

MEET EDGIE

The dancing, fist-bumping robot that stole the show at Spectrum's TechExpo booth was nicknamed "Edgie" by the team. No, that's not the official name of this Unitree G1 humanoid robot, but Edgie had too much swagger not to have a name all its own. Don't believe us? Check out [this video](#) from Spectrum Business showing off Edgie's fresh dance moves.

PARAMOUNT-WARNER BROS. IS NOW SKYDANCE

Paramount Skydance CEO *David Ellison* made his [X debut](#) Friday morning to announce the name of the combined PSKY-**Warner Bros. Discovery**. Alas, it's the end of the "WarnerMount" and "ParaBros" monikers. When the deal closes, the merged company will be known simply as **Skydance**, with Paramount and Warner Bros. continuing to operate as separate brands under it. The exec originally founded Skydance Media in 2006, merging it with Paramount Global in 2025 to form Paramount Skydance.

Ellison explained the logic behind the new (old) name: "First and foremost, as we bring Paramount and Warner Bros. together, we wanted to preserve what has made each of these studios iconic. Both have distinct identities, extraordinary legacies and brands that have resonated with audiences for generations. We never wanted a new corporate identity to diminish, alter or overshadow either one," the CEO wrote on X. "Instead, we wanted a name that would give the combined company an identity of its own while allowing Paramount and Warner Bros.—and all our extraordinary brands—to remain in the spotlight."

The \$34.5 billion combo, which is set to close imminently after a U.S. District Court judge signed off on a settlement between PSKY and the states, sees the Discovery name lose top billing, with longtime chief *David Zaslav* going along with it. Of course, the brand that began life in 1994 as **Discovery Communications** (itself a refresh of the **Cable Educational Network**) lives on through its cable net and **Discovery+** streamer. The Discovery logo also appeared in a marketing video revealing the Skydance name this morning.

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“What once was the peak is now just the beginning,” concludes the video’s message. That beginning has so far involved quite a few shakeups in senior leadership. The big headline is that Skydance will have a co-CEO: outgoing **Mattel** chief *Ynon Kreiz*, who will oversee the company’s day-to-day operations and integration, while Ellison minds all strategy, creative and technology work. Kreiz joined the toy and entertainment company in 2018, leading a turnaround effort that included a big boost from the zeitgeist-dominating Barbie movie, which was distributed by Warner Bros. in 2023. Before Mattel, Kreiz led **Fox Kids Europe** and the multi-channel **YouTube** content network Maker Studios before both went to **Disney**. *Puck* [noted](#) Kreiz’s “cost-cutting prowess,” which will come into play now that Ellison has to deliver the \$6 billion in synergies he promised through the merger.

One tidbit **CFX** learned this week: longtime PR pro *Catherine Frymark*, who joined Mattel in 2020 after 20 years at WBD and Discovery, said she’s a Barbie girl and has no plans to follow Kreiz.

While Warner Bros. film studio execs *Mike de Luca* and *Pam Abdy* are also expected to exit stage left, staying put is **HBO** boss *Casey Bloys*, whom Ellison has tapped to run the company’s HBO Max/**Paramount+** streaming business. PSKY DTC Chair *Cindy Holland* announced her exit ahead of the merger earlier this week. The combined streaming platform boasts over 200 million DTC subs, although Bloys [suggested](#) this week that the streamers could be bundled together rather than merged into one service. When adding AVOD **Pluto TV** and Discovery+, Skydance streaming would be good for 3.6% of total TV watch time in the U.S., based on Nielsen’s most recent Gauge report, still trailing leader YouTube, **Netflix**, Disney services and **Prime Video**.

Skydance also brings together **CBS Sports** and **TNT Sports**, which hold valuable **NFL** and college sports rights, and **CNN** and **CBS News**. There’s been lots of speculation about how the newsrooms will operate now that they’re under the same umbrella. Some in the media industry and in D.C. fear Ellison’s influence on CNN will lead to a rightward shift for the news brand, not unlike what has happened at CBS News under Editor-in-chief *Bari Weiss*. Part of the settlement with the states saw PSKY agree to establish a special board to ensure the news brands continue to operate independently, although critics of the deal have said the compromise isn’t good enough. Some had hoped California AG *Rob Bonta*, who led the state coalition, would force PSKY-WBD to divest CNN before closing. Ellison maintained throughout the regulatory approval process that CNN would remain independent post-merger.

