

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Next-Gen: AI On the Rise for Operators Embracing Virtualization

Artificial intelligence has been discussed for years in technology and regulatory circles, but it is finally becoming a highly-valued tool in the arsenals of cable providers of all sizes.

It has become the heart of offerings from vendors large and small as they try to address longstanding inefficiencies and modernize the cable and broadband industry. Startups like **Actifai** are hoping to break into the industry even further and introduce more folks to its AI-powered customer engagement platform. The tool is largely used by customer service representatives to quickly and easily match customers with the best package for their needs. The goal is to enhance customer satisfaction, reduce churn and win over new subscribers in a time of unprecedented competition.

“What of this complex array of product and service offerings could they and should they offer to a new subscriber, and what should they offer to an existing customer in a retention or save scenario?” Actifai EVP/GM *Jeff Vogt* told **CFX**. “The idea being can you cut through all the noise—150 different flavors of video, broadband and phone—and present a singular recommendation?”

Actifai customers include **altafiber** and **Cogeco Communications**. On multiple occasions, conversations with prospective and existing customers have turned into much larger discussions focused on idea generation around the next steps for AI and its potential.

“We get a lot of interest around, okay, if your AI has built this very practical solution to customer acquisition and growth with our ability to upsell customers and our ability to retain customers with more intelligence either proactively or reactively, how can we get insight into network events?” Vogt said. “How can we do proactive, predictive maintenance activities on the network? How can we use AI to develop a strategy around network expansion?”

The rise in interest in machine learning and AI has coincided with the introduction and adoption of virtualized networks. Network virtualization has been a huge focus for operators like **Comcast** that can double their capacity and realize a number of other benefits by adopting the software-based architecture. It’s the basis of what will allow Comcast to deploy multi-gigabit symmetrical speeds over coax and fiber, and comes with a number of benefits like real-time visibility into all parts of the network.

Comcast has fully embraced AI and machine learning with its Octave platform, a project that was built on the back of its X1 platform. It checks thousands of telemetry points across tens of millions of modems every 20 minutes and detects when they aren’t optimally operating. It can also make adjustments to open up more bandwidth for use within a household. Octave was put to the test during the pandemic and teams of engineers continue to examine how far it can go to take Comcast’s network into the future.

“Our customers don’t want to know that we knew what hap-

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pened to them an hour ago, right? They want to know that, hey, my service is impaired right now. What are you doing about it?” Comcast Cable EVP/Chief Network Officer *Elad Nafshi* said during an appearance last month at the RBC Capital Markets Global Technology, Internet, Media and Telecom Conference. “And where we can do something about this from a platform standpoint, we want machines, artificial intelligence and the brilliant network to take care of that. And where we can’t, we want to make sure that we’re about to dispatch the technicians to the pinpoint location of where the issue is so we can quickly resolve it.”

Other vendors are emerging that can offer deeper insights into the field for operators. **Nrby** is largely known for its dynamic location intelligence platform designed to offer crews and field personnel the tools to more efficiently maintain the network, but a dashboard launched earlier this year offers predictive analytics that can tell operators what they need to focus on next and why. Called *Nrby Vu*, it also analyzes patterns to find common faults or evidence-based conclusions on why a job may have gone wrong. *Nrby* customers include **WOW!**, **Breezeline** and **Vyve Broadband**.

Bringing these tailored, fully actualized services to life has begun to transform AI from a buzzword at future-looking shows like CES into something consumers and enterprises can really understand.

“There’s an embrace of automation and AI technologies, and there is a practical use case for them. It’s how do you harness them for very practical purposes versus trying to bite off everything,” *Vogt* said. “AI is a little bit of a buzz term for a

lot of things. What we’re trying to do is just build very siloed use cases that deliver real value, and then I think there will be some other portfolio opportunities as we engage with these customers.”

#### COMCAST MOVES ONE STEP CLOSER TO 10G

**Comcast** completed what it called the world’s first live, multi-gigabit symmetrical internet connection powered by 10G and Full Duplex DOCSIS 4.0 technology. The trial consisted of the provider connecting a business location in the Philadelphia area to its live network, including a DOCSIS 4.0-enabled 10G node and multiple cable modems. Comcast engineers tested symmetrical speeds over the connection and will continue to trial other 10G technologies over the next several months ahead of the commercial launch of 10G-enabled services in the second half of 2023. “This live trial combines years of technology innovation and versatility to create a clear path to next-generation speed, reliability and performance for all the homes in our footprint, not just a select few,” Comcast Cable President, Technology, Product and Experience *Charlie Herrin* said in a statement.

#### VERIZON, CMG FACE RETRANS BLACKOUT

**Verizon Fios** has begun notifying customers of a potential blackout they could experience thanks to an expiring retransmission consent agreement with **Cox Media Group**. *Fios*’ contract with Cox Media Group for WFXT (**FOX**) in Boston and Rhode Island, WPXI (**NBC**) in Pittsburgh and the Pittsburgh Cable News Channel expires on Thursday. “We are working hard to negotiate with them to reach a new agreement. However, CMG has proposed charging significantly more for its programming,” *Verizon* said in a statement to customers. “Verizon

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remains committed to making these channels available to our customers, but simply cannot agree to such unreasonable increases.” Cox Media Group remains optimistic that a deal will be reached ahead of the deadline, saying it has been negotiating productively with Verizon for several weeks. Two weeks ago, 12 CMG stations went dark on **DISH** after the pair could not agree on terms of a new contract.

