

HBO to CEO, Amy Tykeson Bends Broadband

by K_Guice

Read Amy Tykeson's bio and it is easy to see why CableWORLD once named her one of the 50 most influential women in cable. Labeled a true "cable gal," Tykeson is the chairman and CEO of Bend Broadband.

She was part of the industry long before she was hired by HBO in 1980, where she moved through the ranks and ultimately served as VP of Area Marketing in New York.

Her father, Donald Tykeson, helped her blaze a path into cable. Tykeson said he was a mentor. "No question my dad has played a significant role as a mentor throughout my career." She added, "My entire family has been very supportive."

After finishing college with a BS from the University of Oregon; her father, president of Liberty Communications, suggested she take a look at cable. "At that time, satellite technology had opened the door for cable and all the major markets were in the midst of granting cable franchises," Tykeson said. "The opportunities were wide open for young people and excellent for women." The rest is history.

Tykeson grew up in Eugene, Oregon. She moved to Chicago and then to New York City to work for HBO. "In 1988 my husband and I were ready to return to our home state," she said. "We traveled and began the next phase of our careers in Portland."

Now at the helm of Bend Cable Communications LLC (dba BendBroadband), she has built the leading independent operator, which recently celebrated its 50th anniversary. BendBroadband is at the forefront of broadband technologies, launching high speed data in 1997 and digital voice service in 2005. In addition, the company introduced an all digital video platform in 2005 and has offered a suite of enhanced video services such as HDTV, Video on Demand, DVRs and two interactive program guides.

Tykeson believes the company is building more than technology; it is helping to build the community. "There is no question that BendBroadband has played a role in the economic development of the region," she said. "We were the first in Oregon to provide high-speed Internet service back in 1997! people would come to Bend and be astounded that our little town had this type of service."

Since then, the company has invested over \$60 million in Deschutes County's cable system to bring facilities digital phone service and the best breed of digital cable with HDTV, DVRs and Video on Demand.

"In addition to these investments," Tykeson adds, "we provide living wage jobs to 160 terrific associates many of whom have moved up through the ranks over the years along with our growth."

Talking to Tykeson it is easy to tell she loves what she does. "I am passionate about the cable industry. It was started by entrepreneurs, mostly in the furniture business looking to sell televisions in small mountainous towns like Bend over 50 years ago. Broadcast signals didn't reach these towns," she says.

“These cable pioneers worked out microwave paths from larger cities to bring in the television signals and thus built demand for TV set sales,” Tykeson adds. That ingenuity was carried forward by people like Jerry Levin with HBO and Ted Turner with both WTBS and CNN.

Tykeson’s father also played a role in the evolution of the industry, moving Liberty Communications from a simple broadcaster to the 18th largest Cable operator in the 1960s and ‘70s. Since then it has continued to evolve.

“When I started out in cable, the programming side of the business was incredibly exciting,” she said. Now, the pace of change in the operational side fascinates her and the technology keeps her interest.

At the end of the day, Tykeson says her job comes down to people. She has learned how much fun it can be having a high-functioning team and how critical that is in terms of attracting and retaining great talent. “A positive, team-based culture is the foundation for customer satisfaction and financial success,” Tykeson said. “It is the people at BendBroadband that make my job fun.”

In addition to her daily BendBroadband duties, Tykeson is also VP of the Oregon Cable Telecommunications Association Board and chairs the small operators’ council for the NCTA Board of Directors.

Tykeson is also the Vice President of the Tykeson Family Charitable Trust and a board member for Economic Development for Central Oregon.

During her off time she takes pleasure in all that Bend has to offer. “One has to enjoy the outdoors year round,” Tykeson said. “I’m part of an active family and we take advantage of the regional attributes. Skiing, hiking and golf probably top my list.”

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