



2021 SPRING EDUCATIONAL FORUM
MAY 9-12 • INDIAN WELLS, CALIFORNIA
 ADVOCATES FOR RURAL BROADBAND

2021 WTA SPRING EDUCATIONAL FORUM SPEAKERS

Monday Keynote Speaker Sponsored by CoBank

Ross Bernstein is a best-selling author of nearly 50 sports books, an award-winning peak performance hall of fame business speaker who's keynoted conference for Fortune 500 companies on all seven continents and has been featured on CNN, "CBS-This Morning," ESPN, and Fox News, as well as in the Wall Street Journal, New York Times and USA Today.

Ross' program is all about the DNA of what makes champions in sports so unique and how that relates to business. It's based on a series of books he wrote in which he was able to interview more than 1,000 professional athletes and coaches that all had one thing in common – they were all members of championship teams. In his research he concluded that the same metrics and characteristics that were common among champions in sports, were also common among peak performers in business. There are reasons certain teams win consistently, whereas others don't...Ross explains why. It's based largely on the "Good to Great" concept of how the best companies are able to separate themselves from the rest of the pack through servant leadership, by creating a culture of excellence, by developing deeper relationships, and by giving extraordinary customer service. Ross weaves sports stories, about the DNA of champions, along with stories of companies who he has worked with around the world – and shares best practice ideas on ways to overcome disruption, while ultimately building stronger relationships. At the core of his message is the simple fact that we like to do business with people who we trust, who we like, and who just "get it" – CHAMPIONS.

Tuesday Keynote Speaker Sponsored by CALIX

Tyler Christian Campbell was born October 26, 1986, in Houston, Texas, to Earl and Reuna Campbell. Tyler recalls life-changing words learned from his father at an early age, "A Campbell Never Quits." When confronted with life's obstacles, these words provided strength and encouragement. Tyler received a football Scholarship to San Diego State University in 2005. While attending SDSU, he was a consistent scholar athlete and contributed mightily on the gridiron for the Aztecs. The tides of life came rolling in during his junior year when he was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. Tyler became the first individual to play division one college football with the disease. After graduating from SDSU in 2009, Tyler moved back to Austin. An entrepreneur in his own right, Tyler travels the country as a professional speaker delivering empowering and inspiring messages of self-worth. Coining the phrase "TC Speaks", Tyler hosts his own on air radio show, Real Lyfe Reel Talk, every Saturday from 12pm-1pm on 104.9 The Horn FM in Austin. The inspirational show has become so popular that the Moody School of Communications, at the University of Texas, has hired him on as a consultant to work with students on their semester podcast projects. Tyler and his wife Shana, along with their 3 children, reside in Texas.

Michael J. Balhoff, CFA, is a Senior Partner and co-founder of **Charlesmead Advisors, LLC**, which provides investment banking advisory services with a focus on telecommunications. Before founding Charlesmead Advisors and the predecessor firm to Balhoff & Williams, Mr. Balhoff was Managing Director, heading the Technology and Telecommunications Equity Research Group at Legg Mason in Baltimore, and, in the final seven of his sixteen years as a senior analyst at Legg Mason, he covered equities in the incumbent local exchange carrier industry. Mr. Balhoff has a doctorate in Canon Law and four master's degrees, including an MBA-concentration finance-from the University of Maryland. Mr. Balhoff has been named in six annual awards as a Wall Street Journal All-Star Analyst for his recommendations on the Telecommunications industry.

Carri Bennet has launched several startups, including her own successful boutique communications and technology law firm prior to joining **Womble Bond Dickinson**, Carri Bennet uses her entrepreneurial spirit and smarts to make the often times seemingly impossible achievable. Carri is exacting and persistent in achieving her clients' goals. When working with clients, Carri determines the desired outcome and then creatively develops solutions that are structured to be cost effective and result oriented. She is known as a spunky outspoken advocate for small rural carriers, having battled with regulators and large companies for more than 30 years to ensure that small rural businesses have a seat at the table and a strong voice in Washington, DC.

