

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Comcast Converge: Operator Shares Network, Video Enhancements

Comcast NBCUniversal has big plans for 2024, and it unveiled many of them Tuesday at the Comcast Technology Center to a room filled with press and partners from around the world.

“We are betting on a future that demands way more connectivity because so many more bits are going to travel across our network every year... we’re building the best network, and we’re building it because we believe people want and will need the best,” Comcast Chair/CEO *Brian Roberts* said at the close of a 90-minute program covering network and entertainment innovations the company has planned through the end of 2024.

It had all the sizzle of an upfront thanks to host *Kenan Thompson* and video appearances from the likes of *Seth Meyers*, but the focus of the presentation was what convergence means to Comcast NBCU and how it is bringing that vision to life.

“Some people hear the word converge and immediately think wired and wireless coming together or pricing and packages, and those things are important,” Comcast Cable CEO *Dave Watson* said. “But it’s bigger than that, and for us, convergence also means seamlessly integrating media and technology to make it easy for customers.”

Taking care of customers in the home will be a new gateway scheduled to be released later this year dubbed the XB10. *Kunle Ekundare*, Executive Director of Product Management, said Comcast will be the first in the industry to combine WiFi 7 with DOCSIS 4.0 and this gateway will be capable of delivering

multi-gigabit symmetrical speeds over WiFi. It will also be able to support 300 connected devices at the same time and will leverage AI to enable self-healing of the network. Comcast will show off the enhanced power in an ad campaign to launch this spring with the centerpiece being a spot directed by *Kathryn Bigelow* (“The Hurt Locker”). The spot shows five former pilots using VR goggles to fly again alongside their grandchildren in a virtual environment seamlessly thanks to Comcast’s network.

Comcast is also introducing a feature this fall that will allow customers to detect motion in their home using their gateway and other internet-enabled devices. When the feature is introduced, customers will be able to choose three devices within their home to create motion sensing zones. On their Xfinity app, subscribers will be able to see when motion is detected and what device detected the activity. Examples of use cases given were parents being able to see when their children arrive home from school or family members being able to keep an eye on whether aging relatives are following their usual home routine.

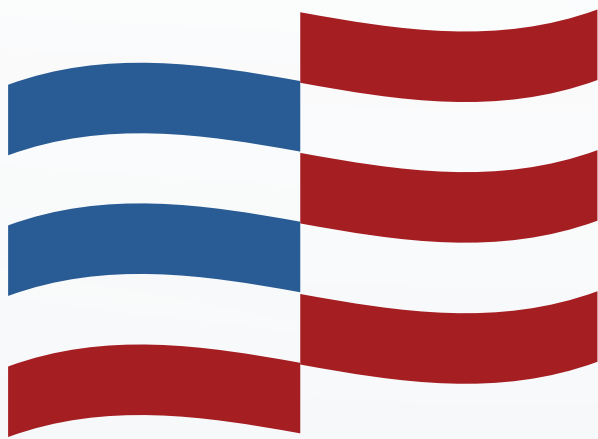
Another team is working on what Comcast is calling Ultra Low Lag, a feature that gives customers the ability to control on which devices low latency is a priority. Gamers could use their Xfinity app to make their PlayStation 5 a priority device to ensure its traffic is given priority on the network, or a remote worker could give their work laptop priority over their kids’ gaming PC. The operator has been working with **Apple**, **Nvidia** and **Valve** to test the technology, which will be rolled out soon. For those customers that have Xfinity Mobile, Comcast is in the

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process of rolling out WiFi Speed Boost. Mobile and Comcast Business customers will be able to access speeds of up to 1 gigabit whether they are in the home or outside of it.

On the entertainment side, Comcast is pushing for better video and audio quality on live broadcasts and streaming video. During the Super Bowl, it ran a test on something it is calling High Fidelity Video, a combination of 4K HDR with Dolby Atmos and low latency technology. “The result is the best picture quality you’ve ever seen, the best audio quality you’ve ever heard and they’re only a 10-second difference between a seat in that stadium and on your couch,” Watson said. The trial was a world-first.

Comcast has been focused on making inclusive technology for years from its eye tracking technology to its audio guide, but more is coming. Global Chief Product Officer *Fraser Stirling* said work is being done to use AI to recognize American Sign Language. It is also looking at how to make entertainment more interactive, and it has already made some leaps forward with its Sky Glass smart televisions.

