SPRING 2024

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LEGISLATIVE PURSUITS, FUELED BY LOCALISM

From multiple bills in Congress that could positively impact broadcast media to working with the FCC – both in and out of the federal court system – the NAB's legal and regulatory affairs team has perhaps never been more active. But don't think for a minute Rick Kaplan is overwhelmed.

If anything, the National Association of Broadcasters' Chief Legal Officer and EVP of Legal and Regulatory Affairs is energized — even with multiple playbooks in place designed to drive forward the desires of AM, FM, UHF, and VHF station owners across the U.S.

Kaplan, who was named General Counsel in November 2014, is responsible for directing NAB's advocacy at the Federal Communications Commission and other federal agencies. He also manages all NAB's legal affairs, including litigation and regulatory compliance.

"Dish and DirecTV, Facebook and Google, Verizon and AT&T – they are massive companies that cover the entire country, and the fact that broadcasters can't is really like fighting with one arm tied behind our backs."

As such, Kaplan has been front and center and focused on a collection of potentially crucial regulatory matters and Congressional legislative efforts. Plainly stated, there's a lot going on Inside the Beltway, both on Capitol Hill and at the FCC's headquarters due north of Union Station. The positive impact for broadcasters has been well-stated by the NAB as it pertains to both its efforts in Congress and at the Commission.

In contrast, the FCC under Jessica Rosenworcel's leadership could introduce regulatory policies that could have a potentially detrimental impact on broadcasters. Nexstar Media Group, the nation's top owner of broadcast TV stations and the parent of WGN Radio in Chicago, in February responded to the 3-2 vote of approval by the FCC that puts its long-overdue 2018 Quadrennial Order into effect. Why? The Democratic majority tightened TV ownership rules — and Nexstar won't stand for it.

THE PUSH TO PRESERVE AM RADIO

Of all the policy initiatives Kaplan and his team are engaged in, is there one that stands out as being the most important for broadcasters? Or are radio and TV broadcasting companies at a major crossroads in how the Commission wishes to regulate them?

Kaplan points to three things that, to him, stand out in importance. However, he says, "You could easily pick a dozen issues at the moment. They all have a meaningful impact on broadcasters in both radio and television."


“Nobody at the FCC is going to want more interference introduced into the band. We’re trying to keep radio in cars, and that will give people an excuse to take it out.”

Yet, of all the matters his office is involved in today, the first Kaplan discusses is the AM radio effort on Capitol Hill. "That is obviously critical," he says. "Once you start to see auto manufacturers think about removing AM radio from the car, just think about what that does to the safety infrastructure of the country. The ability for AM radio stations to reach consumers has gained a lot of momentum, and understandably so."

Introduced in the Senate on May 17, 2023 by Senator Ed Markey (D-Mass.), the *AM Radio for Every Vehicle Act* as of early March had 47 co-sponsors and remained a legislative calendar item awaiting a full floor debate and vote. On February 26 of this year, Senators Jeff Merkey (D-Ore.) and Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.) became the latest politicians in the upper body of Congress to sign on as supporters of the AM radio bill.

For television broadcasters, moving ATSC 3.0 adoption forward is one of the sector's biggest priorities for Kaplan's legal team, he shares. This sees him working with the FCC to ensure that its Future of Television initiative is carried out. His No. 1 goal? To make sure "the Commission really steps on the gas and does whatever it can to pave the way for a smooth transition."

He elaborates, "The industry is pushing something forward to stay competitive, and we're not defending something. We're trying to extend our boundaries, and that's really exciting."

The No. 1 issue for both radio and TV? The "various ownership issues" that are already playing out in the federal courts, Kaplan says. "These legacy ownership restrictions … you have to have a thick skin to read some of the stuff that really flies in the face of everything that everybody is seeing on the ground."

The everyday broadcast media executive outside of Washington may get the sense that Kaplan and the NAB have been more active recently than at any point since Kaplan came on board nearly 12 years ago — after three years at the FCC. Is it true that there's much more activity on the legal and regulatory front today than in the recent past?

"I think it's true," Kaplan says. "I think this is one of the busiest times we've had, but I will say it doesn't feel like a strain on the organization. There are items we are really excited about, including AM radio. That's very energizing, as it involves the health of the radio industry. To see how many people — laypeople and policy-makers — come together and really care has been kind of fun and puts a spring in your step because you know you're doing something important."

"There are items we are really excited about, including AM radio. That's very energizing as it involves the health of the radio industry. To see how many people – laypeople and policy-makers – come together and really care has been kind of fun and puts a spring in your step because you know you're doing something important."

HIGHER FIDELITY

Seemingly out of nowhere, the fight for AM radio's continued presence in every vehicle sold in the U.S. became one of the NAB's biggest policy topics over the past year. The push for AM woke many up to the continued importance of the more than 100-year-old media technology to listeners all over the U.S., whether they are on farms or in the biggest cities across the nation.

In the U.S. House of Representatives, New Jersey Democrat Josh Gottheimer is AM's biggest advocate. In late January, the Congressman went so far as to urge the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to adopt an amended automobile safety sticker — one that includes in bold red lettering: **WARNING: NO AM RADIO. VEHICLE UNSAFE IN EMERGENCIES.** Auto manufacturers excluding AM radios from their vehicles would be required to display the message.

While there has been largely positive news coming out of Washington with respect to legislating AM radio's future, are there some who perhaps oppose any government mandate to keeping AM accessible to all while on the road? If those individuals present a potential roadblock, that's not concerning to Kaplan nor the NAB.

"We feel really excited by the amount of independent effort that legislators have taken here to develop solutions to deal with a fast-emerging problem," Kaplan says. "It is really heartening, as a lot of people take radio, and broadcasting in general, for granted. We may not be the shiny new object. We have been there for the entire lifetime of most people. It is easy to get complacent. But this really jarred people awake — this idea of taking AM radio out of the cars."

With former President Donald Trump en route to a general election battle with President Joe Biden in November, Kaplan has no crystal ball as to what the immediate future holds for Congress or the FCC. Yet, with no guarantee that AM's preservation through legislation will arrive by January 2025, he is optimistic and confident regarding the efforts on the Hill and around the U.S. thus far. "A number of legislators really recognize how important this issue is," he says. "The momentum is heading in the right direction."

Meanwhile, Kentucky Republican Senator Rand Paul is seeking to add his own modification to the AM radio legislation by ending electric vehicle subsidies under the American Vehicle Tax Credit. This would pave the way for mandating AM radio as a standard feature in all vehicles manufactured and sold in the U.S. — assuming no new developments emerge in the coming months.

A MOVE AGAINST 'MODERNIZATION'?

Under court order, the Rosenworcel Commission at the end of 2023 released its 2018 Quadrennial Order. The Order changed nothing for radio broadcasters, while the tighter

rules for broadcast television station owners resulted in a lawsuit against the FCC from Nexstar Media Group.

As the FCC under Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel effectively reversed course from the "modernization" efforts of her predecessor, Ajit Pai, how is the NAB responding — especially as the 2022 Quadrennial Order is nearly 18 months overdue?

To be clear, Kaplan believes the Rosenworcel-led FCC is not reversing rule changes made under Pai's Republican leadership — except, of course, for Title II broadband classification, as the desire to restore "net neutrality" remains a hot topic. Other than that, Kaplan says, "At least the Commission is not sliding back to reinstate the cross-ownership rules — certainly because no court could ever sustain that. Even if the FCC wanted to, that would never happen."

The path taken by Rosenworcel as it pertains to media ownership rules is nevertheless a frustrating issue for the NAB, Kaplan says. "For broadcasters, one thing we clearly need out of the FCC, and this correlates to many different issues, is a positive vision for what we as a country want our industry to do." He looks to competitor industries, such as the wireless business, and believes the FCC has a really positive relationship with them. This includes those responsible for the rollout of 5G technology.

"They are really cheerleading for the industry," Kaplan says of the FCC's work on behalf of wireless. "I can say the same thing about the broadband industry. With connectivity-program money about to run out, FCC Commissioners are all over Capitol Hill pleading with budget leaders to fund the program."

This is all great, Kaplan notes. However, he laments, "You don't see that same energy apply to broadcasting."

For starters, Kaplan believes the FCC needs to take a fresh look at its rules for radio and TV licensees. "Don't just default to what you've done for many years with broadcasting because we are not the industry of the 1970s and exist today in a much more competitive media environment," he says. "It's important to take stock of that. This Commission has just fallen back on the tired old views that don't match what every broadcaster is seeing."

In conversations with broadcasters across the U.S., Kaplan says they're amazed at some of the things the FCC says — including statements that radio doesn't compete with Spotify or SiriusXM and isn't losing revenue to them. "How can anyone say that?" he wonders. "The [local radio] salespeople go out and see it right under their feet. When the FCC is saying what we are experiencing is not true, that makes it very, very difficult and is why we need them to take a fresh look [at the rules]. Maybe the 2022 review will eventually do that. This 2018 review really missed the mark."

NO MORE DISCOUNT?

For America's broadcast TV station owners, the "Top Four" rule has long been a topic of conversation. The "UHF discount" in recent years has also been on the minds of these broadcasters. Could the Rosenworcel Commission introduce a proposal that would rethink this discount? Given the advancements with the shift from analog to digital TV broadcasts and the arrival of ATSC 3.0 broadcast technology for television, where does the NAB stand on the matter?

As it is an issue that has emerged several times in the last decade, Kaplan believes Ajit Pai had it right when he said the transition to digital changed the propagation characteristics of VHF and UHF broadcasting. However, Kaplan explains, "What he acknowledged, which is critical, is that doesn't mean you just eliminate the discount without looking at the entire ownership cap, which is actually very low. And no one else we compete with has a cap."

With an ownership cap put in decades ago and the signal contours of UHF and VHF stations all but reversed, Kaplan believes there is a need to understand that the ownership limits and the "UHF discount" go hand-in-hand. "We can't turn a blind eye to the implications of getting rid of the discount, which again really cuts in half the amount of reach any broadcaster can have. In a day and age when scale is everything, look at who we compete against. Dish and DirecTV, Facebook and Google, Verizon and AT&T … they are massive companies that cover the entire country, and the fact that broadcasters can't is really like fighting with one arm tied behind our backs."

"We need the FCC to take a fresh look at the rules. Maybe the 2022 review will eventually do that. This 2018 review really missed the mark."

He continues, "Running programming is expensive. Sports are expensive. You have to have scale these days to compete, but we are artificially limited."

Thus, should the Rosenworcel Commission move to eliminate the "UHF discount," the FCC must raise or eliminate the ownership cap, Kaplan concludes. "There is no chance to say that we should be smaller, because that's in fact what they would be doing. That would be very detrimental and invalidate any justification."

DIVERGENT RADIO INNOVATIONS

While digital television signals have their own policy concerns, a proposal in front of the FCC to allow broadcasters to increase their HD Radio power has seen the NAB team up with Xperi Corp., HD Radio's parent, to help move that from plan to regulation. "It's another pro-innovation story here," Kaplan says. "The great thing about this NAB, and that under Gordon Smith's leadership, is that we're always going to look for ways to work with the Commission and other stakeholders to find the right balance. It's all heading in the right direction."

While giving HD Radio a boost is a positive development for the NAB, it has taken a vastly different approach to GeoBroadcast Services' "ZoneCasting" — a technology that would require the FCC to approve program origination from an FM booster signal. As has been demonstrated in Jackson, Miss., and in San Jose, Calif., the technology can allow a FM radio station with a "rimshot" signal to offer hyperlocal weather, traffic, news, and, controversially, commercials.

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For some, this brings to marketers a highly desired addressable advertising solution across local digital media. For others, it could potentially serve as a detonation device for a local ad rate bomb that could destabilize an entire radio market.

The NAB has expressed its disapproval of "ZoneCasting." Yet the FCC now has three Democrats able to approve a proposed rulemaking — gathering dust for a year — that would green-light the linchpin of a hyperlocal radio solution. How is the NAB responding?

"Well, the good news is, based on my understanding of the proposal that is in front of the Commission now, [the FCC] will authorize GBS' patented technology to operate on a special temporary basis, and there is more to figure out," Kaplan says. A Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking would figure out how it would work, in practice, if "ZoneCasting" were to be fully adopted. "At least we caught the Commission's attention there."

To be fair, Kaplan gives praise to those working behind the scenes at the FCC who don't get the outsized attention seen by the Commissioners. "The staff in the Audio Division are some of the best in probably all of government," he says. "They understand all of the issues. Nobody at the Commission is going to want more interference introduced into the band. We're trying to keep radio in cars, and that will give people an excuse to take it out."

Continuing his thoughts on "ZoneCasting," Kaplan says, "Even if there is interference among themselves, that is not going to bring a great listening experience. By all indications, from our analysis, it will cause listeners' signals to drop out. We need to have a healthy and good band from a technology perspective."

GeoBroadcast Services sees it differently, as does Commissioner Geoffrey Starks, who in particular has been a proponent of the capabilities "ZoneCasting" could bring as demonstrated in both the San Francisco Bay Area and in Mississippi's state capital.

While Kaplan believes the challenge with "ZoneCasting" is that "nobody really supports it," key decisionmakers do — making its future a real possibility.

A DIFFERENT VIEWPOINT ON LOCAL MEDIA

Given some of the actions taken by the Rosenworcel Commission since the confirmation of Anna Gómez as the fifth Commissioner, giving Democrats a majority, one might assume the FCC is "out to get" broadcasters. With the FCC seemingly now wading into the controversial waters of retransmission consent, how is the NAB working with the Commission to discuss such new issues as fair compensation from virtual MVPDs, including YouTube TV and Hulu, for the right to distribute their channels?

