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Time Warner Cable Sports President David B. Rone is leaving the company after a tumultuous period attempting to win wider distribution for SportsNet LA, the cable channel owned by the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Rone was one of the architects of Time Warner Cable's entry into the sports channel business. A former Creative Artists Agency agent, Rone helped launch Time Warner



Cable SportsNet and the Spanish-language outlet Time Warner Cable Deportes, which showcase the Los Angeles Lakers.

Those two channels launched successfully in 2012 but ratings have slipped amid the Lakers' on-the-court struggles. Time Warner Cable's venture with the Dodgers, SportsNet LA, stumbled out of the gate with no

major pay-TV operators beyond Time Warner Cable agreeing to carry the channel, limiting its visibility and stunting its ratings.

Rone's decision to leave the company, first reported by Sports Business Journal, was not a surprise.

Time Warner Cable has been cutting expenses and laying off staff members within its El Segundo programming division. Last month, it canceled several programs, including "Dodgers Clubhouse" and "Larry King at Bat."

Time Warner Cable also is in the process of being sold to another cable operator, Charter Communications. The Federal Communications Commission has been reviewing Charter's proposed acquisition of Time Warner Cable.

Should Charter take over Time Warner Cable, that company probably would install its own team. Time Warner Cable said it has no plans to hire a replacement. The current general manager of the regional sports networks, Mark Shuken, is expected to continue in his current role.

Rone's team members now will report to Melinda Witmer, the chief operating officer of the Time Warner Cable Networks.

Rone will step down at the end of this week, but will serve as a consultant at least through December.

"David has accomplished what he set out to do here at TWC, including successfully launching three regional sports networks," Time Warner Cable spokesman Andrew Fegyveresi said late Monday.

"He feels that with this success, the pending acquisition and a strong bench of talented employees who have worked for him, it would be a good time to start exploring other opportunities," Fegyveresi said.

To boost its distribution, Charter began carrying the Dodgers channel, SportsNet LA, in June after announcing its deal to buy Time Warner Cable. But other major distributors in the region, including AT&T, which now owns DirecTV, Dish Network, Cox Communications and Verizon FiOS continue to refuse to carry the Dodgers channel, citing its hefty distribution fee.

SportsNet LA loses more than \$100 million a year for Time Warner Cable.

Rone joined Time Warner Cable as president of sports in May 2011. Two years later, he transitioned into a larger role overseeing the company's regional sports networks as well as its local channels devoted to news, sports and lifestyle programming.

Before joining Time Warner Cable, Rone worked with the investment banking firm Evolution Media Capital, which was formed in partnership with Hollywood talent agency Creative Artists Agency. Prior to that, Rone was the co-head of CAA Sports, representing star athletes and advising sports teams.

Rone, who started his career as a lawyer, also had stints at Fox Sports and Walt Disney Co. – **Los Angeles Times**



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