**Sky** introduced Sky Live, a smart camera built to work with Sky Glass, last summer and offered customers the use of an array of new fitness tools, motion games that can be played on the television and more. Since implementing Sky Live, customers have spent an average of 70 more minutes per week interacting with their televisions. While Sky Live was built specifically for Sky Glass, Stirling said Comcast is investigating how to bring the experience to more Comcast customers in the U.S. and around the globe.

## REPORT: ESPN, CFP INK SIX-YEAR EXTENSION

The **College Football Playoff** is staying put. **ESPN** and the CFP agreed to a six-year, \$7.8 billion extension to [keep the playoff on the network](#) through the 2031-32 season, according to *The Athletic*, which cites sources who were briefed on the deal. It means there will be no changes to the CFP’s broadcast home as it expands from its original four-team format to 12 teams. The deal won’t be ratified until commissioners and presidents vote on the specific structure and financial details of the new playoff format, which will have first-round games take place at on-campus sites before shifting to neutral venues. ESPN’s current deal with the CFP runs through the 2025-26 season.

## INDUSTRY WANTS 37 GHZ BAND OPEN BY MAY 15

A coalition that includes **Charter, Cox Communications, Mediacom, NCTA, Public Knowledge** and **Starry** are asking **NTIA** to finalize any additional National Spectrum Strategy studies of the

37 GHz band by May 15 so that it can be prepared for shared licensed commercial and federal deployment. Charter, Comcast and Cox all offer mobile service, with Mediacom’s participation further evidence that the operator is interested in joining the party. “Although not a substitute for important mid-band spectrum such as the 3.1 GHz or 7 GHz bands because of different propagation characteristics, the 37 GHz band is low hanging fruit that can quickly be made available for innovative services,” said the letter to NTIA Administrator *Alan Davidson*. The group believes the government can move fast because of the work already done in the space, including the **FCC’s** allocation of 600 Mhz from 37.0-37.6 GHz for shared use by Federal and non-Federal users in its 2016 Spectrum Frontiers Order and the existing equipment ecosystem supporting this spectrum band. “Commercial operations could begin almost immediately, and without the need for an auction,” the group said. Also signing the letter are the **Dynamic Spectrum Alliance, Federated Wireless, JMA Wireless, OTI at New America**, Qualcomm, Samsung and The Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition.

## PINK SLIP FEBRUARY

Those layoffs **Paramount Global** CEO *Bob Bakish* alluded to last month have started, with U.S. employees notified Tuesday. “While I realize these changes are in no way easy, as I said last month, I am confident this is the right decision for our future. These adjustments will help enable us to build on our momentum and execute our strategic vision for the year ahead—and I firmly believe we have much to be excited about,” Bakish wrote in a memo Tuesday obtained by **CFX**. The cost cutting comes just days after a record-breaking Super Bowl on CBS and the highly anticipated return of Jon Stewart to Comedy Central’s “The Daily Show.” Approximately 800 employees (3% workforce) is affected, with employees outside the U.S. to be notified in the coming days and weeks. Bakish warned in a memo last month that the company would need to operate leaner. – All eyes on **Cisco**, which reports 2Q24 earnings tomorrow. *Reuters* [reports](#) the tech giant is poised to eliminate thousands of positions as it restructures to focus more on growth drivers. Cisco employs 84,900 employees worldwide.

## SUPER BOWL RATINGS

It was **CBS’** time to shine as its telecast of Super Bowl LVIII on Sunday became the most-watched telecast in history. The Chiefs-49ers game recorded a total audience delivery of 123.4 million average viewers across CBS, **Paramount+**, **Nickelodeon, Univision, CBS Sports** and NFL digital properties including **NFL+**, according to **Nielsen** Fast National data and

**Adobe Analytics.** The 123.4 million mark is up 7% compared to last year's big game, which set the previous record at 115.1 million. Approximately 202.4 million viewers watched all or part of the Super Bowl across networks, making it the highest unduplicated total audience in history as well. It also became the most-streamed Super Bowl in history with **Paramount+** getting in on the record-breaking fun. The Chiefs' dramatic victory led right into the post-Super Bowl series premiere of CBS' "Tracker," which recorded 18.4 million viewers and was the most-watched primetime entertainment program since 2021 (which was also a post-Super Bowl series debut of "The Equalizer"). Additionally, "The Late Show with *Stephen Colbert*" averaged 3.74 million viewers, the show's largest Live+SD audience since its post-Super Bowl broadcast in 2021.

