



2021 FALL EDUCATIONAL FORUM
OCTOBER 3-6 · PHOENIX, ARIZONA



2021 WTA Fall 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 Comedian Sponsored by CALIX

Eric O'Shea

Get ready to witness not only a comedy show, but an EVENT! With over 4 MILLION hits on YOUTUBE, and BEING NOMINATED 6-TIME CAMPUS ACTIVITIES MAGAZINE'S "National Comedy Performer of the Year," Eric needs your help to try to cope with this crazy thing we call life! As a veteran performer of over 1200 colleges and universities, sit back, but buckle yourself in–and let his CLEAN wit and priceless observations take you through your embarrassing childhood and everyday moments that drive you insane!

WARNING!!! Thanks to a little A.D.D. and lack of segues, this show gets RANDOMLY WILD! From surviving family, to surviving all 24 hours of the day–from original stories to celebrity impressions including ELMO–Eric's UNIQUE humor, expressions, and high-energy show is unlike anything you've ever heard...

...including his world-famous “SONGS FOR COMMERCIALS” that caught the eye and got rave reviews from MR. STEVEN SPIELBERG—and was performed at the CREATIVE EMMY AWARDS in L.A on the E! NETWORK!

Commissioner Brendan Carr is the senior Republican on the Federal Communications Commission, and he served previously as the agency’s General Counsel.

Described by Axios as “the FCC’s 5G crusader,” Carr has led the FCC’s work to modernize its infrastructure rules and accelerate the buildout of high-speed networks. His reforms cut billions of dollars in red tape, enabled the private sector to construct high-speed networks in communities across the country, and extended America’s global leadership in 5G.

Commissioner Carr is also focused on expanding America’s skilled workforce—the tower climbers and construction crews needed to build next-gen networks. His jobs initiative promotes community colleges and apprenticeships as a pipeline for good-paying 5G jobs. And he is recognizing America’s talented and hardworking tower crews through a series of “5G Ready” Hard Hat presentations.

Commissioner Carr leads a groundbreaking telehealth initiative at the FCC. The Connected Care Pilot Program supports the delivery of high-quality care to low-income Americans and veterans over their smartphones, tablets, or other connected devices. The Program is helping to drive down health care costs while improving patient outcomes.

Commissioner Carr’s time outside of Washington helps inform his approach to the job. He regularly hits the road to hear directly from the community members, local leaders, and small business owners that are impacted by the FCC’s policies at town halls and other events across the country.

Commissioner Carr brings over a dozen years of private and public sector experience in communications and tech policy to his position. Before joining the agency as a staffer back in 2012, he worked as an attorney at Wiley Rein LLP in the firm’s appellate, litigation, and telecom practices. He litigated cases involving the First Amendment and the Communications Act. Previously, Commissioner Carr clerked on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit for Judge Dennis Shedd. And after attending Georgetown University for his undergrad, Commissioner Carr earned his J.D. magna cum laude from the Catholic University of America’s Columbus School of Law where he served as an editor of the Catholic University Law Review.

Commissioner Carr was nominated to the FCC by President Trump and confirmed unanimously by the United States Senate.

Commissioner Carr grew up in Virginia and now lives in Washington, DC, with his wife and three children.

Andy Deinert is the Network and Security Services Manager at Vantage Point Solutions. Andy has been with Vantage Point since 2004, helping service providers design and secure

their networks. Andy's expertise is in the areas of data network design, network implementation, network monitoring, cybersecurity, and project management. Andy has engineered several fiber optic networks for broadband service providers over the years. He is involved in writing plans and specifications for core and edge routers, transport equipment, and access electronics. Andy also gets involved in long term strategic planning for network expansion and growth.

Andy is a frequent speaker at many state and national level shows around the United States. Andy partakes in several webinars sharing his expertise in the telecommunications industries and has facilitated several training workshops.

Andy majored in Computer Information Systems and minored in Computer Networking at Dakota State University (DSU) in Madison, SD. He has a Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP) from ISC2 (active) and obtained his Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA) certification (expired). He also sits on the Cybersecurity Industry Advisory Board at DSU.

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.

Geoff Feiss has been General Manager of the Montana Telecommunications Association (MTA) since 1998. MTA offers public policy analysis and advocacy; education and training; and communications services for Montana's rural telecommunications industry.

