

# Promotion, Retention Are Key to Inclusion

Surveys released at Diversity Week show progress in hiring, areas where gains can be made

By R. Thomas Umstead



At the NAMIC/WICT Diversity Town Hall (l. to r.): David Cohen, Comcast; Maria Brennan, WICT; Johnita Due, WarnerMedia; Karen Bennett, Cox; moderator Suzanne Malveaux, CNN; Adria Alpert Romm, Discovery; Rhonda Crichlow, Charter; and Lee Schroeder, Altice USA.

**C**ABLE OPERATORS and programmers took heart from new survey results showing increased employment opportunities for people of color and women, the same week that companies contributed more than \$1.4 million to bolster diversity efforts during the industry's annual Walter Kaitz Foundation dinner.

Still, executives said the challenge remains to continue recruiting new, diverse and inclusive talent while working harder to keep executives of color and women from leaving for other industries.

"As we open the report card on our own [diversity] efforts and continue striving to advance the cause of diversity, we do so understanding that ... the business of a diverse America is diverse business," NCTA president and CEO Michael Powell said during the industry's Diversity Week programs in New York, including the annual Women in Cable Telecommunications (WICT) Leadership Conference and the National Association for Multi-ethnicity in Communications (NAMIC) Conference.

## Signs of Progress

Findings of the two-year AIM/ PAR Workforce Survey from WICT and NAMIC include an increase in representation of people of color and women in executive and senior-level management positions by 3% and 2%, respectively, compared to the last survey in 2017. Hiring rates for people of color exceeded the rate for white people by roughly 15% compared with the last survey, while hiring rates for women exceeded the rate of men by nine percentage points.

The positive results stem from continued efforts to cultivate an industry culture that welcomes women, as well as people from all backgrounds, Comcast senior executive VP and chief diversity officer David Cohen said during the Sept. 17 town hall meeting where the report was unveiled.

"What other industry in America does what we're doing?" Cohen asked rhetorically. "We have senior executives, managers and executives, women and people of color collectively getting together to attend seminars, sessions and learning best practices in the D&I space.

We've created an enlightened culture around D&I, and that is what is driving our success."

While the survey showed positive results, industry executives said it also showed some weaknesses in diversity efforts that need to be addressed. Paramount is turning around low promotion rates and high departure figures for women and executives of color.

Promotion rates for people of color are lower than for white people, and white professionals younger than 36 are promoted at more than two times the rate of young professionals of color, according to the survey. Also, the turnover rate for people of color is 11% points higher than their white counterparts, and for women it is 7.3% points higher than for men.

"A lot of time when we talk about inclusion, workplace and culture efforts, but internal mobility and having an opportunity to advance is part of inclusion," Johnita Due, senior vice president and chief diversity & inclusion officer for WarnerMedia News & Sports, said at the town hall.

Charter Communications senior vice president and chief diversity officer Rhonda Crichlow said that increased executive mentorship is one of the keys to retaining quality, diverse and inclusive executives.

"For anyone to be successful in a corporate environment, they need to make sure that they have adequate sponsorship in the organization to help them continue to [thrive]," Crichlow said. "What we know is that people of color ... are under-mentored and underdeveloped compared to their peers. So the question for us is, what are we going to do about it, because we know that when they get that level of sponsorship they are inclined to stay in organizations longer and they are inclined to be much more satisfied with their career experience."

Added Powell: "Mentorship is imperative to the industry's advancement of diversity and inclusion. If you're going to be a great mentor you're going to be a truth-teller ... you can't make someone a superhero if they haven't bought the right cape."



NCTA CEO Michael Powell (l.) and Cox president Pat Esser open the NAMIC Conference.

## See It, Then Be It

Comcast's Cohen said it is also important for young women and people of color to see diverse executives in the workplace if the industry is going to retain the best and the brightest talent. Fifty-three percent of Comcast's workforce now reports to a person of color or a woman, Cohen said, compared to a mid-40% share of employees five years ago.

"As the pressure gets put on other industries like the tech industry to hire diverse talent, they're coming for our diverse talent," he said.

"The competition for our diverse talent is much more intense than it has ever been, and I think that's contributing to our turnover problem. It's a war everyday."

To aid in the industry's diversity efforts, the Walter Kaitz Foundation's annual fundraising dinner raised more than \$1.4 million, consistent with the numbers in recent years. The cash helps fund NAMIC, WICT, and internship-placing organizations Emma L. Bowen Foundation and T. Howard Foundation to help advance diversity, equity and inclusion within the industry.

