

QUOTABLE

“Those are very important relationships to have. I think we all kind of feel like we’re in it together. It’s been really a nice relationship, and we communicate all the time. I feel like we’re really in sync.” – NAMIC Next CEO Sandy Nuñez on working with The WICT Network and NCTA Education Foundation as they get ready for Leadership Development Week

NEW LEADERS, NEW LOOK FOR LDW

When **Leadership Development Week** kicks off on Oct. 5, there will be changes from top to bottom—starting with management. It marks **The WICT Network**’s first Leadership Conference since *Tracy Pitcher* took the reins in April. It’s a similar story for **NAMIC Next**, with *Sandy Nuñez*’s first day on the job as President/CEO virtually coinciding with the start of the org’s 39th annual conference last year.

Both leaders have been going 90mph, working to adapt their decades-old associations to today’s fast-changing media landscape and a political environment that, as **CFX reported** last year, saw Diversity Week rebranded to Leadership Development Week amid the Trump administration’s anti-DEI executive order.

For 46-year-old NAMIC, a February rebrand to NAMIC Next broadened its support from cable and media professionals to include those working across media, entertainment, technology and sports. It became a fiscally sponsored fund of the Entertainment Industry Foundation, whose board spans many of those added industries (directors are from companies such as **Creative Artists Agency**, **Netflix**, **Apple** and **United Talent Agency**).

The org also ditched its annual conference, a mainstay of Leadership Development Week, in favor of regional one-day events. Nuñez said the change is about meeting members where they are and recognizing that not everyone can travel for an annual event. NAMIC Next held two earlier this year in L.A. and Atlanta, with it closing the 2026 calendar with Oct. 5’s [Leadership & Impact Experience in NYC](#), featuring **Amazon MGM Studios**’ AI Chief *Albert Cheng*, **Disney** President of Global Advertising *Rita Ferro* and many others. NAMIC Next is also gearing up to announce an update to its award-winning Executive Leadership Development Program, with *Jim Jones*, who helped launch the original program, leading a task force reimagining it.

While Nuñez is in a new job, she’s not new to NAMIC, having previously served as Vice Chair of its national board and as President of the L.A. chapter. She’d been working as VP, On-Air Talent Management at **NFL Media**, but her role there was winding down with **ESPN**’s acquisition of NFL Media assets. “It just made a lot of sense for someone like myself to take this over because we knew where we really wanted to go with the organization, which was to make it more relevant to the industries served,” she said. “We don’t operate in silos anymore. Sports is into media now, and media companies are technology companies. All of that sort of converged in a way that it just made a lot of sense.”

Other changes include NAMIC Next starting the week of NYC events instead of the WICT Leadership Conference, which moves to Tuesday and Wednesday (Oct. 6-7). And regular attendees may notice that there is no presentation of the WICT PAR and NAMIC AIM Workforce Diversity Surveys. They have been released every two years to measure and benchmark gender and cultural diversity in the media, entertainment and technology industries. The last survey, presented in 2024, found representation

of people of color increased by 5 percentage points from 37% two years ago to 42%, while representation of women in the industry decreased by 1 percentage point during the two-year period to 37%. The surveys also looked at other metrics, including pay equity and advancement.

Núñez said both organizations are discussing how to approach the surveys. “I think what has made it very difficult is that we realize whatever data we’re capturing via that type of study is going to likely be very different by the time we even receive the results,” she said, adding that NAMIC Next is still very interested in capturing data.

It’s a similar story at WICT Network. “We’re taking a thoughtful look at how future research can deliver timely, relevant and actionable insights in an environment where workforce trends are changing faster than ever,” said Pitcher.

Like NAMIC Next, WICT Network broadened its scope in 2021, changing its name from WICT to The WICT Network and adding the tagline Empowering Women in Media, Entertainment & Technology. Pitcher spent her first few months on the job traveling and meeting with members, chapter leaders, sponsors and board members to better understand where the association is delivering and where it could evolve.

This year’s [WICT Leadership Conference](#), themed “Future Ready: Learn. Lead. Grow,” will put some of those learnings on display, with an opening keynote from *Tammie Jo Shults*, the former Southwest Airlines captain known for her leadership during the emergency landing of Flight 1380. Other highlights include an AI Leadership Forum focused on practical applications of AI and a State of the Industry drilldown with **Evercore’s** *Kutgun Maral*, **Citi Research’s** *Michael Rollins* and **Comcast** EVP, Investor Relations *Marci Ryvicker*.

Another change this year is the venue. Not only will the association week no longer be at the New York Marriott Marquis, but also each event is at a separate location. NAMIC Next will hold its one-day at Dream Downtown by Hyatt, while WICT’s conference is at the New York Hilton Midtown.

The grand finale will move to Guastavino’s NYC on the night of Oct. 7 for the **NCTA** Education Foundation’s annual **Kaitz Event** [fundraiser](#) that supports targeted grant-giving for workforce development to industry associations, including WICT Network, NAMIC and the Emma Bowen Foundation. Last year’s fundraiser, which raised nearly \$1.1 million, pivoted from a dinner to a party/reception atmosphere, and that’ll continue this year with a Mardi Gras theme, complete with New Orleans cuisine, a second line brass band, a silent auction and a few surprises. This year’s ChangeMaker honoree is Disability Belongs.

