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WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Keep it Personal: Xumo Sneak Peek Shows Focus on Fine Details

As **Charter** and **Comcast** inch closer to the launch of their national streaming juv **Xumo**, meeting the individual needs of each viewer is taking priority as a way to differentiate their service in a crowded room of options.

“Personalization matters more than ever,” Xumo Chief Revenue and Platform Officer *Colin Petrie-Norris* said during an appearance at **NAB Show** Monday. “That problem I think actually is also more important than people realize: how you get people to things that they want and need to watch. A personalized approach, curation and being able to use great metadata—I think that’s where we excel.”

It’s been nearly a year since two of the U.S.’ largest cable operators first announced their plans to introduce a platform that will compete with connected TV services. Xumo-branded devices are set to hit the market by the end of 2023, but that’s only a “launching pad” moment according to Petrie-Norris. The product will be one that develops with time to continue meeting changing consumer habits.

“They have different needs. They don’t want just black-box solutions. They want a custom solution for what they want. And we are best served to provide, on a commercial basis, a custom operating system fits to the needs of our [customers],” he said.

When Xumo does launch, Petrie-Norris baselined three areas to gauge success that all relate to one another. The first is

monthly active users and keeping track of the ways Xumo is growing in existing and new audiences. That funnels into the second notion of engagement and how customers are using Xumo on a daily basis and if they’ll remain users. That has a large impact on the third area of focus: financial metrics such as ARPU.

Whether Xumo succeeds may come down to how it sets its retail strategy. Xumo won’t manufacture TV devices, placing a large focus on its OS and the mixture of Charter and Comcast offerings. But while Xumo’s main home will be on TVs, there’s a growing need to meet younger viewers where they are, and that’s on smaller screens.

“I think at the end of the day, the Smart TV or big TV is where the center is, and that’s our primary focus,” Petrie-Norris said. “But you can’t ignore the other screens because you have to be available on all platforms, all other devices. We also can’t just be on our own platforms; we’ve got to be on others ... You can’t ignore the fact that consumption happens everywhere in the home out of the home.”

There also lies the potential for Charter or Comcast to bundle Xumo with their other respective offerings. Petrie-Norris said bundling in this case includes packaging content together for different groups of consumers, which is something he and the Xumo team have had experience with at ad-supported service **Xumo Play**.

“From a commercial side, when I started this years ago ... we were working with other people’s platforms. We were

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working with Smart TV manufacturers like **LG**. We now have the ability with our own platform to fuse that brand and run it in an elegant manner," Petrie-Norris said.

MRC LIFTS NIELSEN NATIONAL MEASUREMENT SUSPENSION

Nielsen is back. The **Media Rating Council's** board has reinstated the accreditation of its National Television Audience Measurement service at the recommendation of its TV Committee. It's a major win for the measurement company, which saw the accreditations of its national and local ratings services suspended in September 2021. The **Video Advertising Bureau** asked MRC for the suspension, and an audit from the council found that Nielsen undercounted viewership during the COVID-19 pandemic. The MRC again audited Nielsen in November, and an independent group of auditors was brought in to measure progress in areas where the company had previously come up short. That audit report showed compliance with industry standards. "That said, there is still more work to be done both in the near and long term to ensure Nielsen's National TAM measurements continue to meet our standards and the requirements of the industry," MRC Executive Director/CEO *George Ivie* said in a statement. This reinstatement does not include the Local Market Television Service, the Digital in TV Ratings component of the national service or the Nielsen One measurement service, among other things. VAB is now focused on what it views as the many changes that need to be made to Nielsen's planned Big Data + Panel product. "VAB has had an open and candid channel with Nielsen's top leaders on the Big Data + Panel product shortcomings, including exchanges of analytics and constant co-focus on improving that product before use as currency," VAB President/CEO *Sean Cunningham* said in a statement.

AMC NETWORKS LAUNCHING AVOD TIER OF AMC+

AMC Networks is joining the AVOD game, announcing plans to launch an ad-supported version of **AMC+** later this year. **Shudder**, **IFC Films Unlimited** and **Sundance Now** that are available as part of the **AMC+** bundle will also be included in the ad-supported tier. The programmer also unveiled a new insights and data targeting platform that would allow advertisers to identify and reach viewers across all ad-supported distribution platforms. Called Audience+, the platform was developed in partnership with analytics firm **605** and aims to give advertisers the ability to respond to changing viewer habits and cross-platform consumption.

STANDARD GENERAL GIVES MORE POST-MERGER COMMITMENTS

Standard General is going all out to gain support for its merger with **TEGNA**, announcing additional post-merger commitments on Monday. In addition to its previous statements, Standard General has now committed to no newsroom layoffs for three years following the transition. It will also increase local news budgets and hours of local news programming by an average of 20% across TEGNA-owned stations within three years of the deal and establish a grant fund of at least \$5 million in that timeframe to support the growth of local journalism. In an effort to appeal to pro-union organizations, Standard General said it would establish various non-disparagement policies. Its hope is that those offerings will be enough for organizations like **The NewsGuild-CWA**, the **National Association of Broadcast Employees** and **Technicians-CWA** to offer their support for the TEGNA buy. In related news, Standard General signed an agreement with the **International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees** in connection with the pending merger.