In an effort to better understand the intricate technical and business issues facing her wireless and broadband client base, Carri also served as General Counsel and the de facto chief operating officer of an international wireless carrier. In that role, she developed a wealth of knowledge on nearly every aspect of running a small commercial wireless company that operated in the United States, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Poland, Sweden, and Germany. She has since translated this experience into better servicing her clients.

Carri testifies before the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Congress and the courts on rural wireless issues and speaks regularly at industry trade shows and legal seminars on cybersecurity, data privacy, spectrum policy, universal service funding reform and business development and strategy issues for communications and technology companies. She represents her clients before the FCC, state regulatory agencies, the courts and Congress. She has advised clients and industry groups on creating strategic alliances and new business opportunities in the fast-paced world of communications technologies. In 2017, Carri was appointed by FCC Chairman Ajit Pai to serve on the FCC's BDAC Federal Siting Work Group and tasked with making recommendations for improving the timing and processes associated with the siting and deployment of broadband infrastructure on federal lands and buildings.

V. Chornodolsky ("V") is the Director of Sales at IDI Billing Solutions. V understands that every communications service provider is unique, so he specializes in crafting a customized vision for long-term partnerships with IDI that suits individual needs.

V has represented IDI at tradeshow, associations, and conferences (remotely, of course) over the last year, sharing the mission and capabilities of IDI and listening carefully to the challenges of telecommunication companies.

V has also had the honor of serving on the Associate Member Boards at the Alaska Telecom Association, the Montana Telecom Association and WTA.

V holds a BA in Political Science from The Catholic University of America. He is an avid outdoorsman who loves to ski, cycle and hike.

Camille Christiansen, CPA, PMP – Partner, Moss Adams, has provided audit and consulting services since 2001 to all sizes of rural telecommunications companies through the country – from some of the smallest to some of the largest. She manages financial audits of wireline ILEC and CLEC commercial and cooperative enterprises, wireless and international carriers, cable television companies, and fiber transport companies. She is a frequently sought after speaker on telecommunications issues and has presented at numerous industry meetings.

Bob DeBroux is Director of Federal Affairs and Public Policy at **TDS Telecommunications Corp.** (TDS). He joined TDS in 1992 as Manager of Regulatory Policy, was promoted to Director of Federal Affairs in 1999, and in his current position is responsible for overseeing the development of TDS Telecom’s public policy as well as management of all federal advocacy, including regulatory and judicial proceedings.

Bob is active in telecommunications policy development and advocacy at both the state and federal level. He is a director on the WTA board, and is active on its regulatory and legislative committees. In 2017 he was appointed by FCC Chairman Pai to the Broadband Deployment Advisory Committee, and is chair of its “Removing State and Local Regulatory Barriers” Workgroup.

Prior to TDS, Bob worked at NorLight, a regional fiber-optic long-distance company, where he held the positions of Manager of Business Development and Manager of Rates and Tariffs. Bob began his career in telecommunications as a regulator, serving four years at the Wisconsin Public Service Commission. Bob holds both bachelor’s and a master’s degrees from the University of Wisconsin - Madison.

Chad Duval, Partner, Moss Adams provides strategic leadership for the firm’s cost consulting and regulatory compliance and policy teams. Chad has specialized in providing service to the telecom industry since 1995. His clients are small to mid-size rural telecommunications and broadband carriers, and his experience includes separations studies, forward-looking economic cost studies, rate cases, depreciation studies, and state and federal regulatory issues. Chad has provided expert testimony in a variety of proceedings before regulatory agencies throughout the country and is a regular presenter on regulatory issues at industry conferences.

Gerard J. Duffy has been a **Blooston, Mordkofsky, Dickens, Duffy & Prendergast** partner since January 1, 1992. His areas of practice have focused upon rural telephone, commercial mobile radio, Internet and cable television issues.

