With just a little over two weeks to go, **Fox Sports** is all set for the **World Cup** festivities. Along with being the exclusive English-language broadcaster of the tournament in the States, **Fox** is also tying in community impact initiatives, including a \$500,000 commitment to Boys & Girls Clubs of America. The donation will go to giving more young people access to soccer programs across the U.S. The initiative is expected to reach more than 26,000 kids, while also training coaches and creating job opportunities for teens as referees. It will also allow local soccer clubs nationwide to host Soccer Forward Fests, community-based events designed by U.S. Soccer to celebrate and deepen engagement in the sport. Meanwhile, the World Cup kicks off on June 11.

FIBER FRENZY

ImOn Communications launched free public WiFi at Iowa City Kickers Soccer Park, located on the southeast side of the city. Visitors can now access the internet across all 23 fields in the 108-acre soccer complex, just in time for the start of youth spring leagues and summer camps. – **Charter** plans to expand the Spectrum network to more than 6,600 additional homes and businesses in the previously unserved or underserved areas of the Missouri counties of Pike, Warren and Pettis.

'YELLOWSTONE' SEQUEL DELIVERS FOR PARAMOUNT+

Western drama mega-hit "Yellowstone" may have wrapped, but the expanded universe is still doing numbers on **Paramount+**. "Dutton Ranch," a spinoff and sequel to the popular show, has reeled in almost 13 million views globally in the seven days since its premiere. That makes it the biggest original series launch in the streamer's history. The program also delivered 2.9 million total viewers on premiere night across its two-episode debut on Paramount Network, and scored the biggest series premiere on cable since 2023 with 1.9 million viewers for the first ep.

PROGRAMMING

Acorn TV mystery thriller "Irish Blood," starring Alicia Silverstone, is officially a go for Season 2. The news comes as **AMC Global Media**-owned streamer is in the midst of its annual Murder Mystery May programming event. Speaking of AMCGM, it's expanding its *Anne Rice* universe further with a new half-hour after show to tie into "The Vampire Lestat," featuring behind-the-scenes interviews with series cast and producers. The companion program will debut with a special preview ep on May 24 on **AMC+** ahead of the full series launch on June 7.

PEOPLE

Hallmark Media promoted *Jon Sichel* to Head of Distribution and Business Affairs. In the expanded role, Sichel will lead global distribution efforts and oversee content agreements across all Hallmark Media platforms, while also continuing to lead business and legal affairs for the organization. Sichel joined Hallmark Media in 2021.