First, Kaplan dismisses the notion that Rosenworcel has radio and TV station owners in her crosshairs. "I don't agree with the idea that the Chairwoman is out to get broadcasters," he says. "She just has a different outlook than many of us have, and that is just a disagreement. [Rosenworcel] has a certain view, and the things that are coming out all match that view. And it is not just about broadcasters. In some ways, she is thinking of some of the right things. In the case of retransmission consent, she's looking at early termination fees from cable TV service providers."

The "all-in" pricing and "junk fees" the Commission is looking at also demonstrate that Rosenworcel's view doesn't always match that of the NAB, and that there is no bias against the association.

Still, Kaplan wishes the FCC to develop "a positive vision for broadcasting," with every leader at the Commission able to answer the question of what the plan is for making this the healthiest system for local broadcasting in the world. "It doesn't mean that you don't have any regulations, but I don't see as clearly as what the answer is," Kaplan says.

"What the FCC is not really recognizing is that the broadcasters' competitive advantage is localism. The challenge is that localism is expensive. That's the only roadblock. If the Commission wants to do address localism, it has to do something economically based, which is why we address ownership restrictions."

Potential new regulation would require radio and TV stations to provide a list of programs that are produced locally, as part of a preferential-treatment plan. Where do Kaplan and the NAB stand on this Notice of Proposed Rulemaking?

"It does highlight how the current Commission doesn't really seem to understand localism," Kaplan says. "No broadcaster is going to do more localism because they might have a better standing when it comes to a license renewal. What the FCC is not really recognizing is that the broadcasters' competitive advantage is localism. The challenge is that localism is expensive. That's the only roadblock. If the Commission wants to address localism, it has to do something economically based, which is why we address ownership restrictions."

In fact, the biggest groups have the best chance of benefiting from a localism NPRM, as they engage in an abundance of programming that they have the funds to produce. This sets up a potentially difficult scenario for smaller, fiscally challenged broadcasters. Kaplan points out, "This highlights the disconnect between what is happening on the ground in our industry and what is happening in Washington, D.C."

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PLACING A SPOTLIGHT ON TV'S SHINING STARS

As cord-cutting continues to challenge cable television channels and service providers, the broadcast TV renaissance continues. Live sports is back on free-to-air TV in multiple markets. Local news and public affairs programming is more abundant than ever. This makes **RBR+TVBR**'s 2024 *Broadcast Television's Best Leaders* rankings more powerful than ever.

Yet Wall Street is hardly convinced that "linear television" remains a healthy business. A recent investor note from MoffettNathanson concluded, "It is now clear that outside of sports advertising there should no longer be expectations of a recovery for linear TV advertising." We challenge this assessment as it applies to live and local broadcast TV, with must-see athletic events including the Summer Olympic Games and every move of the 2024 U.S. presidential campaign key news components.

With the end of the SAG-AFTRA and WGA East/WGA West work stoppages, prime-time favorites are back, and viewers haven't forgotten, based on early Nielsen ratings data. Daytime syndicated fare remains a key draw, too. Given all of these positive attributes, the *Radio + Television Business Report* is proud to again honor the 20 top leaders who have helped to make broadcast television an important and highly valued community asset across the U.S.

With **RBR+TVBR** reader input aiding our curated review of nominations gathered in the first quarter of 2024, we pause to applaud as we reveal this year's honorees. While every executive in the U.S. television industry is working hard to make free-to-air television future-proof, these leaders stand out for their accomplishments and ability to bring big results to their respective companies.


Perry Sook

1 PERRY SOOK
Founder and Chairman/CEO, Nexstar Media Group
2023 Rank: No. 1

From taking control of The CW Network to driving local news viewers to its broadcast TV stations — key to ratings and revenue growth — 2023 was a transformational year for Nexstar. With the cable TV network NewsNation continuing its upward momentum and WGN Radio also an important asset, Nexstar is positioned for future riches in ways that are unique compared to its peers.

Chiefly responsible for creating the Nexstar of today, the nation's No. 1 licensee of broadcast television stations, is Perry Sook. Speaking on his company's fourth-quarter and year-end 2023 earnings call, he declared, "The power of the broadcast model and its ability to reach the largest audience of any medium with important news, sports, and entertainment content is as strong as ever." Fiscally speaking, net revenue on an ex-political basis increased 4.3% year-over-year. While that is certainly good news, it fell short of Wall Street analysts' expectations.

Perhaps these financial whizzes aren't fully versed on what lies ahead for companies such as Nexstar, in particular when it comes to single-frequency networks associated with ATSC 3.0. While core advertising remains sluggish, political ad dollars have never been more robust. At the same time, retransmission consent revenue isn't poised to fade in the immediate future.

Asked by **RBR+TVBR** what he views as some of the biggest challenges facing broadcasters today, including Nexstar's brethren in the radio industry, Sook points to the Nation's Capital — and the regulatory environment. "Competition is everywhere, especially from streaming entities like Netflix, which are largely unregulated by the FCC. Broadcasters can compete with anyone — we're just asking for a level playing field on which to do so."

"Competition is everywhere, especially from streaming entities like Netflix, which are largely unregulated by the FCC. Broadcasters can compete with anyone – we're just asking for a level playing field on which to do so."
– Perry Sook

At the same time, Sook believes the biggest future opportunity for broadcasters is ATSC 3.0., which has the potential to create a new revenue stream for broadcasters that is estimated to be worth billions industrywide. "We have been at the forefront of the industry in converting our TV stations to ATSC 3.0 and are actively looking for customers to test this exciting new technology for delivering data," Sook says.

How is Nexstar helping to create the industry's leaders of the future? Sook says the company believes strongly in growing its leadership team at the local and corporate levels. "We offer a number of training programs for employees across the organization, including those in news, sales, operations, and recruitment and retention, that are designed to improve their understanding of the media industry and Nexstar's role in the media ecosystem. Employees annually evaluate their own performance, review their performance with their manager, and collaborate on setting goals for the coming year. We promote from within whenever possible and have developed a deep bench of talent as a result."

Sook founded Nexstar in 1996 with the acquisition of a single TV station in the Wilkes Barre-Scranton market. Today, its holdings include a 31% interest in Food Network.

2 PAT LAPLATNEY
President/co-CEO, Gray Television
2023 Rank: No. 3

Like Nexstar, Gray Television has busily transformed itself over the last decade to propel itself into the ranks of the nation's top broadcast television companies. This growth included the January 2019 merger of Gray with Raycom Media — a transaction that brought Raycom leader Pat LaPlatney into the Gray C-Suite, where he's excelled as the individual charged with overseeing the company's broadcast TV stations.

LaPlatney had been with Raycom since 2007 and spent the early part of his career with Blair Television as an Account Executive and Sales Manager in the Charlotte and Atlanta offices. He has also been Metro Networks' SVP of Television and Digital Media and built Metro's news services division ahead of its acquisition by Westwood One.

Today, LaPlatney, alongside co-CEO Hilton Howell Jr., is a key figure in a company that will see a noteworthy change in the Chief Financial Officer role on July 1. At that time, Wells Fargo Securities Managing Director and Head of Media &



Pat LaPlatney

Telecom Investment Banking Jeff Gignac will succeed Jim Ryan, who is formally retiring in 2025.

With Ryan's exit on the way, **RBR+TVBR** asked how Gray is helping to create the industry's leaders of the future. LaPlatney replied that Gray has leadership and training programs for virtually all the disciplines in local TV. The company also works with the NAB Leadership Foundation and other organizations in the development and training of the company's future leadership.

Then there are the challenges and opportunities ahead for Gray. "Among our challenges are the increased competition from the large tech companies, and the regulatory environment in D.C.," LaPlatney says, echoing Nexstar's Perry Sook. "The opportunities are numerous and include new businesses around ATSC 3.0, more local sports programming, and growing our digital footprint and digital businesses."

The local sports growth for Gray includes its fledgling Peachtree Sports Network, found across Georgia markets where Gray owns stations.

3 JACK ABERNETHY

Chief Executive Officer, FOX Television Stations

2023 Rank: No. 2

With a group of stations including WTTG-5 in Washington, D.C.; WOFL-35 in Orlando; KTVU-2 in San Francisco; and KTTV-11 in Los Angeles, Jack Abernethy has gained industry-wide respect for his oversight of some 28 stations across 17 markets. Each of these properties has established



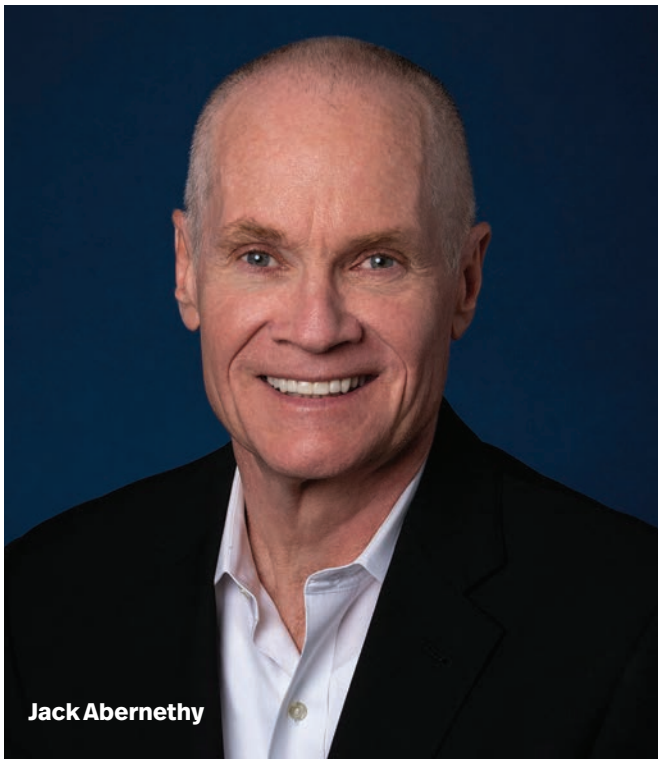


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Jack Abernethy

itself as a market leader for local news and network programming, including National Football League telecasts.

Abernethy has been in his role since 2004. His achievements led the Broadcasters Foundation of America to honor him in 2023 with its Golden Mike Award.

As Abernethy reflects on the state of the broadcasting industry today, he offers words that are perhaps emblematic of how swiftly the industry is evolving. "Those who are in the 'we never did it that way' club have no place in this evolving, fast-paced media landscape as viewers are consuming news, entertainment, and sports differently," he says. "We need to be smart and ingenious in our thinking and open to an entirely new way of doing business. Through streaming, there are tremendous opportunities to build new models that will shape the future of our industry. Those who cannot pivot to this new reality will not survive."

Abernethy also has firm thoughts on the cultivation of the industry's future leaders. "As leaders, our mission is to create a diverse, inclusive culture where our employees can be heard and thrive. We must foster their creativity and talent and challenge them to produce their very best work. Here at Fox, we embrace our young talent, as they are willing to look for ideas outside of their comfort zones and take risks. They are excited to seize opportunities to replace and reinvent dying media platforms."

"Those who are in the 'we never did it that way' club have no place in this evolving, fast-paced media landscape."

– Jack Abernethy



4 DEAN LITTLETON

SVP/Local Media, The E.W. Scripps Co.

2023 Rank: NEW

"Transformational" is an overused adjective appearing in flowery press releases boasting of big, positive changes at a company that's just announced a merger or acquisition. But in the case of The E.W. Scripps Co., a genuinely transformational shift in the operations of its broadcast TV stations is reshaping how local over-the-air television can remain successful against local digital in markets ranging from Detroit and Cincinnati to San Luis Obispo, Calif., and Corpus Christi, Tex.


Dean Littleton

Overseeing this big shift, which has resulted in leadership changes at several stations while reimagining newsroom operations, is Dean Littleton. In April 2023, Littleton was chosen to succeed Brian Lawlor as Scripps' local media leader, with Lawlor now heading the Scripps Sports entity. Littleton previously excelled as the General Manager of KMGH-7 and KCDO-3 in Denver.

Before joining Scripps in 2017, Littleton spent four years as GM of WATE-TV in Knoxville. He's also been General Sales Manager of WVLT-TV and WBIR-TV in Knoxville. Littleton's career began at WBIR, as a news photographer and editor.

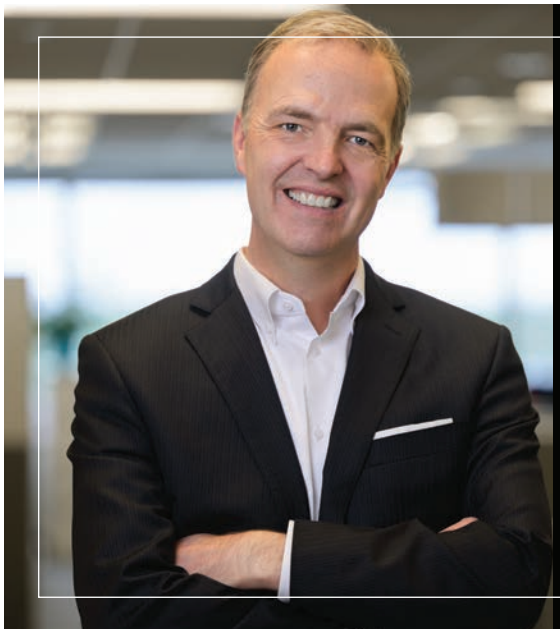
Speaking with **RBR+TVBR**, Littleton comments, "It's no secret that broadcast television — and the media industry at large — is competing for eyeballs in an increasingly fragmented media landscape. As consumer choices are increasing, their time and attention spent with linear television is decreasing. This trend, against the backdrop of a regulatory environment that can drastically impact local stations' abilities to serve our communities, means the broadcast industry needs to change how it does things."