Gerry was born and raised in Rochester, New York. He obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree from Villanova University and a Juris Doctor (with honors) degree from the George Washington

University Law School. He also holds graduate degrees in economics from the University of Illinois, and in accounting from Virginia Tech.

Gerry is Regulatory Counsel for WTA – Advocates for Rural Broadband. He and his wife Janette reside in not-so-rural Bethesda, Maryland, and are the proud parents of Maureen, Christopher, Daniel and Katie, and the even prouder grandparents of Colin, Julia, Chelsea, Hunter and Emma.

Dustin Hilliary is the CO-CEO of Hilliary Communications. He has been the leader for the growth and financial planning of all Hilliary-owned companies, including ILEC and CLEC properties. Dustin negotiated the acquisition of more than 20 companies during the span of 10 years and was a major part of the push from a traditional telco to a multi-faceted provider of broadband, video, and VoIP services.

Currently, Dustin is helping to deploy fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) in numerous communities across central Oklahoma and Texas. He works primarily on mergers and acquisitions and holds various executive roles within Hilliary Communications, Oklahoma Western Telephone Company, Texhoma Fiber, and Southern Plains Cable, among others.

As former executive vice president of Wichita Online, he helped build a wireless broadband network that combined new construction and the acquisition of 12 wireless companies that served 10,000 customers across 23 rural Oklahoma counties. They sold the company in 2015. He was appointed to the Oklahoma Employment Securities Commission in 2021 and he serves on the boards for the Comanche County Memorial Hospital Foundation. He is also active with the Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association.

Dustin is an entrepreneur and builder who is developing a 25,000 square-foot retail center in Elgin, to help meet the demand caused by a boom in population due to the U.S. Military's reassignment of troops to Fort Sill.

Evelyn Jerden is the Senior VP-Regulatory Dynamics of the **LICT Corporation** which owns 15 small, rural ILECs ranging from 600 to 6,000 access lines. Evelyn is a CPA who has worked on Rural Local Exchange Carrier issues since 1979. Evelyn began her telecommunications career with Ernst & Young's Telecommunications Group prior to joining Western New Mexico Telephone Company, a subsidiary of LICT, in 1992 as the Director of Revenue Requirements. She is a Subset 2 representative of the NECA Board of Directors and Co-Chair of the NECA Board Common Line/Traffic Sensitive Committee. She is a member of NECA's Cost Issues Task Group and Co-Chairperson of the Western Telecommunications Alliance's Public Policy Committee. She was a member of the Rural Task Force appointed by the Federal/State Joint Board on Universal Service to review the universal service support mechanisms for RLECs. Evelyn has participated on various RLEC industry associations' USF, separations, and intercarrier compensation committees. She has taught seminars and spoken at numerous conferences on these topics and has testified in front of state commissions.

Eric Keber is Vice President of Government Affairs at **WTA – Advocates for Rural Broadband**. He works in WTA's Washington, D.C. office representing WTA's member companies' interests on

Capitol Hill and at various federal agencies. Before beginning his work for WTA in 2007, Eric spent seven years working on Capitol Hill for two members of Congress.

Eric is a graduate of Bucknell University in Lewisburg, PA. He grew up in New Jersey and currently resides in Alexandria, Virginia with his wife and two daughters.

Gabe Levy is Director of Information Security for **Smithville Communications**. In this role, Gabe strives to build a robust information governance program to ensure appropriate data management policies are in place for the company. Gabe also collaborates with numerous departments within the company to bolster Smithville's defenses against cyber threats.

Gabe earned his J.D. from Indiana University's Maurer School of Law along with an M.S in Cybersecurity Risk Management from the Graduate School. He was among the first graduates to participate in Indiana's dual degree program combining cybersecurity and law. After obtaining his degree, he was admitted to the Indiana Bar and received his Certified Information Privacy Professional certification / U.S. from IAPP.

Outside of the office, Gabe enjoys spending time with his pet dog, cat, and two rabbits. He is also a video game enthusiast and enjoys grilling and smoking different foods.