## NICK AT NITE, INSP ALSO SUPER BOWL RATINGS WINNERS

While many were glued to the Super Bowl, plenty of others chose to watch other options, like "Gunsmoke." **INSP** was the No. 1 cable network Sunday from 8-10pm for the 50+ demo, averaging 435,000. **Nick at Nite**, with its slimetastic alternative Super Bowl telecast, took first place among P2+. P18+ and P35+, while **INSP** was second in all those demos. **INSP** had cable's top entertainment show opposite the big game, with an airing of "Gunsmoke" delivering 462,000 viewers.

## INTRODUCING THE TECH EXPO

Say hello to **SCTE** TechExpo. The association has adopted the new moniker for its long-running telecommunications trade show, previously known as SCTE Cable-Tec Expo. The new name and logo were revealed Tuesday as [the call went out for papers](#) for technical session presentations during TechExpo 2024, which runs Sept. 24-26 in Atlanta. "TechExpo has evolved to incorporate so much more than cable, and we have increasingly broadened the event's audience to include pertinent communities like policy, security, sustainability and strategy as the gathering place for moving technology forward to advance connectivity around the world," **CableLabs** President/CEO *Phil McKinney* said in a statement. All technical abstract submissions will be reviewed by TechExpo's Program Committee, which is looking for submissions about forward-looking technologies that'll help the industry's push for 10G. SCTE will gather subject matter experts across nine areas: wireline networks evolution, wireless network and convergence with wireline, construction and network planning, security and privacy, data analytics/AI/machine learning, cloud services, commercial and business services, operational transformation/workforce learning and energy management and sustainability. Deadline is April 5, and SCTE is taking presentations delivered in both English and Spanish in order to showcase Latin American concepts.

## NCTA SOUNDS ALARM AT FCC ON EMERGENCY ALERTS

Representatives from **NCTA** and member companies **Charter**, **Comcast** and **Cox** met with **FCC** staffers last week to express concerns over the agency's desire to make Emergency Alert System alerts accessible in a wider range of languages. "The Draft NPRM does not accurately reflect the enormous technical and logistical challenges that its proposals would present for cable operators," the cable industry said, explaining that multilingual alerting would require years-long work from industry and standards groups and substantial changes to the cable video architecture. **NCTA** urged the **FCC** to add questions in the NPRM to address these complexities, including seeking comment on whether EAS participants that carry multiple channels have the ability to determine what language is being used on a particular channel at any given time and what would happen when an individual device setting does not match the language assigned to each channel.

## LATE NIGHT RATINGS WARS

The return of Jon Stewart to "The Daily Show" on Monday at 11pm was an expected hit, notching its most-watched telecast in over 5 years on the back of 930,000 viewers on **Comedy Central** as well as 320,000 A25-54. That number rises to 1.85 million total viewers when including premiere and encore simulcasts. For comparison's sake, *Trevor Noah's* final episode as the show's host achieved 443,000 total viewers. However, it was **Fox News** that still reigned supreme for the night. The network's nightly comedy show "Gutfeld!" had 2.2 million viewers and 328,000 A25-54 in its one-hour 10pm airing. Then in the 11pm hour, "Fox News @ Night" had 1.3 million viewers.

## PEOPLE

Former **Altice USA** CFO *Michael Grau* is joining **MSG Entertainment** as EVP, Finance. He'll begin with a transition period before assuming full responsibilities come April 1. Grau will have a hand in the strategic financial insight on all of the company's areas of business as well as overseeing financial matters, which includes planning and analysis, controllership, treasury, IR, tax and procurement functions. Grau spent nearly four years at Altice USA, which followed a nearly 20-year career at **Cablevision**.

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Don't let the March 1 last-chance deadline to submit your **2024 FAXIES** nominations sneak up. We're searching for the best of the best when it comes to PR and marketing, campaigns and the teams that fuel them, with categories ranging from Holiday Marketing, Press Kit, Best Live Event Activation, Wireless/Mobile Sales Campaign and more. Enter today on the FAXIES [website](#).