Even with these industry dynamics, Littleton says Scripps sees several opportunities ahead. "Broadcast TV, and especially local TV, must be an indispensable resource to the communities it serves," he says. "That's why Scripps is doubling down on our local news commitment. Detailed research over several years has told us that what viewers want most is to have reporters in their communities getting to know the people and the stories that matter to them."

With that in mind, Littleton says Scripps is committed to having a minimum of 12 reporters in every newsroom — even in the company's smallest markets. In larger markets, significantly more reporters will be put into action "so that we can cover all the distinct neighborhoods that make these communities unique," says Littleton.

While some local leaders, including those in Buffalo and on California's Central Coast, said goodbye to their colleagues at the close of 2023, Littleton notes that between April 2023 and the start of 2024, nearly 50 reporters were brought into the Scripps family, with more to come. He says, "This increase in local coverage is good for our audiences, as well as the advertisers we partner with to deliver solutions that help them grow their businesses."

Littleton also speaks highly of Scripps' investment in live and local sports. "Broadcast TV has unmatched potential to expand teams' and leagues' reach in both local markets and nationally," he notes. "Scripps Sports has invested in and won local sports rights deals with the NHL's Las Vegas Golden Knights and Arizona Coyotes." He also points to agreements with the WNBA and NWSL, with coverage on Scripps' Ion network. "I expect we will continue to see teams and leagues exploring the potential of broadcast TV to connect them with more of their fan bases and the advertisers who want to engage them."



Congratulations

Dean Littleton

SVP, LOCAL MEDIA

on being named a

RADIO + TELEVISION BUSINESS REPORT

2024 TOP BROADCAST TELEVISION LEADER

SCRIPPS

5 CHRIS RIPLEY

President/CEO, Sinclair Inc.

2023 Rank: No. 6



Chris Ripley

At the 2024 NAB Show, Chris Ripley will once again be at the forefront of broadcast television's biggest innovation in decades — the ATSC 3.0 digital broadcast standard. With single-frequency networks (SFNs) still on the horizon, the revenue potential for broadcast TV in the U.S. beyond retransmission consent fees and core advertising remains bigger than ever.

On April 14, Ripley will participate in a gathering for the press hosted by Sinclair at which he will reveal more in the way of commercial and tech developments associated with ATSC 3.0. While Sinclair is very much a broadcast TV company, it has taken the lead on ATSC 3.0. It also happens to be the parent company of tower company Dielectric.

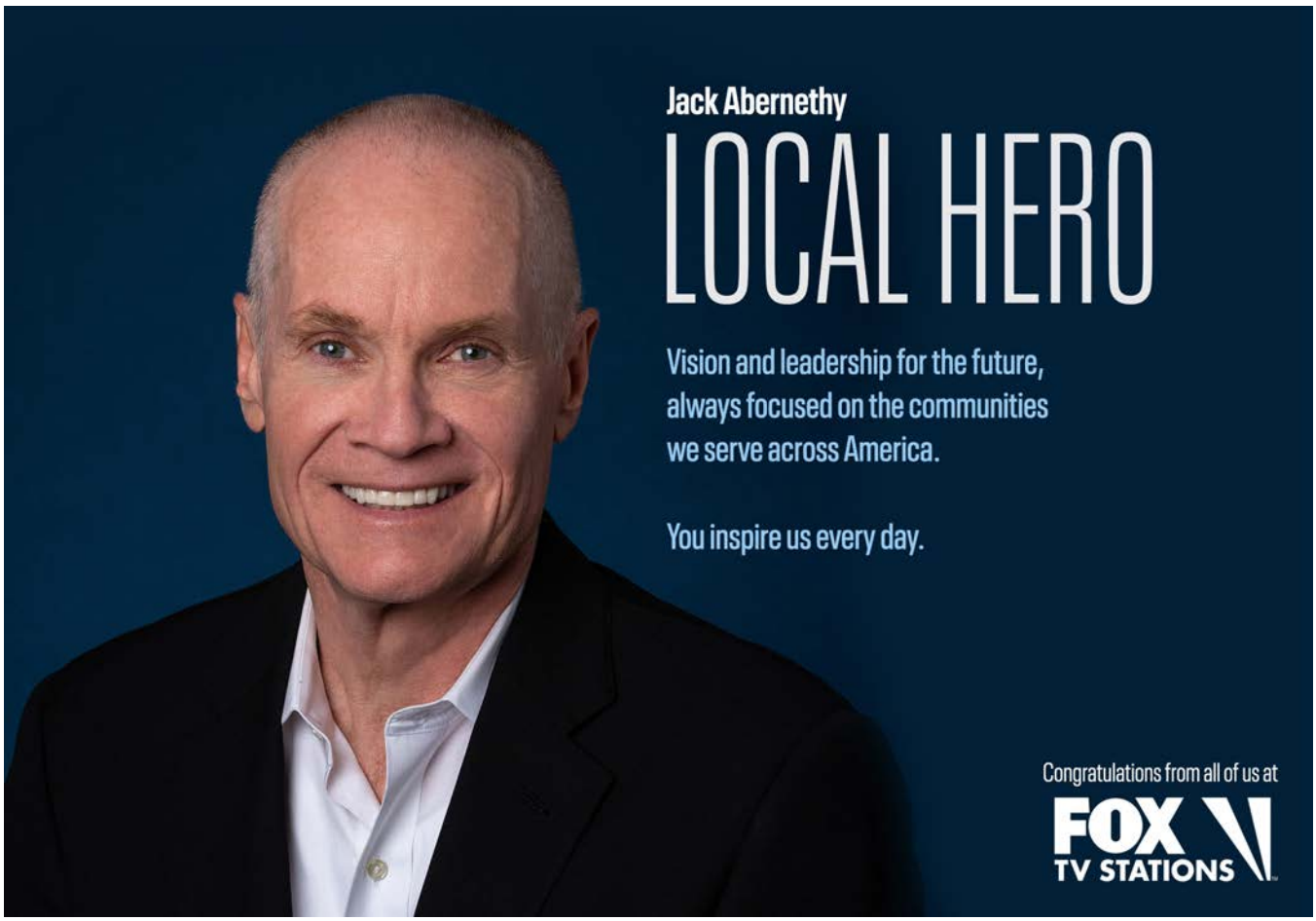
Still, how the broadcast television stations perform is key to Sinclair's fiscal health. "Sinclair delivered a solid finish to 2023 with our local media segment meeting guidance and Tennis Channel exceeding expectations," Ripley said during Sinclair's quarterly earnings call. With live sports and news now the hallmark of live broadcast television, how is Sinclair ensuring that viewers can continue to trust and easily access the content its local stations are producing every day?

Ripley tells **RBR+TVBR**, "We pride ourselves on understanding the communities that we serve, and that is why we are a trusted news source for consumers. It's the impact and difference we make in our communities that make us relevant and significant on all our local platforms."

He continues, "We are focused on delivering more value and access to news consumers, so they can participate with our products on all screens. We're showcasing an interactive experience on a wide range of platforms — from linear broadcast to social media, and from compelling podcasts to informative newsletters. We continue to evolve and grow in this modern era of journalism."

Sinclair is also the parent company of digital marketing platform and agency Compulse, making its revenue stream well-rounded as it continues to deliver for its audiences in markets far and wide, with ABC, CBS, and FOX affiliates in its nationwide stable of stations. Then there is the philanthropic side of Sinclair, which has partnered with the nation's leading children's literacy non-profit organization — Reading Is Fundamental — to launch a nationwide campaign that seeks to create awareness around children's literacy challenges.

While Rob Weisbord, Chief Operating Officer and President of Local Media at Sinclair, is overseeing that initiative, it is Ripley who is steering the company into the future. And the future looks bright.



6 LYNN BEALL

Executive VP/Chief Operations Officer, TEGNA

2023 Rank: No. 7


Lynn Beall

One year ago, TEGNA's future was still unknown. By late May 2023, the company led by President/CEO Dave Lougee with broadcast TV stations overseen on a day-to-day basis by EVP/COO Lynn Beall was positioned to operate just as it had prior to efforts led by dissident-shareholder-turned-merger partner Soohyung Kim to acquire TEGNA. Kim's Standard General did not move forward with its deal due to ownership-concentration concerns from the FCC's Media Bureau. Lougee remains in the CEO position; Beall continues in her operations-focused role.

Beall's leadership of TEGNA's 64 broadcast stations, which include such stations as flagship property WUSA9 in Washington, D.C.; KGW-8 in Portland, Ore.; and KPNX-12 in Phoenix, remains steadfast.

"Our focus is on delivering the very best news in our communities and partnering with our clients to deliver their targeted audiences across any platform with precision and effectiveness to grow their business," Beall says. "Local broadcasting remains the essential distribution channel for U.S. households."

Beall also believes TEGNA's stations provide "irreplaceable, life-saving information" and says they are working hard to combat the spread of false information. "Ensuring our journalists are well-prepared to tackle disinformation has been our priority for more than six years, with recent training focused on how to identify AI-altered images and audio and how disinformation will play a role in the 2024 elections," Beall shares. "The ecosystem in which we operate continues to change, but it's our job as leaders to create opportunities to reach news consumers on all platforms and continue to grow the business."

Beall was previously an EVP and SVP at Gannett Broadcasting, positions she held while President/General Manager of KSDK-5, the NBC affiliate in St. Louis. Prior to her corporate roles, Beall held marketing, programming, and sales positions at five TEGNA stations, including WUSA9.

Asked about the future path for those seeking a career in broadcast television, Beall says, "I'm really proud of the work we continue to do to provide a range of learning and development opportunities for employees, leaders, and early-career job seekers. In addition to our manager and leadership training programs, we offer specialized news, content, and sales training to those employees."

Beall points to TEGNA's Producer-In-Residence program as one initiative she believes is making an industry-wide difference. "This program has grown to one of the largest entry-level producer-development programs in our industry," she says, adding that upward of 60% of program participants have been journalists of color since the program's 2018 launch. "In 2023, we hired 50 program graduates," she says. "By 2026, we estimate that 40% of our stations' 700 producers will be current or promoted Producer-In-Residence grads."





CBS

CONGRATULATES WENDY McMAHON

Thank you for the leadership, innovation and passion you provide every day to inspire our teams across

CBS NEWS AND STATIONS | CBS MEDIA VENTURES

Paramount


Wendy McMahon

7 WENDY McMAHON

President/CEO, CBS News and Stations and CBS Media Ventures

2023 Rank: No. 9

If you've tuned to a CBS News and Stations property in recent months, you may have noticed that the local newscasts have a very different look from days of long ago, with anchors today in front of large screens and away from news desks. That's one of the traits that have made the local stations owned by CBS through its parent, Paramount, standout properties. Since May 2021, much of what's seen on the air is thanks to the leadership of Wendy McMahon.

Before serving as President and co-head of CBS News and Stations, McMahon was President of ABC Owned Television Stations, rising from VP/Programming at KABC-7 in Los Angeles. Before that, however, McMahon was at CBS.

In August 2023, McMahon's role at CBS expanded, as she became the first executive to oversee three CBS businesses. This gave her singular oversight of CBS News and Stations as well as leadership of CBS's domestic syndication business.


Valari Staab

8 VALARI STAAB

Chairman, NBCUniversal Local

2023 Rank: No. 10

With the NewFronts and Upfronts rapidly approaching, the Chairman of NBCUniversal Local (which includes all NBC-owned television stations) was busily preparing for each of the key marketer and advertiser events. There's much to share, from the Summer Olympic Games and other only-to-NBC fare to the power of its local news, much of it available nationally via the Peacock platform.

For Valari Staab, the 30-year veteran honed her craft in roles ranging from general management and research to creative services. Before joining NBCUniversal, she spent eight years as President/GM of KGO-7 in San Francisco.

Staab rose to her current role in January 2022; she had been President of what was then called the NBC Owned Television Stations group from 2011.


Chad Matthews

9 CHAD MATTHEWS

President, ABC Owned Television Stations

2023 Rank: No. 11

Much like his peers at NBC and CBS, Chad Matthews has been charged with bringing new ideas and innovation to a "Big Four" company's owned-and-operated stations. In Matthews' case, however, top ratings in Los Angeles and New York mean balancing evolution with continuity. For WABC-7 in New York, where Matthews served as President/GM until rising to his current role in January 2022, a high-profile change in morning news anchors didn't impact the station's ratings. In markets such as Fresno, "ABC30" is equally strong with its local news coverage, as seen by **RBR+TVBR** in mid-March when visiting Central California.

As President of ABC Owned Television Stations, Matthews also oversees stations in Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Houston, and Raleigh-Durham. Twenty years ago, he was just being promoted to a senior executive producer role at WABC.

"I'm exceptionally proud of the work that [our] stations did this year and how we've adapted to the changing industry and continue to grow and succeed," Matthews tells **RBR+TVBR**. "There will always be a desire for hyperlocal news, which is both a challenge and an opportunity as we


Congratulations Chad Matthews for being selected as one of Broadcast Television's Best Leaders 2024!
Your strategic vision, drive for innovation, and thoughtful and collaborative management style make you a truly inspiring leader.
Disney Entertainment
abc owned television stations
©Disney

continue to find new ways to connect with our audience and tell stories that are relevant and important to them."

Key to the success of ABC Owned Television Stations is telling stories that reflect the communities stations serve. "We highlight local heroes, shine a spotlight on businesses and organizations making a difference, and support a variety of important cultural events," Matthews says.