#### NETFLIX DOMINATES CHILDREN'S, FAMILY EMMYS

The first-ever Children's and Family Emmy Award winners were unveiled this weekend at the Wilshire Ebell Theatre in Los Angeles. It was the first standalone spinoff of the Emmys since 1979 in order to meet the [growing interest in children's and family programming](#), with the event split into two days—the first to focus on technical crafts categories and the second centered on the program-related categories. The first night saw **Netflix** take home 13 wins, followed by **Disney+** with 10 and **Apple TV+** with two. Netflix had “Maya and the Three” win three categories: Outstanding Promotional Announcement, Outstanding Writing for an Animated Program and Outstanding Sound Mixing and Sound Editing for an Animated Program. Disney+'s “Sneakerella” also took home a trio of awards: Outstanding Music Direction and Composition for a Live-Action Program, Outstanding Editing for a Single-Camera Program and Outstanding Choreography. **BYUtv**, **Cartoon Network/TBS**, **Disney Junior**, **HBO Max**, **Hulu**, **Nickelodeon**, **Oculus TV** and **Peacock** each won one award on the first night. Netflix led night No. 2 with 15 wins, headlined by “Heartstopper” which took home four overall awards. Disney+ earned another four honors with Sneakerella winning Outstanding Fiction Special and “The Mysterious Benedict Society” nabbing Outstanding Directing for a Single Camera Program. Cartoon Network/TBS, Disney Junior, HBO Max, Nickelodeon, **Paramount+** and Peacock each earned one award respectively.

#### HBO MAX, NETFLIX TO BATTLE AT GOLDEN GLOBES

**HBO Max** and **Netflix** were front and center in the TV categories as the nominations for the 80th Golden Globe Awards nominations were unveiled. The two streamers had 14 nominations each as Netflix's “The Crown” and “Dahmer—Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story” had five and four, respectively, with “Ozark” (three), “Wednesday” (two) and “Inventing Anna” (one) supplementing the rest. HBO Max's “The White Lotus” notched four alongside “Hacks” with three, “Barry” and “House of the Dragon” with two each and “Euphoria,” “The Flight Attendant” and “The Staircase” with one each. **Hulu** garnered 10 nominations, followed by **FX** with nine, **ABC** and **Apple TV+** with six and **AMC/AMC+** with two.

#### QUICKPLAY PURCHASES 440 DIGITAL

As **Quickplay** moves more into media services and media asset management, the company acquired **440 Digital** to integrate its automation technologies into Quickplay's cloud-native OTT platform. Quickplay's end-to-end video pipeline, video CMS and user experience capabilities will now expand to cover onboarding and management of content, which includes media workflow automation and digital mastering before content is distributed. As part of the deal, 440 Digital's founder *Robert Longwell* will be Head of Media Services for Quickplay. Longwell previously

spent over 17 years at **Disney** in various media services roles, helping usher in innovations that helped Disney's transition to HD, accessibility services and multi-platform viewing.

#### ON THE CIRCUIT

**The WICT Network's** Washington DC/Baltimore Chapter is taking on cybersecurity in the nation's capital for its annual Tech It Out event. Kicking off Wednesday at 1pm ET, this year's program will see **Wilkinson Barker Knauer, LLP** Partner *Evelyn Remaley* serve as keynote speaker and feature **NCTA** VP/Deputy General Counsel *Loretta Polk*; Wilkinson Barker Knauer, LLP Associate *Savannah Schaefer*; and House Homeland Security Subcommittee Director, Cybersecurity *Moira Bergin* as panelists.

#### PROGRAMMING

**ESPN** and Superstar Racing Experience (SRX) inked a multiyear media rights deal to have the series broadcast exclusively on the network. Beginning in summer 2023, races will air on six consecutive Thursdays at 9pm, following a similar format that SRX had in the 1980s. The network will bring back the “Thursday Night Thunder” branding to commemorate SRX's return on July 13. Locations of each race will be announced at a later date. – To commemorate the 10th anniversary of TeletonUSA, **TelevisaUnivision** will have 17 hours of musical performances, celebrity appearances and special programming starting Saturday at 10am. It'll air on **Univision** with a simulcast on **Galavisión** in the U.S. and be available to stream on **VIX** in Latin America. “Despierta America” will kick things off Saturday at 10am, followed by “Noticiero Univision: Edición Digital” at noon and “Loa Rosa de Guadalupe” at 1pm. The event will raise money for the San Antonio-based Children's Rehabilitation Institute TeletonUSA. – **Fox News** is getting ready to ring in the New Year. On Dec. 31, “Countdown to All-American New Year” will begin at 9pm with *Emily Compagno*, *Jimmy Failla* and *Griff Jenkins* will serve as co-hosts. That'll lead into “All-American New Year 2023” from 10pm-1:30am, with *Will Cain*, *Rachel Campos-Duffy* and *Pete Hegseth* hosting from Nashville. – Two new shows are coming to **Fox Business Network** in Jan. “The Big Money Show” will air on weekdays from 1pm-2pm and break down financial news that impacts the day-to-day lives of viewers. “The Bottom Line” will cap the day from 6pm-7pm to tackle issues affecting the business and political realms. – “Friday Night Duals” will return for a fourth year on **ACC Network**. The event will feature a match every Friday between Jan. 20 and Feb. 17 at 7pm, beginning with No. 8 North Carolina State and No. 9 Virginia Tech and finishing with NC State and No. 21 North Carolina.

#### PEOPLE

**Charter** promoted *Eilisa Reid* from Group VP, Service Delivery Applications to SVP, Application Platform Services. She'll report to EVP, Network Operations *Magesh Srinivasan*. In her new role, Reid will oversee operations of customer-facing service delivery applications, public and private cloud operations, data center networks, shared database services and operational support systems. She originally joined Charter in 2016 and had a 13-year stint with **Comcast** before then.