MTA members employ nearly 1,000 Montanans as they invest nearly \$100 million each year in broadband infrastructure and services. These companies serve over 70% of the state's land mass with over 25,000 miles of fiber optic facilities.

Geoff's career began on Capitol Hill and has included stints with Michigan Bell Telephone Company and USTelecom, among others. He resides in Helena, MT.

Mark Gailey is President and General Manager of Totah Communications, Inc. headquartered in Ochelata, Oklahoma. He has been employed with Totah since 1996.

Total Telephone Company was started in 1954. His Father Jess was President and General Manager from 1966 to 1998. His Mother Marilyn also worked in the front office of Total while Mark was growing up. Mark grew up in the telephone business starting at the ground level in yard maintenance. He progressed into Install and Repair, Construction, Cable splicing and minor Switching work. He was employed by Contel of Arkansas later GTE Arkansas from 1987 until 1996. He graduated from Oklahoma State University 1987 with a BS in Business Administration. Majoring in Marketing and Management.

Mark is active in a number of associations. He serves on the Board of Directors of WTA, is a Past President. Currently serves as the PPC Co-Chair. He served on the board of Directors of OPASTCO and as Chairman in 2009., has also served on the Board of Directors of Kansas Telecommunications Industry Association, Kansas Rural Independent Telecommunications Association, and Oklahoma Telephone Association. He is past chairman of KTIA and KRITC, and past president and treasurer of OTA. He currently serves as Secretary of the Oklahoma Telephone Association. He has served on the Board of NTCA, Serves on the Industry Committee. He is on the Leadership committee of US Telecom.

He is also involved in various Committees and social activities in and around his hometown of Ochelata, OK. He serves on the Convention Visitor's Bureau of Bartlesville. He has served as Vice Chairman of the Board of the Bartlesville Development Corporation and the Chairman of Washington County Industrial Trust Authority. He has also served on the local advisory board of BancFirst Bartlesville Branch. He has supported local youth in sports as a coach and referee. He and wife Angie actively support Caney Valley Schools. Mark served recently on the advisory group to get the School bond passed for upgrades at the Caney Valley School's campus and Athletic facilities in Ochelata and Ramona Oklahoma. He and Angie also support the CV Band, CV Cheer, CV Yearbook, and various sports.

Mark and Angie were married June 1987. They have 5 Children. He and Angie are active Church members of New Harmony Baptist Church. Mark currently serves as Chairman of Deacons, Sunday School Director, on the Stewardship/Finance Committee, the Missions Committee, Youth Committee, Church Council and the Long Range Planning Committee.

Bob Gnapp began his telecommunications career with NECA in 1989. He held several management positions with varied areas of responsibility. Bob currently heads a department that provides member training on telecommunications technology, service pricing, cost recovery and regulatory change. This department is also responsible for providing resolution to complex issues involving access tariffs, cost recovery, universal service funding, demand changes, next generation technology deployments, changing network designs and/or evolving regulations.

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.

Tom Karalis, is the CEO of Oklahoma Rural Broadband Association

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.

Douglas Kinkoph is Associate Administrator of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth, which includes responsibility for the Office of Minority Broadband Initiatives. Kinkoph joined the Department of Commerce in 2010 and has served in a number of roles, working on issues including spectrum management, broadband, and public safety communications.

In his role, Kinkoph is responsible for all of NTIA's broadband programs, including three active broadband grant programs: the Broadband Infrastructure Program, the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program and the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program. Kinkoph also has responsibility for the agency's BroadbandUSA program, which was created under his leadership in 2015. He also oversaw a \$4 billion broadband grant program that funded the deployment of broadband infrastructure, public computer centers, sustainable adoption of broadband service, and statewide broadband planning.

Before joining the Department of Commerce, Kinkoph held multiple executive roles in the communications industry as well as in the public and private sectors as a telecommunications policy expert. He served as Vice President of Operations at Soundpath Conferencing where he was responsible for all sales, marketing, and customer service operations. His private sector experience also includes serving in senior regulatory and policy roles at XO Communications, Nextlink, and LCI.

Kinkoph earned his M.A. in Administration from Central Michigan University and his B.S. in Telecommunication Management from Ohio University.