In fall 2023, a 10am newscast was launched in New York, Philadelphia, and Raleigh. A 3pm newscast came to Fresno, a market with a significant agricultural community that begins its day before sunrise. By the time you read this, a 4am newscast will be on the air at KTRK-13 in Houston.

Matthews is also pleased at how ABC Owned Television Stations is growing its business in "unique and innovative ways" as its 24/7 streams continue to add content. Live local newscasts are now available on Hulu. "This environment of innovation and experimentation has yielded great results for our stations," Matthews says, noting that 2023 saw the ABC Owned Television Stations earn the most streaming minutes compared to competitors.

One of the other key focus areas for Matthews is the development of a strong intern-conversion strategy to prepare future news leaders. "We have a 12-month Producer Boot Camp that provides on-the-job training in our newsrooms and in the field to help develop a pipeline of future producers," he says. We host 'wrap parties' for our interns and encourage them to continue building their journalism careers and consider returning to our stations in the future. We're also grateful to be part of the Walt Disney Company ecosystem, which provides a wide variety of internal development opportunities for all employees from interns to executives."



Catherine Badalamente

10 CATHERINE BADALAMENTE

President/CEO, Graham Media Group

2023 Rank: No. 12

It considers itself "the authentic local voice passionately informing and celebrating our communities." From Orlando and Jacksonville, Fla., to San Antonio, Roanoke-Lynchburg, Houston, and Detroit, Graham Media Group has crafted stations that are innovators yet continue to provide



news and insight with a flair instilled under Post-Newsweek ownership — continuing a Graham family tradition in each of its markets.

Leading the broadcast stations is Catherine Badalamente, who has emerged as one of broadcast television's top women in leadership following the early-2022 retirement of an equally well-respected CEO, Emily Barr. In November, Badalamente joined her peers by serving as co-chair of Forecast 2024, the annual leadership conference presented by **RBR+TVBR** and *Radio Ink*. She appeared on the Executive Super Session at the exclusive affair and spoke particularly of the role AI will play in broadcast television in the near future.

Specifically, Badalamente noted how Graham stations are looking at artificial intelligence through a business lens, and what GMG can do to "create capacity" remains a centerpiece of how the company is using GenAI in the right way — ensuring its stations do not run afoul of the law.

From a broadcast standard, how will GenAI be put to use? "That will be determined," Badalamente said. She also told Forecast attendees that looking at the business she oversees as a digital media company with "an amazing broadcast asset" is core to how AI is being implemented at the Graham Holdings unit, which includes flagship NBC affiliate WDIV-4 in Detroit.

11 (tie) ASHLEY GOLD and ERIC MEYROWITZ

Co-EVP/Group Head, Hearst Television

2023 Rank: NEW

In September 2021, privately held Hearst Television promoted its SVP/Sales and VP/Sales, respectively, to new roles. Today, Ashley Gold and Eric Meyrowitz are EVPs/Group Heads, sharing oversight of Hearst Television's 33 broadcast stations and two radio stations. Gold and Meyrowitz rose to their respective roles with the naming of Frank Biancuzzo as President of Hearst Media Production Group.

Gold and Meyrowitz each earned greater roles at Hearst in May 2023. At that time, Jordan Wertlieb rose from President of Hearst Television to the corporate-level post of EVP/COO at Hearst. This move put Michael Hayes in the role of Hearst Television President, while active oversight of the stations went to Gold and Meyrowitz.

Meyrowitz's resume includes a role as SVP/Sales at Hearst Television, which he rejoined as VP/Sales in 2014. From 1997-2000 he served as National Sales Manager for WBAL-11 in Baltimore. After that, Meyrowitz served as VP/GM of WPIX-11 in New York.

Asked to provide his thoughts on the challenges and opportunities for broadcast TV today, Meyrowitz says, "One significant challenge facing the broadcasting industry is the fierce competition for viewers' attention amidst the varied media consumption habits and time available to consume content from the audience. The allure of social media, streaming platforms, and apps for user-generated content is scattering audiences across several platforms. Nevertheless, the development of engaging content such as local news, live sports, and local programming continues to offer compelling reasons for audiences to stay tuned to TV."





Eric Meyrowitz



Ashley Gold

Given its no-cost access, Meyrowitz also believes that for advertisers aiming to maximize the impact and return on investment for their products and services, broadcast television continues to demonstrate its effectiveness as a sales channel.

Gold also chimes in on the state of broadcast television, calling it "an exciting and rapidly evolving business." She continues, "As with all industries, broadcast television has the challenge and opportunity of embracing technology. Importantly, we need to continue to produce content that connects with all age groups and helps ensure we are positioned on platforms, apps, streams, and screens whenever viewers want it."

Gold adds that the industry's biggest responsibility and opportunity remain in its commitment to superserve local communities in ways that "giant content providers" and social media cannot. She says, "We are unique in the sense that we are local, and we need to continue to exploit that advantage; we need to be locally focused with our content and with our advertising messages."

How is Hearst helping to create the industry's leaders of the future? It partners with universities nationwide, Meyrowitz says, while being actively engaged in diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. Gold feels she is personally connected to helping grow the future leaders of broadcast television; she says, "We have so many smart, creative, and diverse voices coming into the industry at a pivotal time, and we are encouraged about the next generation."





Ignacio "Nacho" Meyer

12 IGNACIO 'NACHO' MEYER

President of U.S. Networks, TelevisaUnivision

2023 Rank: NEW

The Spanish-language television industry is more competitive than ever. While broadcast stations continue to attract U.S. Hispanics with unique programming and a distinct delivery of big events also found on English-language television — including Super Bowl LVIII — "FAST" channels are also attracting viewers.

For TelevisaUnivision, bringing programming to viewers from the world's largest content creator en español very much involves ViX, its over-the-top streaming platform. Then there are the signature Univision and UniMás networks, and the company's owned stations in the U.S. that continue to fiercely compete against Telemundo, Estrella TV, and local and regional choices.

Ensuring that TelevisaUnivision's U.S. operations remain top-notch and market leaders is a man who prefers to be called "Nacho" — Ignacio Meyer. Meyer has held his current role since September 2022, shifting from the role of SVP of Entertainment and Music at Univision Communications following the merger between Miami-headquartered Univision and Mexico City-based Televisa. Meyer's time at Univision dates back to 2011, when he was named VP of Business Development. Before that, he spent nine years leading strategic development for Univision as an outside contractor through KONEXXION Enterprises. Meyer began his career in early 1996 as a senior account executive at pioneering U.S. Hispanic advertising agency Sánchez & Levitan, working with such clients as BellSouth and Capital One.

As Meyer sees it, we are in the midst of a transformation — for consumers and industry alike. "Shifts in consumer behaviors are reshaping content consumption patterns," he says. "Despite these changes, audiences are consuming more video content than ever across multiple platforms, and they still tune in to TV, where they remain engaged to be part of culturally relevant moments that foster conversations on social platforms and among their communities."

To best serve its audiences, TelevisaUnivision is adding two hours of additional live content per day and bolstering its news content ahead of the 2024 U.S. presidential election. Meanwhile, Meyer notes that TelevisaUnivision is continuously seeking out new, creative talent as it develops projects that "authentically" represent and engage U.S. Hispanics.



Dan York

13 DAN YORK

President/CEO, Cox Media Group

2023 Rank: NEW

In May 2020, as the world slowly began to recover from the depths of the COVID-19 pandemic, a change in leadership came to Cox Media Group. One month earlier, Kim Guthrie had departed as CMG's chief executive. Now, CMG was handing the keys to the C-Suite over to an individual who had most recently served as SVP/Chief Content Officer at AT&T and its then-owned DirecTV.

"I have always admired and respected the unparalleled quality of CMG's 90+ TV and radio stations, digital and advertising platforms, and the company's unwavering commitment to journalistic integrity," Dan York said at the time of his appointment. Today, CMG's stations include dominant FMs WFEZ "Easy 93.1" in Miami, WDUV "105.5 The Dove" in Tampa, WSRV "The River" in Atlanta, and WJGL "96.9 The Eagle" in Jacksonville. On the TV side, York oversees a collection of properties that includes stations with massive market shares — WHIO-7 in Dayton, Ohio, among the biggest. CMG's stations also include WSB-2 in Atlanta, WFTV-9 in Orlando, KIRO-7 in Seattle-Tacoma, WPXI-11 in Pittsburgh, WFXT "Boston 25," and WSOC-9 in Charlotte, among other properties.

The performance of the TV stations is what led **RBR+TVBR** readers to nominate York, placing him in our *Broadcast Television's Best Leaders* rankings for the first time after roles at both Time Warner Sports and HBO. While cable TV is certainly in his past, it is over-the-air television that is his biggest passion today.

"There is no better platform than broadcasting to reach and serve consumers and advertisers," York says, adding that free-to-air television also brings "tremendous value" to the media ecosystem. "New technologies like NextGen TV and AI, plus our popular and critical (yet undervalued) local news, investigative journalism, sports, and entertainment content make broadcasting the industry's cornerstone and present great opportunities for us moving forward."

At the same time, York believes the industry must remain focused on key issues including the growing involvement of Big Tech in media and the current approach by regulators on topics that are critical to broadcasting.

14 BYRON ALLEN

Founder and Chairman/CEO, Allen Media Group

2023 Rank: No. 8


Byron Allen

He has repeatedly expressed his ambition to build the nation's biggest owner of broadcast television stations. He's also been waging a war against McDonald's, accusing the quick service restaurant giant of racial discrimination. Today, Byron Allen is as active as ever, with over-the-air and free ad-supported streaming television ("FAST") channels each attracting viewers and advertisers.

As of today, Allen Media Group's broadcast properties comprise 22 stations in markets as diverse as Tucson; Honolulu; Tupelo, Miss.; and Eugene-Springfield, Ore. Meanwhile, the Local NOW streaming platform continues to grow.

What's the long-term vision for Local NOW, as Allen sees it? Is he satisfied with the growth seen to date? "The long-term vision of Local NOW is to be the world's best streaming service and global super app," he shares. "Yes, the growth of Local NOW has been explosive. We are seeing exponential gains in users, time spent per user, and total viewing minutes. Local NOW keeps getting better every day. There's something for everyone, and it's simple to use. We are leading the way with our content offerings and will continue to provide our users the best local, national, and entertainment content."

As broadcast television stations have invested in local news and entertainment programming as a key driver of keeping viewers informed, giving the stations a unique draw is often the positive result. There is also syndication, an area of expertise for AMG. How have AMG's TV stations embraced both local news programming and syndicated fare to "make it their own" in a sea of digital and linear competitors?

"Local broadcast television stations really matter, especially local news," Allen replies. "Our single focus is to invest in local news and always strive to be the No. 1 local news provider. When we develop our first-run syndicated shows, it's very important that we believe these programs will help enhance and amplify our local news. We have a very strong culture where syndicated content and local news work together very closely."


Rob Hubbard

15 ROB HUBBARD

President/CEO, Hubbard Television Group and VP, Hubbard Broadcasting

2023 Rank: No. 13

"We succeed by always doing the right thing with focus, urgency, and passion."

That's the mission statement of Hubbard Broadcasting, owner of broadcast television stations in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Albuquerque, the New York markets of Albany-Schenectady-Troy and Rochester, and small markets in Minnesota. Overseeing the properties is Rob Hubbard, one of the third generation of broadcasters at Hubbard, which also owns the MVPD-distributed REELZCHANNEL.

As Mr. Hubbard has again been recognized by his peers for his leadership prowess, he continues to maintain a low profile, electing to put the spotlight on the stations and employees rather than himself.

16 JIMMY GOODMON

President/COO, Capitol Broadcasting Co.

2023 Rank: No. 14

It may have just five broadcast TV brands, but Raleigh-based Capitol Broadcasting Co. is a nationally recognized and respected organization that has proven to be an innovator and regional leader in both radio and television.

Overseeing it all is James F. Goodmon Jr. — described by Capitol Broadcasting Co. as a lifelong broadcaster with a passion for the business. He began his career as a 16-year-old camera operator for WRAL-5 in Raleigh's 5am newscast. Since then, Goodmon has handled promotions, programming, and operations and has even been an account executive for the radio and television stations.

Goodmon is the fourth generation of his family to hold the title of Capitol Broadcasting President, following in the footsteps of his father, Jim; great-uncle Fred Fletcher; and company founder A.J. Fletcher — Jimmy's great-grandfather.


Jimmy Goodmon

17 NEAL SABIN

EVP and President of Content and Networks, Weigel Broadcasting

2023 Rank: No. 16

It's been a strong start to 2024 for Weigel Broadcasting. While some may mainly be familiar with the company owned by Norm Shapiro for its MeTV digital multicast network and affiliated radio brand, Weigel is the owner of Milwaukee's CBS affiliate, the home of The CW Network in Chicago, and the Univision affiliate serving Seattle-Tacoma.

Neal Sabin is overseeing those stations, and is enjoying some considerable achievements. In January, its WMLW "The M" in Milwaukee scored a broadcast TV package with the Milwaukee Bucks NBA franchise. It also learned from the FCC that it has received approval to build a station that will likely serve Green Bay, Wisc. These announcements came after a year-end decision by DirecTV to add Weigel's Heroes & Icons (H&I) digital multicast network to its lineup.

Sabin, who has been associated with WCIU since 1994 and became MeTV President in 2011, comments, "Weigel Broadcasting continues to invest for the long term, having bought stations that cover almost 40% of the country. We've expanded news in our major affiliate markets, brought sports back to broadcast, and are fighting for broadcast exclusivity. Our biggest business is the diginet network sector, where we are close to having 10 distinct properties serving a wide range of viewers. We do all of this while promoting over-the-air viewing and antennas, knowing that we must reach the cord-cutters and cord-nevers."