Despite the rebrand, Núñez was clear that NAMIC Next is still committed to Kaitz and its cable roots. “Everything is really kind of intersecting now. We need to meet members where they are in these new industries. But our partners are still our partners, and many of them have been with us for a very long time,” she said. “We basically opened the door wider.”

PLUTO TV HITS THE RESET BUTTON

In a time when costs are piling up for consumers, **Pluto TV** got a makeover as part of an effort to further spotlight its \$0 price point. **Paramount Skydance’s**

CFX Daily (ISSN 1069-6644)
is published daily by Access
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cablefax.com

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\$1,999.00/yr

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free streamer said it's now moved onto the same tech stack as **Paramount+**, "marking the company's largest technology investment since its founding 12 years ago." Part of the refresh includes interface changes to better fuse live and on-demand content together, as seen through Pluto TV's redesigned home screen, dedicated Movies and Shows sections and an updated channel guide that lets viewers select their favorite networks. Pluto TV also made discovery and personalization upgrades. To commemorate the platform updates, the streamer rolled out an "Escape to Pluto TV" [campaign](#), where "people everywhere leave the overwhelming challenges of earth behind and escape to the joy and comfort of their favorite shows and movies with Pluto TV." -- In Pluto TV programming news, get ready for a Halloween-themed October. The platform will host "Double Feature Fridays," a weekly back-to-back movie night experience done in partnership with "Entertainment Tonight." Festivities begin at 8pm each Friday. Oct. 2 will begin with "Kill Bill: Vol. 1 & Vol. 2" and "The Last Victim." Oct. 9 picks up with "Smile" and "Rosario," before Oct. 16 features "Jennifer's Body" and "Vampires of the Velvet Lounge" and Oct. 23 showcases "A Quiet Place Part II" and "Diabolic." Rounding things out on Oct. 30 are "Scream" and "Sleepwalker."

STREAMERS SEE FALL BOOST

A new report from media analysis firm **Antenna** shows how streaming services see a boost in subscriber acquisition during the fall season. Antenna estimates that approximately 40% of the streaming industry's annual gross sub additions land between September and December, with average daily sign-ups 33% higher during fall 2025 than across the rest of the year. Fall was also responsible for the top 10 sign-up days for Premium SVODs and 9 out of 10 for Specialty SVODs in 2025. Unsurprisingly, as SVODs continue to raise prices, more of those sign-ups are for ad-supported tiers. They represented 52% of fall gross adds last year, up from 43% in 2023. The fall SVOD acquisition uptick is down to a few factors: the **NFL**'s larger streaming presence, theatrical windows for summer blockbusters shrinking and Black Friday promotions. Antenna also dug into how the fall is a particularly great time for Specialty SVODs **Hallmark+** and **AMCGM**-owned **Shudder**. In 2024 and 2025, Hallmark+ averaged 422,000 sign-ups per month in November and December, 3.3X its monthly average for the other 10 months. Meanwhile, Shudder reeled in 157,000 new subs in October 2024 and 2025, 2.3X what it averaged for the rest of those years.

CABLE KILLS IT IN NYT'S TOP SHOWS OF THE 21ST CENTURY

The *NY Times* concluded its [ranking](#) of the 100 best TV shows of the 21st Century, as voted by over 500 actors, show-runners, TV execs and other industry members. The big headline is that cable networks are responsible for the top four series: **HBO**'s "The Wire" and "Succession" earned the #2 and #4 spots respectively, while **AMC**'s "Mad Men" came in third. The #1 show of the century so far? **AMC**'s "Breaking Bad." Rounding out the top 10 are even more cable hits: **HBO**'s "Game of Thrones" (#6), "Veep" (#7) and "Curb Your Enthusiasm" (#9); and **FX**'s "Atlanta" (#10). **BBC/Prime Video** series "Fleabag" came in fifth, while **NBC** sitcom "30 Rock" got eighth. Just missing the top 10 was the titan of NBC comedies "The Office" (U.S.), which landed in the 11 spot.

CHAPEK BREAKS SILENCE ON DISNEY CEO STINT

Although *Bob Chapek*'s time running **Disney** was brief, it was memorable, primarily because the rocky stint ultimately resulted in the return of *Bob Iger*, which led to years of rumors about their strained relationship—and whether Iger undermined Chapek throughout the 33-month ordeal. With Chapek set to release his book "Behind the Castle Walls: My Thirty Years at the Happiest Place on Earth" on Tuesday, he gave a glimpse of what folks can expect in a *Wall Street Journal* [interview](#). The answer to whether Chapek thinks Iger sabotaged him until he reclaimed Disney's throne? A resounding yes. As for whether he's visited Disney World since he left the company? Definitely not. Chapek mentioned that signs of a strained relationship showed when he was tapped as Iger's successor in February 2020. In hindsight, he said it was a mistake to let Iger continue managing creative and talent works in addition to his role on Disney's board. "It kept him in a position where he could engage with anybody on any subject at any time. I didn't realize how insidious that was," Chapek told WSJ. He also discussed controversies such as Disney's involvement with Florida's Parental Rights in Education Act and *Scarlett Johansson*'s "Black Widow" lawsuit. More to come in his book next week.