Steven McComas is an executive with thirty years of global experience in a variety of financial management, business leadership and corporate strategy. Mr. McComas is the Chief Executive Officer for Responsive Technology Partners, Inc. a managed information technology consulting and services firm operating throughout the Southeastern United States with offices in Metter, Vidalia, Atlanta, Athens, and Milledgeville Georgia, Raleigh, North Carolina, Roanoke, Virginia, and Tampa, Florida. Under Mr. McComas' leadership, Responsive Technology Partners, Inc. has quickly grown to a ranking by Inc. Magazines' 5000 as the 509 fastest-growing private companies in America in 2021. Mr. McComas also serves as the Chief Financial Officer for Pineland Telephone Cooperative, Inc., a rural telephone, and broadband cooperative based in Metter, Georgia and is responsible for all the company's financial functions.

Catherine Nicolaou is the External Affairs and Marketing Manager for Sacred Wind Communications, New Mexico's newest rural telecom carrier, which provides voice and internet service to rural and tribal areas in Northwest New Mexico on Navajo land. As such, she interfaces with state regulatory officials and government officials to promote the Company's public image and business agenda. She also manages the coordination, review, compilation, assembly, filing and tracking of reports, applications, and petitions to state, local, and federal authorities, including state PRC, FCC, RUS, or any other governmental authority, while promoting brand recognition through the company's marketing initiatives. Catherine is a board member of the New Mexico Technology Council and participates on their broadband committee. She is a member of the New Mexico Chamber of Commerce policy committee and is a registered lobbyist for Sacred Wind.

Christine O'Connor serves as Executive Director of the Alaska Telecom Association where she works on behalf of Alaska's telecommunications providers in support of connectivity throughout the state. She has served as a Director and Board President for Nushagak Cooperative and as the city librarian in Dillingham. Later her work at Matanuska Telephone Association included extensive participation in the regulatory and compliance realm. Christine's roots and experience in rural Alaska have given her a deep commitment to bringing service to Alaskans, as well as an appreciation of the challenges remote location, extreme climate, and high costs bring.

Christine returns every summer to Bristol Bay to participate with her family in the greatest sustainable fishery in the world.

Tip O'Neill, Jr. is the President of the Nebraska Telecommunications Association. Before coming to the NTA in January, he served as the Legal Counsel for the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee of the Nebraska Legislature. He had previously served as Legal Counsel for legislative committees for six years in the 1980s. He also served as the President of a higher education association in Nebraska for 27 years and a Vice President at Kearney State College (now UN-Kearney).

O'Neill was a member of the board of directors of the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU) and served as a member of the NAICU Legal Services Committee. O'Neill is the former chairman of the NAICU Commission on Tax Policy. He

was a member of the boards of directors of the National Student Loan Program, a federal agency which guaranteed federal student loans; MELMAC, LLC, a company which was associated with the secondary market for student loans; and the Platte Valley Bank in North Bend, Nebraska.

A native of Sumner, Nebraska, O'Neill graduated from Kearney State College (B.S. Journalism) and from the University of Nebraska (J.D.). He received an honorary doctorate from Hastings (Nebraska) College in 2002. He worked as the sports editor of the Kearney Daily Hub before beginning law school. An outdoor recreation enthusiast, he was appointed to the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission in 1996 by Governor Ben Nelson and served as Chairman of the Board of Commissioners in 2000.

Dave Osborn is the Chief Executive Officer of the VTX1 Companies headquartered in Raymondville, Texas. The VTX1 Companies operate broadband Internet, voice, security, surveillance, and fiber transport lines of business within a 47,500 square mile service area in South and Central Texas. Their corporate priorities have been growth through expansion, diversification, and acquisitions, and VTX1 has tripled in size with revenues and customer base over the last 10 years.

Mr. Osborn began his career with Southwestern Bell in Dallas and progressed through positions of increasing responsibility in Dallas, St. Louis, Ft. Worth, Kansas City, Houston, concluding at AT&T company headquarters at Morristown, New Jersey. Prior to his current position, he has many years' experience ranging from startups to large telecom and computer network equipment manufacturers and is considered a turnaround and strategic planning specialist within the industry.

Mr. Osborn is a current Board Member and Treasurer for the *Texas Telephone Association* and is a former Board Member of *WTA* and *TSTCI*. Mr. Osborn is also a member of the Board of Directors for the *Texas Lone Star Network* and the Houston-South Texas *Better Business Bureau* and was the Bureau's 2017-2018 Board Chair.