Neal Sabin

Asked what he believes are the biggest challenges for broadcast television, Sabin responds, "Being present and accounted for on all the platforms viewers are now viewing content on." In his view, local news and our democracy depend on being able to reach viewers and serve them no matter how they get the content. He says, "Some say the marketplace should dictate which stations will be on what platforms. We will need more than marketplace dynamics to ensure access and critical mass."

Lastly, Sabin sees too many short-term decisions being made across the broadcast television industry, rather than those focused on long-term innovation and sustainability.



18 MIKE MEARA

President of Broadcast, News-Press & Gazette Co.

2023 Rank: No. 15

Take a trip to California's Central Coast or Coachella Valley, and there's an excellent chance you'll tune to a broadcast television station owned by a company headquartered in St. Joseph, Mo. News-Press & Gazette Co. and its NPG Broadcast arm continue to grow audience and ad share in such markets as Palm Springs, Santa Barbara, and Monterey-Salinas. It also has properties in Colorado Springs; El Paso; Columbia, Mo.; Bend, Ore.; Pocatello, Idaho; and its home market due north of Kansas City.


Mike Meara

Overseeing the stations is Mike Meara, who notes that advertising headwinds, regulatory challenges, an evolving network/affiliate relationship, and threats from "Big Tech" are issues that require no elaboration.

In contrast, Meara says, "The opportunities for broadcast television still exist in localism. We continue to see relevance and appetite for our local news, local information, our ability to connect our communities, and our ability to help local businesses acquire new customers and grow their business. If given a level playing field, we are confident we can thrive in our local communities."

How is NPG helping to create the industry's leaders of the future? "Our focus is primarily in creating leaders in our local markets. We want to develop leaders that are connected to the community and invested in enhancing the local community. Those attributes would transfer to a future industry leader as well."

19 JEFFERY LIBERMAN

President/COO, Entravision Communications

2023 Rank: NEW

For the first time, a veteran Hispanic-market broadcast executive appears among *Broadcast Television's Best Leaders*, and it is thanks to the company's collection of 47 over-the-air television stations. While Entravision boasts 21 Univision affiliate markets, it also has NBC, FOX, and The CW Network stations in its stable. That gives Entravision 4.6 million weekly viewers "with robust — and growing — buying power," something Jeffery Liberman likely emphasizes as Entravision's growth of late is being driven by its digital division.


Jeffery Liberman

As Liberman sees it, "We believe linear television for the Latino market is extremely important, with the majority of viewing geared toward local news and entertainment. Understanding local preferences, traditions, and interests is key to creating successful localized content. Because of this, and in line with our strategic plan, at the beginning of the year we expanded our local news in all of our Univision markets. We added morning and midday news in all of our markets. In addition to El Paso and McAllen-Brownsville, we added weekend news in Denver, San Diego, and Las Vegas."

Liberman also points to Entravision's long-term affiliation agreements with Univision, which allow it to capitalize on its ability to offer a wide range of programming, with appeal to different segments of the Hispanic community. "More importantly, it is crucial that our content resonates with Hispanic viewers and is culturally relevant,



which will allow us to effectively maximize viewership," Liberman says.

Entravision is helping to create future-proof media choices as it transforms itself into a global digital media advertising enterprise.

Asked for his thoughts on the subject, Liberman responds, "We are highly focused on building our digital businesses. Entravision's Smadex business unit continues to invest in advanced technology and data analytics to better understand consumer behavior, optimize ad targeting, and measure campaign performance. This includes leveraging AI and machine learning algorithms to analyze large datasets and predict trends."

In the U.S., Entravision continues to expand into digital platforms. "This allows our advertisers to reach audiences wherever they are consuming content. This includes linear television and radio, connected television, over-the-top, social media, streaming services, mobile apps, and websites."

20 DUJUAN MCCOY

Owner and President/ CEO, Circle City Broadcasting

2023 Rank: No. 18

"Local TV remains the primary lifeline and first informer for all local communities." That's the most important statement DuJuan McCoy, whose stations include high-profile WISH-8 in Indianapolis, offers when asked what makes his Indiana properties stand out from their peers. His view isn't isolated to his stations, or the markets in which Circle City owns stations. Rather, he says of the entire broadcast television industry, "We are the most trusted and respected journalistic medium in America. Both linear and digital platforms continue to lead the way as the dominant reach medium in America."

As such, McCoy says Circle City Broadcasting's stations take pride in upholding these journalistic principles while keeping the communities they serve first and foremost.



DuJuan McCoy

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CIRCLE CITY BROADCASTING HAS A LOT TO CELEBRATE!

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A WAY TO TRANSFORM BROADCAST MEDIA

In March 2023, a Seattle-headquartered broadcast and AV system integration company specializing in facility design, installation, and project management rebranded. With a new name, ZTransform didn't miss a beat, with the construction of new studios and implementation of updated broadcast technology for a local radio station perhaps emblematic of what's next for company founder Erik Utter and his team.

In 2004, Utter opened the doors to what for 19 years was known as Utter Associates. It's worked with some of the world's biggest technology companies, while also building out broadcast radio and television studios.

As 2024 began, ZTransform gained notice for its latest project to involve an over-the-air radio brand. This time around, the task was a significant upgrade to the facilities used by Seattle's noncommercial Jazz station, Pacific Public Media's KNKX-FM. New studios were just part of the needs for the station — literally saved by listeners who in spring 2016 contributed funds to preserve programming that had been heard under its previous ownership as KPLU-FM.

With Managing Partner Ben Wolk by his side and Paul Catterson promoted in January from VP of Strategy to General Manager, facility design and work-flow architecture were some of the key considerations that went into the KNKX project. Looking at the station, which had become so successful that it had outgrown its studios, required a two-way conversation from the very start of the construction plan.

"They're really a dream customer because there was not an RFP process," Utter says, explaining that KNKX did not seek bids from multiple companies. "We have completed several in-market radio station moves, and in other markets, but in Seattle in particular we worked with a couple of the largest non-commercial stations in their moves."

Utter is referring to the relocations and upgrades seen to two nationally recognized radio organizations — Classical KING and eclectic Adult Alternative pacesetter KEXP — over the last five years. The KNKX leadership team toured those facilities, which received a lot of media attention in Seattle. Not knowing who built those stations' new homes, the KNKX team determined that what those stations gained from their moves was precisely what Seattle's Jazz home needed. "We were brought in after a relatively short interview," Utter says, with ZTransform's team walking through the design and integration process as they learned more about KNKX's vision. "We entered into a contract in no time … and they're not all that easy."


Erik Utter

In just a few weeks, ZTransform was hired, with most of the time used to determine the scope of work they would be required to achieve. "One of the things I always like to say about this is that the local staff — the engineering manager or the architecture firm involved — in a lot of instances are first-timers when it comes to moving a facility. Most of the time you really need to do some hand-holding and some education on what's really involved. What are the realistic time frames? Who are the other players that you need to bring to the table? There's an awful lot of coordination with those other players."

With references checked by KNKX, ZTransform went to work. The first step was to ensure cooperation from the station, which had already engaged with an architect: V Three Studios of St. Louis. That company had been tapped by Bonneville International to build out its San Francisco-Oakland radio station hub in Daly City, Calif., among other projects across multiple industries.



"Very few architects specialize in radio and TV broadcasting," Utter notes. "That was very, very helpful for everyone involved." A building hadn't been identified, however, and test fits were being done in several potential locations. Eventually, KNKX landed across the street from one of Seattle's most popular tourist stops, Pike Place Market.

Interestingly, the waterfront building KNKX chose was one Utter had once worked in while employed as an engineer in a post-production facility no longer housed there. Twenty years later, Utter's onetime office, and everything else, was gutted. ZTransform and V Three then worked closely on everything from space planning to electrical and acoustical design. Furniture and room layout and a conduit cable pathway and cable tray were also discussed as part of the construction plan.

"We were effectively a consultant to the architect in the earliest phase of the project, and that is fairly standard," Utter says. "That is how we want to be brought in on a project. It's better to bring your system integrator in early to identify and collaborate on these things than to fix it later. The timing was perfect when we came into the picture."

With the collaborative conversation now including topics such as mechanical systems, electrical needs, and lighting, Sellen Construction was hired as the contractor; ZTransform had worked with that company on two previous broadcast contracts, making the KNKX project flow even more smoothly.

"There are unusual things about building TV and radio facilities," Utter says. "You have unusual acoustic considerations, with floating floors and floating ceilings. You have specialized power requirements, with isolated grounds and backup power. All of that is a little unusual, so working with an architect and a contractor that have some experience really makes a project go that much smoother."

A SITE FOR MORE EYES

For KNKX, being highly visible in the Seattle community was very much a part of the site-selection process. It speaks of the station's commitment to its listeners, and its present programming mix. "In addition to being a Jazz station, they are also an NPR Member station with a news department producing quite a bit of local content daily," Utter says. "They wanted to integrate tightly with the local community, so that location and that visibility was exactly what they were looking for."

A performance space was envisioned from the get-go, allowing the public to come in, much like KEXP and KING offer at their respective Seattle Center facilities near the Space Needle.

With KNKX's construction moving ahead, were cost overruns and sticking within the budget overriding concerns? Was working with a noncomm on a project of this scale perhaps different than with a for-profit operation? "Budgets are always a concern, regardless of the customer and their financial health," Utter explains. "There was certainly a value engineering process at play here."

But Utter notes that with noncommercial station projects, there's much more flexibility in the budget. "We sit down with the customer and really try to understand what they are trying to accomplish," he says. One of the challenges for ZTransform was to coordinate the needs of two different groups within KNKX — the news division and the music division. "They are using the same facility, in the same physical space, with really different functions and requirements, so that sometimes they are at odds with each other."

This is where the interaction among all interested parties becomes an essential. The result? Utter says, "We developed a budget for us, as they were leaning on us to tell them what the budget should be."

Then, in a move wholly dissimilar to anything a commercially licensed station group would be able to do, KNKX went forth with a fundraising drive developed based on that rough order budget. "The other noncommercial stations we've worked on have gone through similar processes," Utter says, with fundraising goals pegged to that estimate.



"We are not just designing a technology, we are designing a workflow, and that is more important than the technology."

A TASTE FOR BROADCAST UPGRADES

Utter began his career in 1992 as an engineer and operations specialist in that post-production company once based in KNKX's new home. Later, he spent 5 1/2 years as a broadcast engineer for NBC Sports' coverage of four Olympic Games.

That experience helped Utter gain broadcast television industry clients, including News-Press & Gazette Co., the privately held Missouri-based group that pioneered ATSC 3.0 technology at its Santa Barbara, Calif., station group. While NPG is widely recognized for its TV properties, it continues to own a Regional Mexican FM in Palm Springs, Calif., and an AM/FM Talk combo in Colorado Springs, Colo. — facilities that ZTransform had a hand in building under its previous company identity.

"We have had a long-standing relationship with News-Press & Gazette and have built, or rebuilt, every single one of their TV and radio stations over a multi-year process," Utter says. "By the time we finished the last one, they were ready for a refresh at the beginning of that circle again!"

Utter calls his team's work for NPR a great example of a project he's led for a commercially licensed broadcaster, while on the noncomm side, Oregon State University's Corvallis radio and television stations are also notable.

As of late February, ZTransform was in the midst of a series of master control upgrades for the NBC Owned Television Stations.

Asked if there is one side of the broadcast media industry that is driving ZTransform's business in 2024, Utter replies, "I would say 75% of our business is in TV, and what drives the TV business for us is market consolidation — the News-Press & Gazette model." In that instance, the operations of those stations will be done remotely through a Colorado Springs master control center, using a hub-and-spoke model. This technology is driving the local TV business, Utter says. Another concern for broadcast TV is the relocation of production control into the cloud — a big need for broadcast news.

On the radio side of the business, most of ZTransform's work involves noncommercial station licensees; Utter explains that this is the result of the fundraising model KNKX and other operations have created to help pay for their projects. Next up for ZTransform: the move from Tilikum Crossing to KOIN Tower in downtown Portland, Ore., for All Classical Radio. "As the costs continue to go up, they are able to fundraise around that, and we are excited about the project because they are building a world-class facility."

Then there's the education vertical, meaning a college or university looking to build out a TV studio for student instruction can contact ZTransform, and Utter's team will put the project into play for the school. He particularly likes the long funding cycles associated with colleges and universities as they discover students may not be thrilled with learning on long-outdated equipment not seen in the professional environment.