The Paramount and Warner Bros. cable portfolios also factor heavily in the settlement. Skydance will have to negotiate distribution agreements for Paramount’s basic cable channels and WBD channels separately for five years, and can’t alter existing schedules for renegotiation of agreements except at the request of a distributor. The combined company also agreed not to make the terms of any future distribution agreements for WBD channels contingent on the terms of an agreement for PSKY channels, and vice versa, or use affiliate fee data for one group of channels to determine or influence negotiating for the other group. If the company breaks these terms, it will have to divest its **BET** channels, **VH1**, **Comedy Central**, **Smithsonian**, **Destination America** and **Science**.

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

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CABLE ONE PUSHES BACK MBI CLOSING

Cable One's bid to purchase the remaining 55% portion of **Mega Broadband Investments** was set to close this week, but continued discussions about financing have pushed the deadline back to Oct. 9. In a release, Cable One said it's in advanced talks with the private equity firm **GTCR** "regarding financing transactions to address certain of the company's forthcoming capital needs." No definitive agreements have been made, and Cable One noted there's no guarantee any transaction will materialize. Cable One and GTCR also agreed to extend the deadline to complete the MBI deal by a week. Cable One first bought a 45% stake in MBI in late 2020 and became eligible to buy the remaining share in 2023. It decided to move on that this past January

VERSANT, VERIZON RENEW CARRIAGE DEAL

Versant and **Verizon** shook hands on a new multi-year distribution deal that will keep **MS Now**, **CNBC**, **USA**, **Oxygen**, **Golf Channel**, **E!** and **Syfy** on Fios TV packages. The programmer said it's now successfully renewed all distribution partnerships expiring in 2026. Not a bad freshman year when you also factor in ratings momentum for MS Now, which just launched a new DTC streaming membership. It's part of the programmer's strategy to boost its digital platforms revenue as pay TV rev continues to decline YOY. Versant also launched a **Fandango** AVOD with live sports this year and is planning a CNBC DTC product as well..

CHARTER ADDRESSES GROUP'S CONCERNS OVER COX CUSTOMER NOTICE

Charter told Connecticut regulators that it's in compliance with rules around cable programming/rate changes. "No legacy **Cox** subscriber's package was discontinued, nor were their rates, programming, equipment or charges changed as a result of the availability of these new, optional offerings," *William Wesselman*, Charter VP, Law-Regulatory, wrote to the state's Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) this week. He was responding to [letters](#) filed at PURA by the **Cox Cable Advisory Council of Manchester, CT**—a citizen group that acts as a liaison between the operator and customers in six Connecticut towns. The council asked PURA to determine if Charter failed to provide 30-day advance notice of cable programming/rate changes when it introduced Spectrum packages in newly acquired Cox markets on Sept. 16. Wesselman said the change was anticipated and consistent with PURA's approval of the merger, and that Cox customers can keep their existing plans. He also addressed concerns Council Chair *Eric Prause* raised when he called customer service to downgrade to a different Cox plan. "To the extent Mr. Prause was told that legacy Cox packages were no longer available, that was incorrect and does not reflect Charter's policies," Wesselman wrote. "We regret that Mr. Prause's concerns were not fully addressed during his initial call, and our Customer Service team is reaching out to him so that we can address the options available to him."

GARDNER NOT CALLING MIDTERM ELECTIONS

NCTA President/CEO *Cory Gardner* isn't making any bets on whether the Senate flips in the 2026 midterms. Given that the former senator pulled off a major political upset in 2014 by unseating incumbent Colorado Democrat *Mark Udall*, he's not big on assumptions. During Friday's episode of the right-leaning [podcast](#) "Ruthless," Gardner conceded that it's a tough year and history favors the party out of the White House gaining ground in Congress during the midterms. "However, going back to some nostalgic days under the *Trump* first administration...Donald Trump actually defied history, the first time in 70+ years that they gained Senate seats in the majority," he said. "Whether they can make that happen again, I don't know, but it's hard to see a night that anyone can predict." Gardner also used his appearance to talk about his current job, stressing the importance of broadband networks if America's going to win the AI race. "This underlying pipeline—the thing that nobody talks about, that's the dirty work, it's the dirty jobs part of it—that will allow us to win and beat China and compete and win at the AI level," he said.

RIGHTFIBER WRAPS UP FASTWYRE BUY

Rightfiber, the product of a recent **Ritter Communications** and **Great Plains Communications** combination, closed its acquisition of **Fastwyre Broadband's** Nebraska-based operations. Former Fastwyre customers are now part of Rightfiber, which has already started integrating Fastwyre's systems as well. Be on the lookout for more Rightfiber deals—the **Grain Management**-owned company [told CFX](#) a month ago it'll continue evaluating M&A opportunities. "We'll look at all things... We see some interesting opportunities out there as well from an inorganic standpoint," Rightfiber CEO *Heath Simpson* said.