Mr. Osborn holds a Bachelor of Science Degree from Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches and a Masters of Business Administration Degree from Texas Christian University in Ft. Worth.

One of Mr. Osborn's favorite pastime is sailing, and he holds both U.S. and International sailing certifications. He also enjoys South Texas bird hunting and saltwater fishing and is an avid grill master. Additionally, Mr. Osborn enjoys music and plays the piano, guitar, and five-string banjo.

Mr. Osborn resides in Harlingen, Texas, with his wife Marilyn. Two adult children and two grandsons reside in the Houston area.

VTX1 visitors are encouraged to come in January when the average temperature is 71 degrees.

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.

Mike Reed joined UNICO in 2009 as a Benefits Advisor for the Employee Benefits division. In 2011, Mike's role transitioned to Risk Advisor for the Property and Casualty, joining the UNITEL division.

Mike's primary expertise is in managing risk for telecommunication companies. Helping his clients manage their risk to protect their assets is Mike's number one priority. His client focus approach prioritizes identifying coverage gaps, emerging risks and finding the best carrier partner for placement for his clients. Mike offers his clients a full perspective of their risk management program and aims to teach them along the way.

UNITEL, a division of UNICO Group, is dedicated to providing risk solutions for the communications industry. When you partner with UNITEL, you are connected with insurance and risk management experts that are committed to helping you protect your world.

Mike Ricks started his career as an interpreter for a Japanese translation business in Portland Oregon while attending Portland State University. This opportunity introduced him into the international arena where he spent 10 years in the international marketplace in a variety of industries. A quality-of-life move brought him to Utah where he has been in the telecommunications business for the past 22 years. All of these years have been spent in business management and sales leadership roles.

As Vice President of Strategic Sales for Toly Digital Networks, Mike leads the charge to bring the highest level of service and support to the ILEC/CLEC marketplace. Taking a consultative, strategic approach combined with strong relationships supports and expands Toly's philosophy of having all customers be "Raving Fans".

Prior to joining Toly, Mike was Vice President of Wholesale at Zone Telecom where he directed all sales and marketing efforts. Mike earned his Bachelor's degree from Portland State University.

Mike's motivation comes from his desire to provide solutions to customers and assist in their success. His primary motivation is his wife, five children and six grandchildren.

Kent Schimke is the Chief Executive Officer and General Manager of DRN Read iTech. Proactive managed network services, business continuity, Telcom Engineering, and IT support are the foundational operations of Read iTech, but its parent company DRN also specializes in state-of-the-art fiber optic services for telecommunication in the office or home. Read iTech has bought out two technology companies, CompQuest and Insight Technologies since its inception in 2010. The latter now operates under the banner of Read iTech IT Solutions. Read iTech Fiber was created in 2019 and serves as DRN's CLEC operations in the cities of Mapleton, Casselton, and Horace ND. Read iTech Engineering was created early 2021 in partnering with Dustin Maier PE and a seasoned support staff. Read iTech Engineering provides all-encompassing Telecom Engineering services.

Schimke has played an integral role in DRN Read iTech's history. For more than 20 years, Schimke was the plant manager of Dickey Rural Networks, which accounts for the acronym preceding Read iTech. The network company expanded in its MSP-like functions through the guidance of Schimke. Before joining the DRN team, he had worked for James Valley Electric in Edgeley, North Dakota. Schimke holds a business management certificate from Rasmussen College.

Aaron Tyler has specialized in business intelligence and data analytics since 2016. He has extensive experience analyzing and interpreting data relative to his clients' business and industry goals. Aaron provides clients with a competitive advantage by making data solutions more accessible for their business. His projects bring operational data and management insights to decision makers in industries ranging from agriculture to financial services

Prior to joining Moss Adams, Aaron worked in business data analysis and consulting roles for companies in the communications, health care, energy, and not-for-profit sectors. He is a proud veteran of the United States Marine Corps.

Jonathan Wray co-founded Aible in 2018 and is currently the CRO. He previously crafted ~1000 real-world predictive models and deployed AI to 10,000+ users while at Salesforce; built and managed \$100M P&L at Danaher/Fortive; and created and taught "AI in Market Facing Functions" to MBA students at Harvard.