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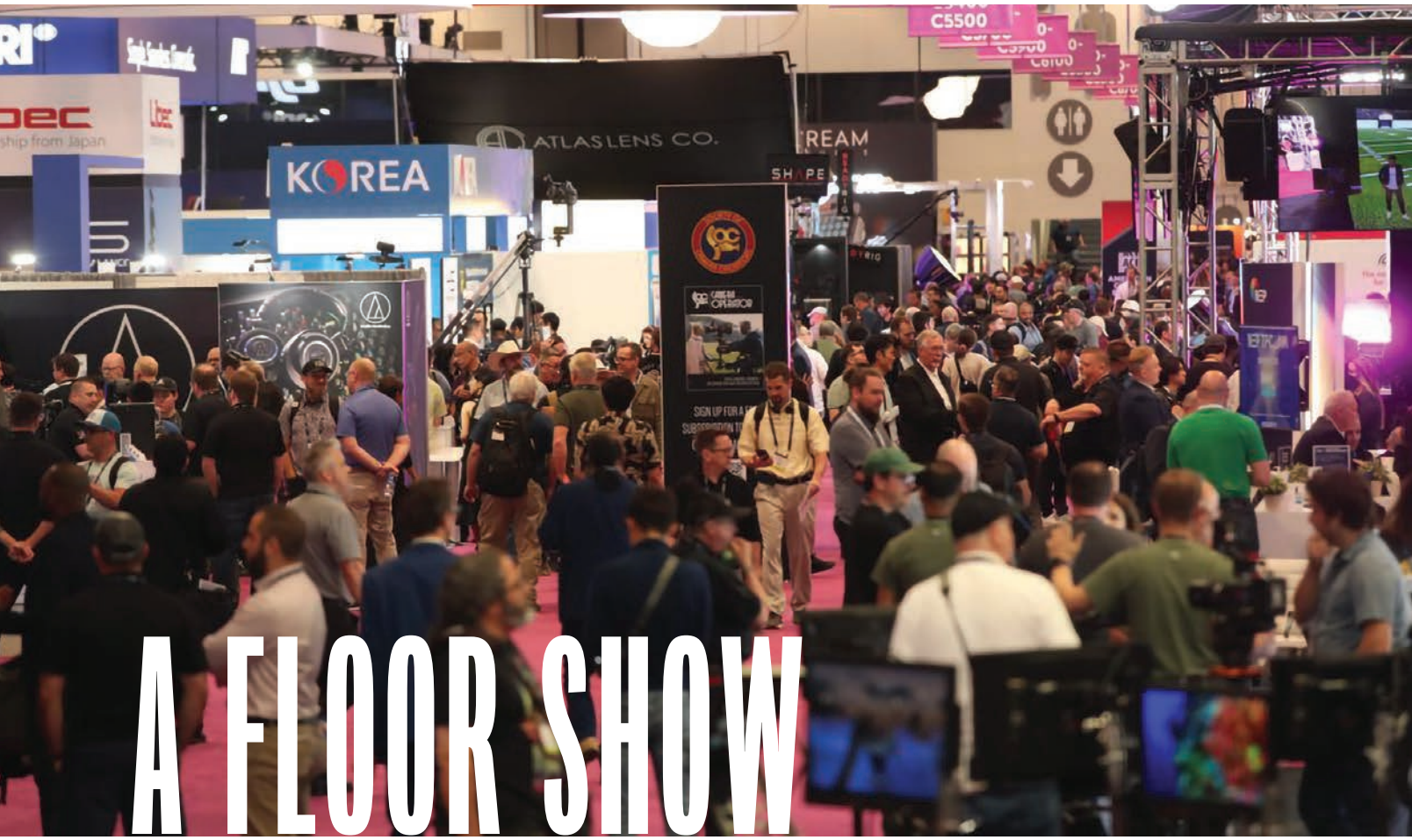
Outside of broadcast, ZTransform also has high-profile corporate and new media clients. "Hands down, those are our biggest customers — by a wide margin," Utter says. However, he's unable to share details about these projects due to client confidentiality agreements.

Meanwhile, ZTransform elected to use the Wheatstone AES-67 compatible WheatNet-IP audio infrastructure for its projects. Additionally, Broadcast Electronics (BE)'s AudioVault was selected for audio storage, studio automation, and playout.

"We're big fans of Wheatstone and WheatNet," Utter says, adding that a new radio station project sees ZTransform intending to use an Axia console from The Telos Alliance. "They are rock-solid systems. We are not ever doing reboots, and our service calls are more operational. The flexibility that reduces cost, and design and integration, is perhaps the biggest benefit."

A benefit of moving to an AES-67-based system, Utter explains, is removing a lot of patch. Then there is the removing of "a ton" of cabling from the system — along with all of those failure points. "What you are gaining is the flexibility to have any signal available anywhere at any time, and that applies not just to audio," Utter says. "That applies to contact closures. There are dozens of them that are a part of the WheatNet system."

As Utter concluded the conversation, he was asked what he'd say given the chance to provide an elevator pitch on why ZTransform stands out from others in its space. He replies, "My background is in engineering. I have a very strong understanding of workflow, so where I think we stand out is in workflow design. We can very quickly get our heads around 'what are we doing today?' and 'where are the issues and bottlenecks and extra costs involved?' so we can design a system around a workflow that fits. We are not just designing a technology, we are designing a workflow, and that is more important than the technology."



A FLOOR SHOW POISED TO SHINE

From GenAI to the latest advancements from broadcast technology companies providing everything from towers and transmitters to captioning opportunities, the 2024 NAB Show's expo floor will most certainly be abuzz with activity and explorations in innovation.

What are some of the must-see stops if you're attending the conference? What if you can't make it to Las Vegas this year? Don't fret: **RBR+TVBR** spoke with key broadcast technology industry leaders to get the scoop on what's hot in 2024.

DIELECTRIC

When it comes to the Sinclair Inc.-owned subsidiary focused on broadcast towers, three things stand out. The first is a merging of RF equipment with protection services, and it involves a system launch of Dielectric's OptiLoad. **Keith Pelletier**, President of Dielectric, explains more about the new product.

"It's an on-demand device," he says. "Typically there would be a station load or a transmitter combining RF path that would need protection in case something went down. That load would be continuously in operation and would need to be in a heat exchange or in a pump to the cooling system of the transmitter. What the OptiLoad does is senses RF power — using PLCs, or programmable logic — and cycles the circulation of the coolant."

This cuts electric bills, as the electricity doesn't need to be on continuously. "The power combiner is phased so that all of the power goes to the antenna," Pelletier says. "But if the transmitter on one side starts to lose amplifiers, it creates an imbalance. Then all power doesn't go to the antenna."

If that load doesn't turn on and protect that RF power, it will burn up passive RF equipment, Pelletier warns. "There could be significant damage to the transmitter," he says, while adding that this is a "green" initiative.


Keith Pelletier

Thirteen OptiLoad products were in production as of late February, Pelletier says.

One key shift with respect to coolants is a shift to liquid cooling from air, as it's more efficient. Pelletier points to high-power TV stations. "It's similar to cooling the transmitter racks," he says. "When you're talking air-cooled, you are limited in how much power you can do."

That's where redundancy and good logic combine to ensure there is no danger of overheating.

The NAB Show will also see Dielectric show off its new DCR-E FM antenna, which fills the gap between Dielectric's lowest-power (DCR-T) and higher-power (DCR-C, DCR-M, DCR-S, and DCR-U) ring antennas. Pelletier shares that Dielectric was missing the mark between the lower- and higher-power options.

The DCR-E is designed for radio stations requiring input power ratings up to 4kW per bay. The design architecture is scalable to 12 bays, with each bay weighing only 18 pounds, making traditional mounting and installation quick and simple. The DCR-E is unique in that it uses a pressurized balun, which increases its power rating by four times in comparison to the DCR-T.

John Schadler, Vice President of Engineering at Dielectric, points out, "It carries over the same flexibility as our high-power ring-style antennas, including stackable bay designs in center of end fed configurations, null fill and beam tilt options, and flexible wavelength spacings." Optional radomes are available to protect the DCR-E from icing and other weather-related damage.

With FM radio a big focus, Dielectric and SCMS recently forged a strategic partnership that gives SCMS exclusive rights to the distribution of Dielectric's FM radio antenna products and systems in the United States. The new partnership marks Dielectric's first exclusive distribution agreement for the domestic FM radio market. "We've put a large effort into research and development, and we've done some drone studies out in the field," Pelletier says. "This alliance gets more salespeople on the ground in being able to better bolster our product line, putting the bow tie on the whole package."

SCMS's Michael Sharpstene was brought on at the beginning of 2024 to serve as National Sales Manager. Sharpstene assumed all of Dielectric's U.S. sales and business development responsibilities east of the Mississippi. This

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was precipitated by the retirement of Christine Zuba. "It showcases our efforts to want to be a more significant player on the FM side," Pelletier says.

Lastly, Dielectric is also an active player in the rollout of ATSC 3.0-powered NextGen TV. In 2022 and 2023, major TV markets saw NextGen TV come on-air through "lighthouses" ahead of the rollout of single-frequency networks (SFNs). Now, the push is on to bring more SFNs to light. "It's going to be quick and fast and furious," Pelletier predicts. "And we've been preparing for this since before the repack process."

GATESAIR

The SFN wait, and ensuring UHF television stations have all of the latest technology, is at the heart of what GatesAir will be sharing with NAB Show attendees in 2024. A new UHF ATSC 3.0 liquid-cooled transmitter will likely attract much attention.

Raymond Miklius, the company's VP of Technology, shares, "It's the next generation of our transmitter that supports ATSC 3.0. We've made some enhancements in terms of efficiency and cost structure, making it easy for replacement purposes. We have some customers that are doing signal expansion, and they're using it for remote learning applications as well."

What's the biggest benefit to a liquid-cooled transmitter, compared to an air-cooled system that some C-Suite executives may be perfectly pleased with? "The total cost-of-ownership model will show the comparisons of operating each of them, and when you get to higher-power television station, the savings in air conditioning costs get to be


Raymond Miklius

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significant," Miklius says. "Liquid can get heat out of the building much more efficiently."

Furthermore, the break-even in FM is much higher than in TV when it comes to power output and the cooling needs for a broadcaster. Thus, those in television have a bigger cost-control need when it comes to cooling. Miklius also believes that the mass deployment of SFNs is on the way — but not this year. An LPTV line is on the way, he adds, with exciters being developed by GatesAir.

Meanwhile, a new product for low-power FM — the "GX" modulator — is coming to market. Power ranges from 50 watts to 2kw. "By the end of the second quarter, all models will be available for shipping," Miklius notes.

With the FCC looking at a proposal that would allow FM broadcasters to boost their digital power, GatesAir's transmitters are at the ready. The FMXi product, an HD Radio importer/exporter, is a basic component, Miklius says. "We are fully capable of delivering anything anybody needs."

In contrast, the analog FM broadcast needs continue — in particular in Africa, perhaps one of the strongest markets for MHz-based broadcasts as certain nations continue to experience signal expansion. "The U.S. is more of a replacement market," Miklius notes. "Globally FM is still a very robust market for us. Africa is one of our primary growth markets for FM. Even in areas with DAB+ deployment, we have several projects going on for us."

On the IP side, a "huge array" of products enable connectivity and content delivery using the latest secure reliable transport (SRT) capacities, allowing the flow of content across the broadcast network to remain as smooth as possible.

With 20 years at BE on the digital audio storage side of the business, Miklius has seen trends and growth-market opportunities that have had an impact on broadcasters many times. Putting audio on a hard drive was one big trend, he recalls, with the dreaded cart machine put out to pasture for radio. The deployment of HD Radio was another big moment for broadcast technology. But the improvement of RF application devices is a major development he's thankful for. "It helped the economics of over-the-air radio and TV and brought a significant improvement to broadcasters," Miklius says.

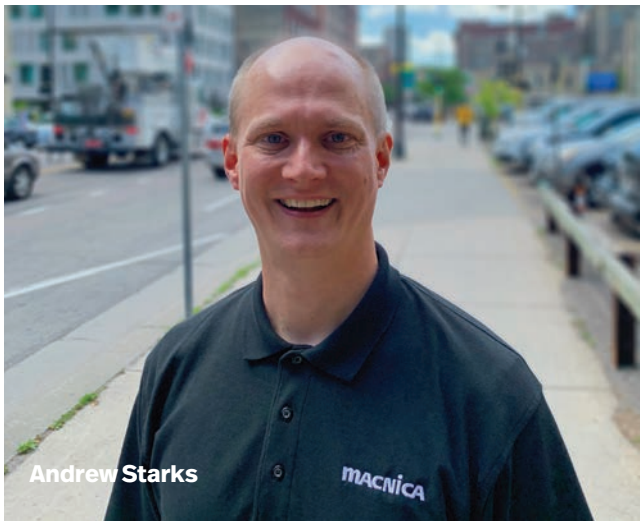
MACNICA

In late February, the North American division of Macnica Fuji Electronics Holdings welcomed a new President — an individual who formerly led a company focused on embedded vision cameras, Edge AI, and SaaS products. Taking the post at Macnica Americas is Sebastien Dignard. He was previously at iENSO, a company with offices in Israel, Ukraine, the People's Republic of China, and in Toronto, Ontario.

For **Andrew Starks**, Director of Product Management at Macnica, Dignard's arrival is "huge news," and is a strong example of the company's commitment to the future of audio and video. Heading into NAB, Macnica has done much work with both IPMX (Internet Protocol Media Experience) and SMPTE ST 2110 — standards suites that describe how to send digital media over an IP network.

"We're excited to bring out a compelling 100G nic card for SMPTE ST 2110 and AES67 workflows," Starks says, noting that those needing low latency and cost effectiveness can take advantage of this broadcast-





technology product. "It includes support for integrating JPEG AES into the card as well."