"True inclusion is a thoughtful, vigorous and disciplined exercise that is needed in order to develop strategies to ensure (the industry) lives up to our goals in business, in society and in life," Kaitz executive director Michelle Ray said. ■

## THEY SAID IT

*"Cokie was a tenacious journalist and generous friend and mentor to so many, especially women in the newsroom. Whether she was offering advice on a story or how to balance family and work-life, Cokie was always someone who you could count on."*

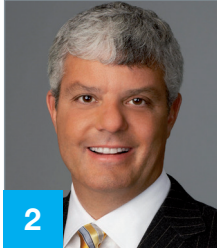


— Sarah Just, executive producer of PBS NewsHour, in response to news of the death of ABC News political commentator Cokie Roberts, who died at 75. Roberts was also a longtime contributor to public broadcasting.

## + Fates & Fortunes



**1) Charter Communications** named **STEPHANIE MITCHKO** executive VP and chief technology officer. She replaces Jay Rolls, who retired in March. Mitchko joins Charter from ad tech company Cadent, where she spent the last five years, and reports to chief product and technology officer Rich DiGeronimo. Prior to Cadent, she worked for Cablevision for 15 years. Also, Charter has hired NBCUniversal veteran **CAMERON BLANCHARD** as senior VP of communications. Blanchard spent 19 years at NBCU before serving as chief communications officer for Condé Nast. She reports to David Ellen, senior executive VP. Former Turner executive **2) DAVID LEVY** has been tapped as CEO of the NBA's Brooklyn Nets and the Barclays Center. Levy was also named president of J. Tsai Sports as well as a venture partner of the company. Levy was president of Turner, where he helped shepherd the programmer's partnership with the NBA. The announcement came as



Joe Tsai completed the acquisition of the team and arena. **MARIA BARTIROMO** has inked a multiyear deal with Fox News. Bartiromo, who joined Fox News in 2014, anchors Fox Business Network's *Mornings with Maria* and *Maria Bartiromo's Wall Street*. She also anchors *Sunday Morning Futures* on Fox News Channel. **MIKE LEWIS** has been appointed VP and general manager of WJZY-WMYT in Charlotte. Lewis joins the Fox-owned duopoly from Fox's WTTG-WDCB in Washington, D.C., where he was VP and general sales manager. Amazon Studios head of marketing **3) MIKE BENSON** has been named president and chief marketing officer for CBS. Longtime CBS marketing chief **GEORGE SCHWEITZER** will transition to the role of chairman before becoming a special adviser to the company in the spring. Before Amazon, Benson oversaw marketing for the ABC Entertainment Group for 12 years. He joined Amazon in 2015. Schweitzer has led CBS's marketing since 1994.

## THE WATCHMAN

Senior content producer Michael Malone's look at the programming scene

## Son Shines on Fox's *Prodigal Son*; CBS Has *Second Act* for Patricia Heaton

PREMIERE WEEK is upon us, which means about a thousand new shows. Creepy thriller *Prodigal Son* begins on Fox Sept. 23. Tom Payne from *The Walking Dead* plays criminal psychologist Malcolm Bright. His father is a notorious serial killer known as The Surgeon. The son is like the father in some ways, but he's a good guy who helps the cops track down dangerous villains.



Greg Berlanti and Sarah Schechter executive produce. So do Sam Sklaver and Chris Fedak, who are showrunners. Sklaver said they think of Malcolm as "Sherlock Freud." While it has some humor, *Prodigal Son* is a dark, angsty show. "We wanted to push the envelope in terms of what you can do on broadcast TV," said Sklaver. "We definitely see the show as a thriller."

Michael Sheen plays the charismatic Surgeon, who killed two dozen people. Bellamy Young plays his WASPy ex-wife. Halston Sage portrays Malcolm's sister Ainsley, a TV journalist. Lou Diamond Phillips plays Bright's detective contact at the NYPD. Fedak calls Diamond Phillips "the Filipino Steve McQueen."

"You just don't realize how cool Lou Diamond Phillips is," he added.

The idea was hatched when Sklaver and Fedak started thinking about how parents affect their children. "Bright knows how killers think because he was raised by one

of the best," Sklaver said.

The men thought about their own influence as dads. "We wondered how we are affecting our kids," Sklaver said.

On a lighter note, *Carol's Second Act* begins on CBS Sept. 26. Patricia Heaton plays Carol, who raised kids, got divorced and retired from being a teacher. She embarks on a second career as a doctor.

Kyle MacLachlan plays Dr. Stephen Frost, senior attending physician at the hospital where Carol is an intern.

What sets *Carol's Second Act* apart from the 999 other new shows? "The concept of someone older and very capable coming back and then mixing it up with a younger generation, and being able to see the value of somebody," MacLachlan said at the Television Critics Association Summer Press Tour last month. "Watching that play out is interesting."

Second acts run in the MacLachlan family. Both of Kyle's brothers, he said, were musicians who went into other occupations in their 30s, and his mother took on a new career at 40. For his part, Kyle started a winery well after making it in Hollywood. (To paraphrase MacLachlan's *Twin Peaks* character, "This is a damn fine cup of wine.") "Second acts are happening all the time around us," MacLachlan said. "So I think people will find something to relate to in this."