ISPS CALL FOR ACTION ON FCC POLE ATTACHMENT PROCEEDING

Altice USA, **Charter**, **Cox**, **Mediacom** and 11 other ISPs sent a letter to the **FCC** Monday asking the Commission to issue an order in its ongoing proceeding on streamlining pole attachment rules and removing barriers to infrastructure deployment. They encouraged the agency to require that investor-owned utility and LEC pole owners share in the cost of replacing poles. They also asked that requirements be put into place to encourage quick resolutions on disputes between attachers and pole owners. "Our members typically pay between \$6,000-30,000 to replace one pole. As a result, this severely limits their resources and causes them to either adjust their deployment plans or simply not extend their networks as far as they possibly could," **INCOMPAS** CEO *Chip Pickering* said in a statement. "If the Administration's goal is to truly connect all Americans, they must act on this issue."

FCC TO CREATE ATSC 3.0 ROADMAP

The **FCC** is working together with **NAB** to identify steps to smoothly transition from ATSC 1.0 to ATSC 3.0, FCC Chairwoman *Jessica Rosenworcel* announced at the **NAB Show** Monday. It's an effort led by the **Future of TV initiative**, a public-private partnership led by NAB that works with consumer groups, government entities and others. Working groups are expected to focus on addressing backwards compatibility, the

final conditions needed for a national ATSC 3.0 transition and the regulatory landscape post-transition.

market. It is accessible through the Spectrum News mobile app as well as on **Roku** and **Apple TV** streaming devices.

WGA STRIKE WATCH

An overwhelming majority of **Writers Guild of America** members voted to authorize a strike, with the vote setting a record for turnout and support of a strike authorization. Of the 9,218 ballots cast, 97.85% voted in favor of authorizing a strike. This doesn't mean a strike will happen, but it gives union leaders the ability the option if a deal isn't reached with studios by the May 1 deadline.

NAB SHOW PANEL SAYS FAST HAS ROOM TO GROW

While research shows consumers are beginning to feel overwhelmed by the plethora of viewing options, those in the FAST space are saying we're not quite at a level of content saturation just yet. "We're maturing," said **Samsung TV Plus** Head of Marketing *Aileen Del Cid* during a panel discussion at **NAB Show** Monday. "The quality of experience is one of the things that's going to really make services stand out. It's not just about putting content out there—you really have to pay attention to how consumers are watching the content on every single platform, because each experience, user flow, etc., are slightly different." Scott Olechowski, **Plex** co-founder and CPO, agreed with that notion, but said at some point from a viewer's perspective it will get too much. That's why Plex is devoting resources for its users to discover the type of content they desire based on user habits, which will then be turned to power recommendations and create a viewership loop. Another way services are cultivating loyal customers is through engagement, specifically with the content itself. For example the food-focused **Gusto TV** will display QR codes on shows for viewers to scan. Then, Gusto will send those users recipes and programs for them to try at home, adding another element of interactivity that brings another potential revenue stream. **Vevo**, a music video platform, takes interactivity to a competitive level with live trivia. However, Sr. Director, Distribution Partner Management *Bethany Atchison* said it then becomes a balancing act of keeping people engaged while not detracting from the content itself.

SPECTRUM NEWS READY TO STREAM

Spectrum News is launching a streaming network focused on local reporting from its networks. The service, called **Spectrum News+**, will offer 24-hour coverage Monday through Friday and plans to expand that to 24/7 by the summer. The streamer will also feature signature shows and specials, including public affairs show "In Focus" and Spectrum News NY1 theater show "On Stage." The service is available to Spectrum residential customers nationwide, including those who do not live in an existing Spectrum News

CARRIAGE

Newsmax is now available on the channel guide in offices within the House of Representatives, Rep. *Bryan Steil* (R-WI) said on "The Record with Greta Van Susteren." It joins **CNN**, **Fox News**, **MSNBC** and other major news channels offered to members of Congress and their staffs. – **Chicken Soup for the Soul Entertainment** signed deals that will bring FAST channels from **Fremantle**, **Revry** and **Love Stories TV** to the **Redbox** Free Live TV service. The eight new channels will arrive on the service soon. – **Vidgo** is adding the **Cowboy Way** FAST channel to its lineup. The channel includes a mix of titles from **INSP** including "Ultimate Cowboy Showdown," "Wild West Chronicles" and "Into the Wild Frontier."

RATINGS

UPtv's Easter programming between Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday reached 4.3 million total viewers, with an 82% increase in Women 25-54 vs 2022. Premiere programming included the television debut of "Southern Gospel" and an all-day marathon of "The Chosen" Season 2. – The latest season of **HGTV's** "Rock the Block" has attracted more than 12.7 million total viewers since its March 6 premiere. The six-episode season averaged a .82 L+3 rating among A25-54 and a 1.13 L+3 rating with W25-54.

PROGRAMMING

TBS unscripted series "The Cube" comes back for a second season on May 14 at 9pm. – "Reasonable Doubt," a legal drama from the **Onyx Collective** and ABC Signature, has been renewed for Season 2 on **Hulu**.

PEOPLE

Allen Media Group has tapped *Princell Hair* as President, Allen Media Broadcasting. The former **Black News Channel** President will now lead a division that includes 27 affiliate stations in 21 markets. Hair will also hold the title of EVP, Allen Media Group. He'll be based at the Allen Media Studios/Weather Group campus in Atlanta. – **Midco** CFO Steve Grossner is transitioning to a strategic role and taking on an EVP title, effective June 1. SVP, Finance *Kent Johnson* will fill the CFO role on that date. Planning for the transition has been in the works for the last year. Grossner will continue to serve as the board's Vice Chair. – **Public Knowledge** added *Cedric Watkins* to its team as a Government Affairs Policy Advocate. Additionally, *Will McBride* will serve as Digital Content Manager. Watkins most recently served as a Research Analyst for the U.S. Department of Energy. *Meredith Whipple* has also received a boost and will now serve as the organization's Chief of Staff.