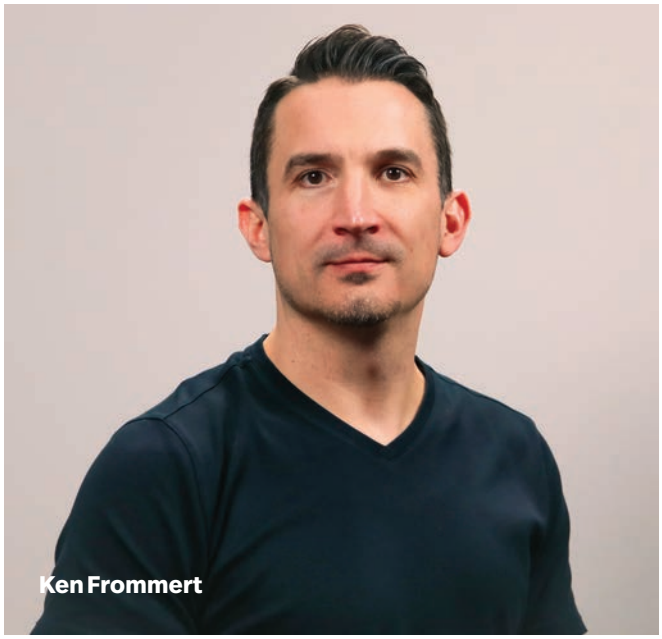
If you're not quite certain what language Starks is speaking, rest assured it's all about broadcasters' transition to IP networks and the relaxation of timing and synchronization requirements seen across over-the-air media.

Starks explains, "The key thing about Macnica's strategy is that we strongly believe in and invest in open standards. If you see the benefits in the key transactional tools our devices do, that world only comes about with open standards. The real scale happens when you have one that people can depend on."

At IBC 2023 in September, Macnica placed a spotlight on its flagship MPA1000 module, ME10 SoC solution, and IPMX Product Development Kit with open APIs as part of standards-based technology demonstrations. The story for 2024 will see those discussions continue.

ENCO

Workflow simplification continues to be a hallmark of ENCO. Ahead of the NAB Show, ENCO President **Ken Frommert** takes pride in demonstrating how far the company has come since rolling out the DAD brand of products more than 30 years ago, quickly establishing itself as a radio automation pioneer.



"With DAD systems powering studio-based on-air operations all over North America and internationally, the next obvious step was to unlock remote capabilities that would allow production and on-air talent to access systems from anywhere — a concept that became reality with the introduction of WebDAD several years ago," Frommert says.

The next frontier for DAD? "The obvious answer would seem to be AI," he says. "That is at the top of the list for ENCO in the radio department at NAB this year, along with some WebDAD enhancements."

ENCO, which will exhibit at West Hall Booth No. 1743, will show how workflows have moved far beyond automating on-air playout. "Broadcasters are automating voice talent, newsgathering, and other production elements," Frommert says. "AI now means that we can reach further into the earliest origins of the production process. We have proved that with SpecAI, which empowers spec ad creation, and we are now addressing that on the voicetracking and dynamic content side with AITrack."

While SpecAI technically exists outside of the DAD environment, AITrack is an integrated module that can be turned on within the DAD or WebDAD workflow. Users can preschedule automated voice tracks (song intros, station IDs, localized news and weather) and use synthetic voice engines to produce natural-sounding, engaging content between songs. As used within WebDAD, AITrack is fully functional for automated broadcast production workflows.

Meanwhile, WebDAD itself is taking on a bigger profile within the DAD universe for NAB, moving beyond a browser-based remote production access tool to become a genuine part of DAD. New for NAB, WebDAD will add the DAD Presenter on-air interface, giving WebDAD users the same functionality they are used to in the studio where DAD resides. Frommert hints that WebDAD's next big step forward will include slimming down the in-studio DAD infrastructure.

Frommert is quick to note that ENCO is much more than a radio company today and will showcase key captioning and translation, virtual production, and products from its RUSHWORKS portfolio of TV automation, streaming, and robotics solutions. "We're very much looking forward to unveiling enCaption Sierra, which continues to push the boundaries of live captioning," says Frommert. "This is a fully Linux and browser-based, cloud-portable platform that improves accuracy, as well as an on-premise encoder born out of the recent acquisition of DoCaption. There's a lot to be excited about where we headed with live captioning and translation."

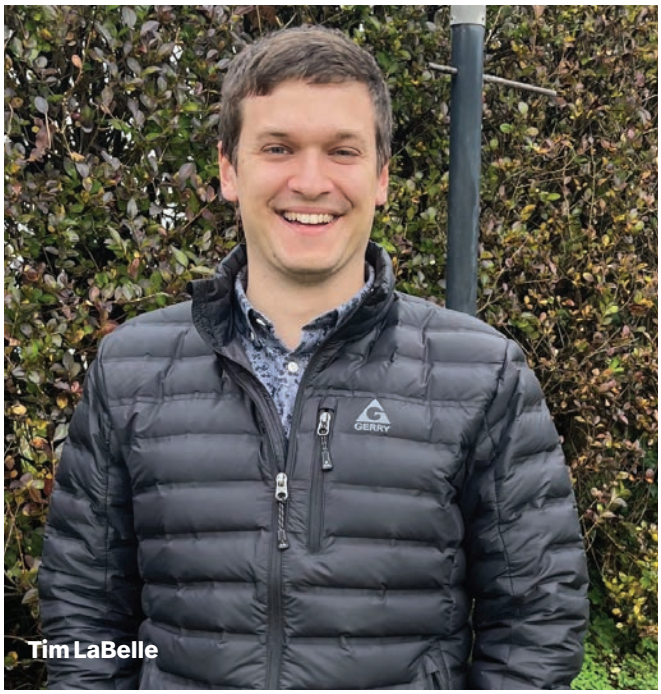
USSI Global

With Sergio Murillo now on board as VP/International Sales following executive leadership arrivals in October 2023, what's the key focus for USSI heading in to the NAB Show and across 2024?

USSI Global returns to the NAB Show floor as an official exhibitor for the first time in many years, sharing a space with ST Engineering in the West Hall (W4772).

The company last year commanded a section of the ATSC Alliance stand, where they shared their vision of ATSC 3.0 and digital signage content for out-of-home media delivery. "USSI Global is in an excellent position to deliver on that


Tony Morelli


Tim LaBelle

convergence as the technologies evolve, and we are seeing an evolution of new cases with datacasting, especially as it pertains to delivery over digital signage networks," says **Tony Morelli**, USSI Global's Chief Operations Officer.

This year, the lead message will be more focused on the satellite side of the broadcast business, where Morelli says they are seeing a transition to a satellite-and-IP hybrid model taking place. "We are not expecting to see a full transition to IP topography in the near future as many broadcasters seek the combined benefits of using satellite and terrestrial platforms," Morelli says. "That opens the door to manage satellite and IP platforms as data services.

"We also expect to see the LEO (low Earth orbit station) satellite market continue to gain ground, especially in hard-to-reach areas of the world that lack terrestrial and/or IP connectivity. We see that becoming more mainstream in broadcast as well, most notably to assist broadcasters with disaster recovery services."

StreamGuys

As an early evangelist of the CDN for broadcast content delivery, StreamGuys entered the market in 2000 with the goal of creating an affordable infrastructure for replicating linear broadcast streams online. Nearly 25 years later, StreamGuys' mission is to help broadcasters make money. At NAB, where StreamGuys will exhibit on the ENCO stand (W1743), the company will introduce its "productized" cloud streaming service and the second generation of its premium subscription service with important new benefits.

"We are very focused on helping broadcasters leverage the cloud for media workflows, which is exactly what the Reflector EVO service does," says **Tim LaBelle**, Broadcast Streaming Specialist at StreamGuys. "This ties back to our goal for the broadcast industry today, which is to streamline publishing workflows and optimize digital revenue."

That starts with Reflector EVO, announced by partner Barix last year and now ready for deployment. LaBelle says they are seeing strong interest from big broadcast names that are ready for an enterprise-level audio contribution and distribution service in the cloud. Reflector EVO streams are encoded through Barix codecs, and sent into the EVO cloud with redundancy to assure consistent uptime for large-scale operations like syndicated program delivery.

Elsewhere, the company's second-generation RevenueStream platform is targeted for broadcasters and content creators that want to monetize premium content with audiences. "RevenueStream supports everything from one-time broadcast events to recurring subscriptions that support ongoing revenue models," says LaBelle, adding that a new subscription management service powered by Pigeon keeps everything well-organized. "We also see opportunity to public media broadcasters to offer donors alternate content during pledge drives."

swXtch.io

Multi-cloud networking continues to be of big interest to broadcast media companies. What updates can **Geeter Kyrazis**, Chief Strategy Officer at swXtch.io, share ahead of the NAB Show, in particular for radio and TV stations in the U.S.?

The company swXtch.io is a relative newcomer to the broadcast industry, having officially introduced its cloudSwXtch virtual overlay platform for high-volume cloud media transport to NAB attendees at last year's show. This year marks a big step forward as the company prepares its first standalone exhibition in the West Hall (W4429). The timing may be perfect, as broadcasters continue to open more to the concept of moving more workflow functions into the cloud.

In short, swXtch.io's message to broadcasters is that they have the right solution to dynamically bridge on-prem studios with the cloud, enabling the same important features of legacy SDI production and media transport. That includes the ability to manage both uncompressed and compressed media flows in the cloud, the latter of which has not been an option — until now.

"When broadcasters started to seriously look at the cloud, there was a belief that cloud networks would work the same way as their on-prem networks," Kyrazis says.


Geeter Kyrazis



Frank Jachetta

"That is most certainly not the case, and cloudswXtch has enabled many important functions in the cloud for the time, including multicast, network path redundancy, and packet monitoring. These more traditional legacy workflows also had some complications, including many different technological links in the chain to compress, uncompress, and recompress video. Heading into NAB, we have unlocked some very important features that allow them to move media content into and through the cloud with multi-cloud diversity and reduce links in the chain."

The presence of JPEG-XS compression in cloudswXtch, new for NAB, is a cloud networking first that will help broadcasters retain their live production and downstream playout workflows from their on-prem production environments. "The SMPTE ST-2110 suite of standards relies on uncompressed video flows, which provides the broadcast-quality visual experience that broadcasters demand and which we support within cloudswXtch," Kyrazis says.

"JPEG-XS compression provides these same customers with visually lossless quality and at very low latency. This addresses the challenges of managing the heavy bandwidth usage that uncompressed video demands, while also ensuring that live content populates at all received links without delay. We're helping our customers achieve the same visual quality while making their global, multi-cloud networks operate without that feel of geographical dispersion."

MultiDyne

With a successful IBC 2023 now in the past and last year one of marked growth for the company, what are the key topics of interest for U.S. broadcast media companies in 2024 as MultiDyne sees it?

The innovator in fiber-optic networking for ground-level media transport is enjoying its first European office while settling into its larger space on New York's Long Island, following a recent relocation. "Our new space has facilitated a much better workflow for product manufacturing, and we are already expanding to new spaces inside the same facility to accommodate more operations," says CEO **Frank Jachetta**.

With an NAB Show booth in the Central Hall (C7107), helping MultiDyne customers move video IP networks and support distribution for OTT and other media services will be at the heart of interactions with NAB attendees. "Our new openGear solutions are ideal for broadcasters who need transitional tools that allow them to use their traditional SDI gear in modernized media facilities that are essentially SMPTE ST-2110 plants for IP networking and uncompressed video transport."

Jachetta explains that openGear is an open-architecture, modular frame system supported by a diverse range of broadcast equipment manufacturers; MultiDyne has been developing for the platform for nearly a decade. MultiDyne will introduce its first IP Gateway solution for uncompressed ST 2110 at NAB, helping broadcasters build stronger bridges between the SDI and IP worlds. MultiDyne will also introduce its first JPEG-XS compression product, enabling broadcasters to send many more video channels over the same pipe with no discernible loss in visual quality and at very low latency.

Barix

Barix continues to build out its next-generation line of audio-over-IP encoders and decoders with a new broadcast-specific solution that introduces important new benefits for STL, studio-to-studio, and other audio networking applications.

The new LX400, to be unveiled at NAB Show 2024, represents the successor to the Barix Exstreamer 500. The LX400 carries over many of the same features Barix customers rely on, including multiple contact closures, relays, and a USB port for direct-from-device playout. It adds


Reto Brader

several important new features that introduce new benefits and efficiencies to broadcasters, and is customizable to support legacy point-to- point and cloud networking scenarios such as syndicated program distribution.

At the top of the advanced new features list is the addition of premium-quality software codec options, including OPUS and AACplus for compressed transport, and PCM to support uncompressed transmission. The LX400's inclusion of the OPUS codec is designed to ensure broadcasters have the best possible audio quality for compressed transmission — lossless quality audio to listeners while using far less bandwidth, reducing audio contribution and distribution costs for broadcasters in the process.

Other first-time features for broadcast-specific Barix hardware products include absolute end-to-end delay control for RTP streaming, adherence to the latest security standards (HTTPS), and data redundancy modes for uninterrupted broadcasting. The LX400 also enhances buffering performance for Icecast streams. The LX400 is configurable as an encoder or decoder and is compatible with the Reflector EVO service, exclusively offered through Barix partner StreamGuys, for full-duplex audio contribution and distribution in the cloud.

"The LX400 continues Barix's rich tradition of supplying broadcasters with reliable IP audio solutions that allow them to migrate away from expensive satellite and TDM networking systems for program audio transport," says **Reto Brader**, CEO at Barix. "The underlying platform builds in the same features and capabilities of our recently introduced MultiCoder M400 solution for live IP audio encoding and streaming, and packages them into a professional, compact, and cost-efficient codec solution that meets today's audio networking requirements for the broadcast community."

Barix can be found at the NAB Show in the Central Hall at Booth No. 2348.

— With reporting by Brian Galante

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BROADCAST RADIO'S BIG VISUAL EXPERIENCE

On April 14, some of the radio and television industry's key leaders will once again gather at an invitation-only "Cocktails and Conversation" event presented by Benztown, Beasley Media Group, Jacobs Media, Skyview Networks, Xperi Corp., vCreative, QUU, and Streamline Publishing's Radio Ink and Radio + Television Business Report.

