

Pipeline's Guide to The Cable Show

By Ed Finegold

June is a great month to be in Chicago and The Cable Show will be in town from June 14 to 16 at McCormick Place. The Cable Show typically includes a unique mix of entertainment stars, gadget manufacturers, and complex technology suppliers. Its hands-on exhibits let you try out technology that may never make it into your house. Its educational sessions stick to key issues without getting lost in the weeds. Overall, the Cable Show's program looks both engaging and manageable. Here is Pipeline's guide to the educational sessions, exhibit hours, and fun things to do while visiting Chicago – our home town!

Tuesday, June 14: Call It a Soft Launch

First, make sure to set your watch to US Central Time. Then, note that the exhibits don't open on Tuesday until

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12:30. The morning is dominated by the IPv6 Summit and the Cable ACT Forum, with the general session kicking off at 10:30. We recommend scheduling some useful morning meetings; enjoying some exhibit time while the booth staffers are still fresh; and catching the first educational session at 2:30 pm. Speakers from Time Warner Cable, Comcast, Cable Labs, and Motorola discuss new tools, including social media, for navigating through TV programming options in "What's on TV? Techniques and Technologies for Content Discovery."

One area of the exhibit hall to check out is CableNET, an area co-sponsored by CableLabs and the NCTA that gives close-up demonstrations of new cable and entertainment technologies. This year's show features



content, applications, and new cable broadband capabilities.

Major events on Tuesday include the Cable Hall of Fame celebration and the WICT Signature Luncheon; but if industry self-congratulations aren't your thing, then head on up to Wrigley Field on Chicago's North side. The hometown Cubs face the rival Milwaukee Brewers at 7:05 pm. If you have a group with you, check Groupon for deals on one of the many private clubs surrounding the park where your ticket gets you gourmet food, an open bar, and a seat that looks down into the ballpark from an adjacent rooftop. Otherwise, grab a brat and an Old Style and enjoy the "friendly confines." Don't forget to sing "root, root, root for the Cubbies" during the traditional seventh inning stretch rendition of "Take Me Out to the Ballgame!"

Wednesday, June 15: Hard Core Tech Day

Sessions kick off at 7:30 am on Wednesday, with exhibits opening at 11 am. Our first pick, however, is "Packet Change: IP Video and Cable's Architectural Evolution." Speakers from ARRIS, Cisco and Comcast discuss the merging of public and private networks in IP video delivery and what this means to business models and cable networks.

If that's not your style, try "The Wow Factory: Technologies that Advance the Cable Vision" also at 11 am. Here, speakers from Comcast, Cox, Time Warner, Rogers, and CableLabs examine emerging delivery technologies, new forms of content and applications, and

where these cable operators are looking to make their investments in the future.

At Noon, speakers from HBO, Sigma Systems, Infinera, Motorola, BelAir Networks and Cyan address cable's presence in telecom's business services arena in "Business Plan: Architectural Considerations for Commercial Services Delivery." This is a network-centric session covering everything from Carrier Ethernet SLAs and optical transport to DOCSIS 3.0, so don't forget a snack and Diet Coke on the way in.

Wednesday's 2 pm slot delivers the inevitable cloud sessions. Speakers from GCI Cable, Cisco, ARRIS, Time Warner Cable, Comcast Labs, and thePlatform for Media join together in "Hey You, Get Onto My Cloud: Implications of New Delivery Approaches." The panel will address how content can move out of cable networks and into the cloud and how it changes approaches to transport, integration, and delivery platforms.

Wrap up this rigorous day of learning with "Projections of Possibility: The Economic Outlook for Media and Communications" at 3:30 pm. Panelists from PriceWaterhouseCoopers unveil the findings of the firm's 12th annual Global Entertainment & Media Outlook which details projections for media industry revenue growth and spending by sector.

If you missed the Cubs on Tuesday – good news; they play the Brewers again on Wednesday night. Otherwise,

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you might need a laugh after such a brainy day. Head to world famous Second City's main stage for "The South Side of Heaven." It's a new dark comedy from the theater that discovered Mike Meyers, Steve Carell, Tina Fey, Stephen Colbert and Pipeline's very own Tim Young.

Thursday, June 16: The Grand Finale

What's really different about the Cable Show's agenda is that it saves the "big keynote" for the very end. At 3:15 in the Grand Ballroom, C-level executives from Cablevision, Cox, Time Warner, Midcontinent, Suddenlink and Mediacom join together for "Across the Universe: Top Cable Executives Talk Products, Competitors, Service and Strategy." The panelists provide their insights on cable's role in the consumer marketplace and how they plan to differentiate their offerings as they compete for customers against a range of new entrants and business models.

Before you get there, however, you could take in "ABCs of QoE: Managing Quality of Experience in a Changing Video Environment" at 10:45 am, if you're up for more technology education. This session, with speakers from Cisco, Ericsson, Edgewater, Cheetah Technologies, and

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If ORD is your way out, leave yourself as much time as possible.

Sandvine, also addresses video's migration to IP, but focuses on streaming technologies and the impact of the over-the-top video on cable networks.

If customer satisfaction is your game, check out "Action Agenda: 5 Things You Can Do to Improve Customer Service and Your Scores – Now." Panelists from The Cable Center, JD Power, Suddenlink, Satmetrix, and Inside-Out Thinking give practical tips on making immediate improvements to customer experience that

will improve customer satisfaction scores and play into what third party evaluators want to see.

If you're just not up for another session, the exhibits open around the same time – at 10:30 am.

Final Thoughts

As you leave Chicago, keep a few things in mind. McCormick to Midway is usually a pretty easy drive. The airport is small and efficient, so you can leave yourself a normal amount of time to catch your flight and still stand a great chance of doing so. O'Hare is just the opposite. The highways can crush your hopes, as can the long cross-terminal walks and slow security lines. If ORD is your way out, leave yourself as much time as possible. Have a safe trip and enjoy the show. We'll see you there.