William E. Mathews, III (Bill) is the Director of **Cordell, A Division of Nex-Tech** located in LA Verne, CA. Bill has been with Cordell for 38 years having served as their President and CEO during that time. After working at Kansas City Southern RR and IBM. Cordell's focus is in software, hardware and engineering solutions for various industries requiring telecommunications, such as telephone companies, railroads, power companies and airports.

Robert Mayer is Senior Vice President of Cybersecurity & Innovation with the **USTelecom Association (USTelecom)** with responsibility for leading cyber and national security policy and strategic initiatives. He is the current Chairman of the Communications Sector Coordinating Council (CSCC), which represents the broadcast, cable, satellite, wireless and wireline industries in connection with the DHS and public-private partnership activities across the U.S. government. Mayer serves as co-chair of the Department of Homeland Security's ICT Supply Chain Risk Management Task Force, which is now in its third year and focuses on developing strategic and operational best practices to manage supply chain risk. He also co-leads the Counsel to Secure the Digital Economy (CSDE), which consists of 13 global ICT infrastructure providers who have joined forces to drive solutions that enhance the cyber resiliency of the global digital ecosystem. Mayer was appointed to the FCC Communications Security Reliability and Interoperability Council (CSRIC V), after having led a 100-person team of cybersecurity professionals that produced a landmark report to adapt the NIST Cybersecurity Framework to the broadcast, cable, satellite, wireless and wireline industries.

Prior to USTelecom, Mayer served as the top telecommunications official for New York State as Telecom Director of the New York Public Service Commission. In that capacity, he led several major initiatives including regulatory reform efforts and he created a new agency department that focused exclusively on network reliability and public safety matters. Prior to this appointment, Mayer was the lead regulatory practitioner in the Telecommunications and Cable Group at KPMG

Consulting and was a consultant with Deloitte Consulting. Before that, Mayer worked as an analyst in the international telecommunications divisions of Chase Manhattan Bank and JP Morgan. Mayer served in the US Air Force supervising intelligence and communications operations at NATO Headquarters, Southern Europe in Italy. He received his B.A from Albany State University, his MA in Information Management from Central Michigan University, his MBA from Boston University, and his J.D from New York Law School.

Christopher A. McLean, is the Assistant Administrator for Electric Programs (AAE) at the **Rural Utilities Service (RUS)**. He was named to that position on January 11, 2015. This is Chris' third time at the agency. As AAE, Chris presides over a \$48 billion loan portfolio. In recent years the RUS annual lending budget for new electric infrastructure loans has exceeded \$5 billion. The agency makes low interest loans for rural electric infrastructure, renewable energy generation, smart grid technology, grid modernization and energy efficiency.

Chris is also currently serving as Acting Administrator of the entire agency which also finances water, sewer, telecommunications and broadband infrastructure.

Prior to his return to RUS, Chris was the Acting Director of the Program Planning and Accountability Division of the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (OASCR) at the United States Department of Agriculture. He came to OASCR in 2013 as civil rights fellow in the policy office.

From 2010-2012, Chris served as a senior advisor to the Administrator of the Rural Utilities Service (RUS).

Chris was in private practice from 2001-2010. He was the co-owner of e-Copernicus, a consulting firm that specialized in telecommunications, transportation, and technology policy. Chris is also the former Executive Director of the Consumer Electronics Retailers Coalition (CERC).

Chris is a former RUS Administrator and former Governor of the Rural Telephone Bank. He was appointed Deputy Administrator in January 1998. In 2000, he was the first person nominated and confirmed for the position of RUS Administrator.

Prior to joining RUS, he worked on Capitol Hill for more than 15 years. He served on Senator Jim Exon's staff and Senator Bob Kerrey's staff both from Nebraska.

Chris hails from Omaha, Nebraska. He received an LL.M. in International and Comparative Law from Georgetown University in 1985, a J.D. from Creighton University School of Law in 1982, and a degree in Business Administration from Creighton University in 1980. Chris also completed the Key Executive Leadership Program at American University in 2015.