Discussion topics are sure to include a variety of big subjects tied to technology and innovation. Making radio a more visual medium has been the talk of the industry since CES 2024, and QUU CEO Steve Newberry believes that conversation will continue at the NAB Show. At QUU, the focus has been on making the in-dash audio entertainment system come alive when tuned to a broadcast radio station.

"It's an exciting time, because I believe broadcasters have really begun to see the importance of putting that great look on the dashboard or on their streams or apps, because our competition is doing it," Newberry says, noting that the visual enhancements provide new revenue opportunities for stations. "It is a better overall listener experience. If we do things that are annoying or are a turn-off for the listener, that might provide some short-term revenue, but it will ultimately interfere with that station's relationship with that listener."

If that visual component isn't provided, Newberry believes listeners will consume a radio station less. And, with the dashboard evolving in ways once unimaginable to consumers, he is focusing QUU's efforts on what is available to consumers in the "unconnected car." He says, "There is something we can do to make it more engaging to the listener. We have to get on the horse and ride now. There are huge opportunities for stations to take advantages of the vehicles that are in the market now."

Meanwhile, the start of March 2024 saw new excitement on Wall Street and from the broadcasting communities for some of the projects from Xperi Corp.'s Connected Car business unit, overseen by Joe D'Angelo.



Quu's Steve Newberry; Beasley's Lamar Smith, Mike Cooney, Tom Humma, and Justin Chase; and Xperi's Joe D'Angelo enjoy the chatter and beverages at a "Cocktails and Conversation" gathering held during CES 2024 in January.

"In the last couple of years, we've seen the Connected Car unit reach across the different Xperi business units and leverage the expertise, the services, and, in some cases, even the content that is available in our home and pay TV business," D'Angelo says. "This is really revolutionizing the suite of services that we are able to bring to the connected car."

DTS AutoStage has proven to be integral to the connected car's continued inclusion of AM and FM. What will NAB Show attendees be seeing from Xperi Corp. as close to 18 DTS AutoStage OEMs are expected by March 2025? At present, Hyundai (and its high-end Genesis line), Kia, Lincoln, and Nissan vehicles are offering drivers a more accessible — and engaging — radio experience. "You're going to get the visuals from QUU, which is driving the multimedia experience," D'Angelo says of Xperi's partner.



The most recent "Cocktails and Conversation" gathering, held at the Capital Grille in Las Vegas' Fashion Show mall during CES 2024 in January, included the attendance of hosts Dave "Chachi" Denes of Benztown, Skyview Networks' Steve Jones, Beasley Media Group head Caroline Beasley, Radio Ink and RBR+TVBR President/Publisher Deborah Parenti, QUU's Steve Newberry, Xperi Corp.'s Joe D'Angelo, and Beasley's Heidi Raphael.

The Xperi analytics platform and data tied to DTS AutoStage are being refined, and more actionable insights are bringing more opportunities for radio, D'Angelo adds.

Meanwhile, HD Radio is poised to get a boost from the FCC, with a proposed rulemaking in play that would allow broadcasters to increase the power of their HD Radio signals without the need for experimental authorization. "The ability for broadcasters to increase power is having a dramatic difference in terms of the actual coverage area, and we're seeing that in our DTS AutoStage-equipped vehicles," D'Angelo says. "We can hand back to broadcasters proof that the investments in their broadcasting infrastructure have made an impact."



A TALE OF TWO BROKERS

Broadcast media transactions are being consummated every week, although deal volume continues to be tepid compared to years past. Our inaugural *RBR+TVBR Broker Scorecard* finds two brokerage firms dominated in 2023, based on announced deals.

For the first time, the *Radio + Television Business Report*, in partnership with veteran transactions analyst Volker Moerbitz, has compiled a list of the top broadcast media industry brokers by deal value in 2023.

The survey, conducted on behalf of **RBR+TVBR** by Moerbitz, is based on reports collected from more than 40 broadcast brokers. Some 29 brokers reported that they assisted radio and TV station operators, contributing to the announced sales of 214 stations last year. It is an industry standard to report deal volume based on announced transactions and not closings.

Based on data reported by Kagan, a media research group within S&P Global Market Intelligence, broadcast deals in 2023 totaled $578.4 million. The *RBR+TVBR Broker Scorecard* breaks down that deal volume one step further, with our survey determining that $171.7 million of that deal volume was achieved with the assistance of a media broker.

The top broker in 2023, by a significant margin, was Tucson-based **Kalil & Co.** The brokerage was represented in the three largest brokered deals announced in 2023 — the $35 million sale of unaffiliated KUSI-TV in San Diego from McKinnon Broadcasting Company to Nexstar Media Group; the $12 million sale of WHKY-TV in Hickory, N.C., from Long Communications LLC to Family Worship Center Church; and the $10 million sale of WDRQ-FM in Detroit from Cumulus Media to Family Life Radio.

TOP BROADCAST BROKERS 2023

Broker	Deal Volume	Full Power Stations	Low Power Stations
Kalil & Co.	61.15	12	–
Patrick Communications	41.93	19	17
Jorgenson Broadcast Brokerage	12.37	13.5	6
Tideline Partners LLC	11.55	4	1
Hadden & Assoc. Inc.	10.43	7	4
Sterling BCG LLC	5.48	–	11
Bergner & Co.	5.00	1	–
Robert Branch	4.08	0.5	–
Media Services Group	3.30	9	1
Kozacko Media Services	2.21	8.5	7
Griffin Media Brokers LLC	2.19	14.5	11
M C H Enterprises Inc.	2.10	13	11
Spectrum Media LLC	1.45	1	
Fowler Media Consulting LLC	1.43	4	2
Guest Technology LLC	1.33	3.5	1
Mymediabroker.Com	1.33	1.5	–
Clifton Gardiner LLC	1.10	4	3
The Intrigue Group	0.80	–	1
Dave Garland Media Brokerage	0.53	1	–
Radiostationsforsale.net	0.49	2	1
TOTALS	**170.22**	**119**	**77**

TOP TV BROKERS 2023

Broker	Deal Volume	Full Power Stations	Low Power Stations
Kalil & Co.	47.00	2	–
Patrick Communications	27.84	–	14
Sterling BCG LLC	5.48	–	11
Hadden & Assoc. Inc.	4.31	1	2

TOP 10 RADIO BROKERS OF 2023

Broker	Deal Volume	Full Power Stations	Low Power Stations
Kalil & Co.	14.15	10	–
Patrick Communications	14.09	19	3
Jorgenson Broadcast Brokerage	12.37	13.5	6
Tideline Partners LLC	11.55	4	1
Hadden & Assoc. Inc.	6.13	6	2
Bergner & Co.	5.00	1	–
Robert Branch	4.08	0.5	–
Media Services Group	3.30	9	1
Kozacko Media Services	2.21	8.5	7
Griffin Media Brokers LLC	2.19	14.5	11

Some 29 brokers reported that they assisted radio and TV station operators, contributing to the announced sales of 214 stations last year.

Kalil & Co. is not only the leading broker overall, it also takes the top ranking in radio and TV transactions.

The second-biggest brokerage overall, and for both radio and television, is **Patrick Communications**. These deals reflect transactions filed for FCC approval prior to October 2023, when longtime media broker Larry Patrick formed Patrick Media Brokerage LLC as Greg Guy launched his Tideline Partners LLC as a new media brokerage and consultancy. For Guy, the establishment of Tideline continues a 26-year career as a broker.

Of the deal announcements associated with Patrick Communications, the largest was an $8 million transaction that saw Paul Koplin-led Venture Technologies Group sell WHTV-LD in New York and WCHU-LD in the Chicago market to MBX Wyoming Inc. The latter is an entity associated with Manoj Bhargava, the man behind 5-hour Energy beverages who is snapping up LPTV stations across the U.S. to serve as O&O properties tied to the NewsNet broadcast TV network.

Patrick Communications served as the broker in 10 television station deals (comprising 14 low-power television stations) and assisted in 11 radio station transactions. The largest radio deal associated with Patrick was the conversion of a LMA to an outright purchase of KBLA-AM in Los Angeles by Tavis Smiley's Smiley Radio Properties. While Greg Guy was the broker on this deal, valued at $6.9 million, it is fully associated with Patrick Communications.

In contrast, Guy, as broker of the $7.55 million sale of Denver-market FM stations KFCO and KJHM from Gene Loving's Max Radio to non-profit religious-focused operator Pillar of Fire, is assigned to his own Tideline Partners. Tideline Partners is quickly becoming a leading media brokerage; in fact, Tideline is associated with four deals, and that's good enough for a No. 4 showing in our rankings.

Taking No. 3 in 2023 by total deal volume is **Jorgenson Broadcast Brokerage**, led by longtime media broker Mark Jorgenson. His firm registered a total of 13 transactions, with the largest being the $6.775 million sale of WRTH-FM and WLTE-FM in the Greenville-Spartanburg market from Salem Media Group to Educational Media Foundation, parent of the KLOVE and Air1 Christian-themed music networks.

Five of the 29 brokers on our *RBR+TVBR Broker Scorecard* registered a deal volume of $10 million or more. **Hadden & Assoc. Inc.**, led by Doyle Hadden and Ryan Hadden, was the broker of record in the $3.75 million sale of WFLM-FM — now a West Palm Beach facility — and the Hadden-led brokerage also completed eight other radio deals. That results in a No. 5 ranking on our list.

It should also be noted that both **Sterling BCG LLC** and Michael Bergner's Boca Raton, Fla.-based **Bergner & Co.** registered deal volumes above the $5 million mark; 10 additional brokers showed announced deal volumes above $1 million.

Finally, it was determined that five of the 123 brokered deal announcements in our *RBR+TVBR Broker Scorecard* listed more than one broker. In these cases, the deal volume and the station count were split, resulting in fractional stations in the counts.



To hear the inflection in a voice or see the vapor trail following a space launch - those are the sights and sounds of our journey through the ages. That's why the preservation of broadcast archives is so important to understanding the history and hope of our humanity.

Deborah Parenti

President/Publisher
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A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY FOR BROADCAST MEDIA

While traveling recently in Central California, the importance of AM radio's continued accessibility in U.S. vehicles became abundantly clear to RBR+TVBR's Editor-in-Chief.



For the last 12 months, one of the biggest NAB policy missions has involved AM radio. As most **RBR+TVBR** readers know, proposed legislation would require automobile manufacturers to keep access to kHz-band broadcasts in the dashboard entertainment system. In Congress, support is strong, with 236 co-sponsors in the House of Representatives for the bill introduced in May 2023 by Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-N.J.); companion legislation in the Senate brought forth by Massachusetts Democrat Ed Markey now boasts 47 co-sponsors.

Yet, to some in my circle of friends and acquaintances, ensuring a technology that's more than a century old can be accessed in a car, truck, or van has brought puzzled looks. "AM radio… *why*?" has been the response of more than one person in our tiny little corner of South Florida, where **RBR+TVBR** and co-owned publication *Radio Ink* maintain their headquarters.

That's perfectly understandable for longtime Miami-area residents. In the early 1970s, migration from AM to FM came swiftly, making South Florida a pioneer in bringing FM out of the living room and into vehicles.

In other parts of the U.S., it is a far different story. In October 2022, an excursion to Detroit demonstrated just how important access to AM radio is, as updated news, traffic, and weather provided by Audacy's WWJ-AM was regularly tuned to in our friends' Honda Civic — a model without such things as Apple CarPlay. Last week, while on vacation in Central California, the truly essential role that AM radio holds in the U.S. couldn't have been more clear.

Traveling north of Fresno, Highway 41 quickly shrinks from a multi-lane freeway to a one-lane mountain road, full of twists and turns. Minutes after leaving the town of Oakhurst, T-Mobile service faded — and only returned within a few miles of Yosemite Village. For three days, all cell service was extremely spotty, with Verizon service on the wife's phone able to make calls but slow on the Instagram connectivity. At the fabled Ahwahnee Hotel, in the heart of Yosemite, cell phone signals are absent; the available guest-only internet is akin to a late '90s dial-up connection.

Driving around Yosemite in our Ford Explorer, which included SiriusXM, also yielded a rare experience: signal fade (on multiple occasions) because of the deep canyon in which Yosemite lies. Guess what? AM radio reception from San Francisco gave us KCBS for news, an expanded-band AM from Merced gave us hard rock music, and KYNO-AM in Fresno offered Oldies while we wound our way to Bridalveil Falls, into Yosemite Village, and out of the park along the majestic Merced River en route to Mariposa. Nighttime signals from Los Angeles and Seattle were easily tunable. Meanwhile, T-Mobile reception remained extremely iffy.

In a world where one assumes technology will provide everything one needs in the palm of a hand, even being four hours by car from the heart of Silicon Valley proved that wireless communication still has its holes. From the Motor City to the western foothills of the Sierra Nevada, AM radio is there. When one wants to be informed, a push of a simple "AM" button delivers.

We wish to take a moment to commend the local broadcast television stations in Fresno, Monterey, and San Luis Obispo we tuned to for providing local news, a sign that the Journalism Competition and Preservation Act remains important legislation for the NAB and both radio and TV to lobby for next term. But viewing these newscasts was done on a TV in a hotel room — not while out on the road in constantly changing weather. Only AM radio could deliver important information at a moment's notice.

This is why the *AM Radio in Every Vehicle Act*'s passage would be hallmark legislation in a nation unlike no other. AM radio works when nothing else can. Keeping it in the car can work while keeping all Americans informed and entertained.

Adam R Jacobson is the Editor-in-Chief of the Radio + Television Business Report *and is based in Boca Raton, Fla.*

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