



## Market expectations

The Cable and Satellite Broadcasting Association of Asia (CASBAA) was established in 1991 as the association for digital multichannel TV, content, platforms, advertising and video delivery across markets throughout the Asia-Pacific. Amy Saunders spoke with Christopher Slaughter, CEO of CASBAA, to find out more about the Association's role, activities and market expectations.

**Question: Can you provide a brief overview of CASBAA?**

**Christopher Slaughter:** CASBAA is the Asia-Pacific region's largest non-profit media association, serving the multi-channel audio-visual content creation and distribution industry. Established in 1991, CASBAA has grown with the industry to include digital multichannel television, content, platforms, advertising, and video delivery. Encompassing over 500 million multi-channel homes within a footprint across the region, CASBAA works to be the authoritative voice for multichannel TV; promoting even-handed and market-friendly regulation, IP protection and revenue growth for subscription and advertising, while promoting global best practices.

CASBAA's core agenda is to facilitate the often tricky process of

transition into an almost 100 percent digital world for our members and the entire industry at a time of unprecedented technology and market change.

This is all part of the CASBAA remit to *Represent* (via advocacy with governments); *Inform* (via conferences, formal submissions and other communications); and *Connect* (via networking opportunities for members and others).

**Question: Which key emerging trends will have the biggest impact on CASBAA members and how should they be addressed?**

**Christopher Slaughter:** The most challenging, and most interesting, area of activity for the association over the past couple of years has been the exceptional variety of digital issues

(online piracy, digital advertising and the fast-changing economics of content creation and distribution) that have emerged across our 16 geographic markets within a CASBAA footprint that runs from China to Australia, from India to Japan.

We also work to build on a global coalition to fight 'illicit streaming devices.' We help organize a cross-industry group fighting piracy in various APAC countries, and we keep up the pressure on advertisers and payment processors to get them to cut off pirate websites. We continue to work on the implementation of Singapore's television audience measurement system, and we yet again grappled with Indonesia's regulators over content and advertising laws.

Among the most notable developments in the four years since I have

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Christopher Slaughter, CEO of CASBAA

been in this role has been the reinforcement of the importance of the 'end-user,' the customer, the consumer.

Today our members (content creators, channel aggregators, platforms of all kinds and technology vendors) have such an enormous trove of data to hand that they are obliged respond to the subscriber needs on an almost moment-to-moment basis.

**Question: With OTT so pervasive across so many of your markets what are the ramifications for traditional free and paid-for TV broadcasters?**

**Christopher Slaughter:** While OTT has emerged as a new distribution mode with many nuances that are even now being addressed, we see OTT as a 'value add' to FTA and paid multi-channel video. This may sound a cliché,

but OTT is not a threat. We have seen a very significant shift – what was once viewed with suspicion and resistance is being embraced and welcomed. As with so many digital developments, it is an outstanding opportunity for all.

We've acknowledged that when it comes to online delivery of video, the TV industry as a whole has adopted and slightly misapplied a telecom industry term. When the designation 'over the top' (OTT) was first coined by our telco friends, it was fairly pejorative, and meant 'any content (video or otherwise) that runs over the top of our network,' with the implication '...that we didn't create and don't directly monetize.'

Similarly, when the multichannel TV industry adopted the term, the definition shifted slightly to mean 'video that is delivered to consumers without going through the set-top box.' As such, our industry also viewed OTT as a rather negative acronym, since it referred to companies operating outside our monetization footprint – they didn't play by the same rules, they didn't follow the same business model, they were disintermediators, cowboys, and in some very obvious cases, even pirates.

But even with the overall embrace of OTT services by traditional pay TV companies, there are still issues to resolve before consumers can expect to have their online cake and eat it too. From a menu of various factors inhibiting development of OTT services, ranging from legacy systems to regulatory restrictions, our respondents singled out content rights availability and pricing for content rights as the key

stumbling blocks. And although concerns about viable business cases remain, broadband deployment is less of an issue, presumably based on the success of OTT services in various broadband-challenged markets in the region.

**Question: How are global regulations changing in line with the evolving broadcast sector?**

**Christopher Slaughter:** Of course, with technology and markets changing so fast, governments and regulators need to be as fully informed as possible of those changes and their implications. That's where organisations such as CASBAA become ever more important.

Our most challenging task is to assist the regulators (and politicians) to adapt as quickly as possible to this new world, and to help them to 'see the future' - and that's not easy for anyone.

CASBAA works to keep our members informed of regulatory developments in our many markets, and also advocates for governments to adapt to the new realities by reducing the regulatory burdens on the pay-TV industry so existing operators can compete fairly. It's not an easy message to 'sell,' because bureaucratic rice bowls, tax revenues, and special-interest political goodies are all hooked to existing over-regulatory approaches. That said, there were some positive signs in places like Singapore, New Zealand, Korea and Vietnam where a few rules were erased. But there remain many miles to travel down the road of rationality, before we can be satisfied. ■



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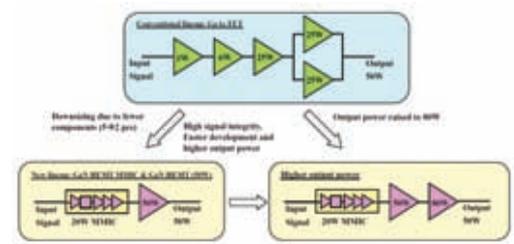
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