Lynn R. Merrill, Monte R. Lee & Company is President and Chief Executive Officer of Monte R. Lee and Company. He is a Professional Engineer with a degree in Engineering from the University of Oklahoma. Lynn has worked for Monte R. Lee and Company since 1981, serving in many capacities providing engineering, design and project management to wireline, wireless, CATV and Internet clientele.

Lynn represents the NTCA on the FCC's Technological Advisory Council and serves on the State of Oklahoma Broadband Advisory Council. Lynn also serves on the Board of Directors of the Association of Communication Engineers (ACE) and Oklahoma Telephone Association. Lynn was recognized as the WTA Outstanding Associate Member for 2015.

Derrick B. Owens is Senior Vice President of Government & Industry Affairs at **WTA – Advocates for Rural Broadband**. He manages WTA's Washington, DC office and is responsible for working with Congress, Executive Branch agencies, and the Federal Communications Commission. He also serves as the association's lead spokesperson on policy matters and is responsible for WTA's industry outreach efforts. Derrick also serves as staff director for WTA's public policy committee where he works directly with the membership to develop policy positions on legislation and regulations affecting rural telecommunications companies.

Prior to joining the WTA's staff, Derrick worked at the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) where he served in a number of senior-level advisory positions. Prior to NTIA, Derrick worked for his hometown Congressman in Washington, DC serving as an advisor on telecommunications and other legislative matters.

Derrick has a master's degree in Public Policy from the University of Maryland's School of Public Policy. He received his bachelor's degree in Political Science from Allegheny College in Pennsylvania. Derrick serves on several boards of directors and is a member of both his college and high school athletic halls of fame.

Michael J. Pollock is the Chief Operating Officer of **Nex-Tech**, headquartered in Lenora, Kansas. He has 36 years of experience, 20 of which have been at Nex-Tech. He has served on the Nex-Tech Wireless Board, Kansas NG911 Cybersecurity Council, NTCA Cybersecurity Working Group, WTA Cybersecurity Committee and several other community and industry boards. Michael has a BA in Computer Information Science from Washburn University.

Allan Reiter is the Director of Technology for **Nex-Tech, LLC**, headquartered in Lenora, Kansas. He has more than 30 years of experience in the technology industry and has held several positions at Nex-Tech during the past 15 years. As the Director of Technology, Allan is responsible for overseeing business units including Network Operations, the Network Operations Center (NOC) and Technology Services.

Dave Ryan is the Chief Operations Officer at **STRATA Networks**, a telecommunications company employing nearly 300 people and headquartered in Northeastern Utah. STRATA Networks provides high-speed broadband solutions and nationwide wireless services to a vast region, including Utah, Northwestern Colorado, and Southwestern Wyoming

Dave has over 20 years of experience in the telecommunications and broadband industry, along with 17 years of leadership experience managing all landline operations teams including Engineering, Rights-of-Way & Permitting, Warehouse & Logistics, Outside Plant Construction, and Fiber Installation & Splicing. With his extensive experience in fiber-optic infrastructure projects aimed at serving residential, commercial, and anchor institutions through private investment and

public-private partnerships, Dave has been Instrumental in STRATA's execution of several high-profile initiatives and is respected in the communities that STRATA serves.

Dave is a graduate of Western Governors University, where he received a Bachelor of Science in Business Management and is currently pursuing an MBA. When not at work, Dave enjoys spending time with his wife and five children. He also enjoys fly fishing, exploring the Rocky Mountains and working on cars and motorcycles. He is also a passionate Formula One race fan.

Mike Wilson is Vice President of Professional Services at **CostQuest Associates**. Mike oversees Broadband Mapping, Broadband Planning and related initiatives for the firm. Mike's background is in Federal and State Universal Service Funding and telecommunications data and business intelligence. Mike has been working within the broadband telecommunications industry for 20+ years. He's based in CostQuest's Seattle office and enjoys spending time with his family (and dog) around the mountains and trails of the Pacific Northwest.