

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Hitting Limits: AT&T's Desroches Argues Cable Needs More Than MVNOs

Cable providers have made a splash with their entrances into mobile, but AT&T CFO *Pascal Desroches* is of the mind that the MVNO deals they use to deliver wireless services have undeniable limits.

During an appearance at the Bank of America C-Suite TMT Conference on Tuesday, he argued that you cannot be a scaled wireless player and be using someone else's network. Not only will the costs become prohibitive, but you're also not ultimately in control of the customer experience.

Because AT&T has both an expanding fiber network and significant wireless assets, he believes the company will be able to deliver services to customers at the lowest price relative to peers over time. At the same time, he thinks the assets and AT&T's commitment to open access networks will allow the company over time to provide added and more seamless functionality between the fixed and mobile networks.

"We're at a time where you have cable trying to replicate a bundle using somebody else's wireless network and our wireless peers pursuing broadband through fixed wireless at scale where the cost over time will become prohibitive," Desroches said. "We are in a unique position to be able to deliver the best possible connectivity at the lowest cost to us."

AT&T is still looking for new ways to bolster its network and ensure it can continue to compete for customers. While the U.S. spectrum pipeline is largely dried up, there's speculation around

whether UScellular will want to monetize the spectrum portfolio that remains following T-Mobile's acquisition of its customer base and a small portion of its spectrum portfolio. While Desroches didn't comment on the specific spectrum in UScellular's portfolio, he did say AT&T's balance sheet is now in a place that allows the provider the freedom to really go after the assets it wants.

Of course, the regulatory landscape brings a level of uncertainty around any spectrum acquisitions and M&A in general. Desroches said the amount of spectrum that is ultimately up for grabs is in some ways dependent on the results of the election in November and the policy priorities of the administration.

"Our position is we're in this business. We have the ability and we should be afforded an opportunity to buy spectrum because it will allow us to serve customers better, and overall the government should want that," Desroches said. "It should want to have spectrum available because it will lower the overall cost of delivering wireless services."

On the broadband side of the business, industry watchers have for some time pondered how much of a competitive threat satellite broadband providers like **Starlink** and **Project Kuiper** will be. AT&T struck a commercial agreement last month with **AST SpaceMobile** to provide connectivity directly to smartphones, particularly those located in wireless dead zones. Desroches said he doesn't view satellite broadband as a competitive threat, instead as another tool in the toolkit to ensure connectivity is available in the most remote areas of the country.

"We want the market to be very deep," Desroches said.



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PARAMOUNT-SKYDANCE TALKS FALL THROUGH

All eyes have been on **Paramount** controlling shareholder *Shari Redstone* as she pondered an \$8 billion [deal](#) with *David Ellison's Skydance Media* since last week, and now the *Wall Street Journal* [reports](#) Redstone has ended discussions. Skydance's deal would've had it buy **National Amusements** for around \$1.7 billion in cash before merging Paramount into Skydance through a stock deal. Though a committee of Paramount directors gave the economic terms a thumbs up, there were still concerns from other shareholders and other deal points that needed to be ironed out. Now with Paramount fully open for talks, WSJ writes Redstone will likely pursue a sale of National Amusements without trying to combine Paramount Global into another company. As for who could be involved moving forward, two parties remain keen: former media exec *Edgar Bronfman Jr.*, who's backed by **Bain Capital**, and an investor-led consortium spearheaded by *Steven Paul*.

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NTIA APPROVES COLORADO, NEW HAMPSHIRE VOLUME II

NTIA gave the greenlight to the BEAD Volume II plans for Colorado and New Hampshire Tuesday. The two states can now begin requesting access to BEAD funding with New Hampshire and Colorado being allowed to ask for more than \$196 million and \$826 million, respectively. Once deployment goals are met, any remaining funding can be used on adoption, training and workforce development efforts among other things.

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ASSOCIATIONS WANT RULING ON TITLE II STAY REQUEST BY JULY 15

As expected, **USTelecom**, **NCTA**, **ACA Connects** and other ISP associations filed a motion late Monday asking the Sixth Circuit to stay the **FCC's** Title II net neutrality order pending judicial review. “Far more than in the typical administrative challenge, we know that the order will impose significant, unrecoverable costs on petitioners' members. That is exactly what happened from 2015 to 2017, when the Commission last claimed plenary authority over internet access under Title II. Just like last time, the Order will force ISPs to incur atypical compliance costs, delay or forgo services and expansions, pay more to raise money, and

negotiate on worse terms,” the groups told the court. Without intervention, the order would take effect July 22. The ISP associations are asking the Sixth Circuit to rule on the stay request by July 15. If it can't rule by then, they'd like an administrative stay and at the very least, expedited briefing and argument. Meanwhile, the FCC is pushing back against the argument from ISP groups that the court should decide the stay motion before ruling on the Commission's request to move the case from the Sixth Circuit to the D.C. Circuit. “Petitioners' approach would be especially inefficient because it could take considerable time and effort to first decide the stay motion, whereas it should be relatively quick for this Court to decide the single, straightforward issue presented by respondents' transfer motion: whether the D.C. Circuit's extensive role in reviewing a series of prior inter-related orders warrants transfer...” attorneys for the FCC and **DOJ** said in a letter to the court.

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BONJOUR AND CZEŚĆ, MAX!

Max has officially arrived in France and Poland. The two countries wrap up the first leg of Max's launches across Europe, which includes 25 countries in total and brings the global country/territory amount to 65. The Netherlands got an enhanced version of HBO Max, which will also arrive in Belgium come July 1. Next up on the Max expansion list is southeast Asia later this year.

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FLOSPORTS DOUBLING DOWN ON COLLEGE PROGRAMMING

FloSports is looking to focus more support for its partners across the Division I, II and III levels, and it's rolling out a new **FloCollege** platform that's slated to launch in October ahead of the winter sports season. FloCollege will have live events, sports data, editorial content and social programming with a particular focus on D-II and D-III programs. FloSports plans to invest over \$50 million into the venture to help cover rights fees, production, content, technology and marketing. The new platform will arrive via an update on the FloSports app, which is available on **Roku**, **Apple TV**, **Amazon Fire TV** and **Android TV** devices.

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NAMIC'S NEW WEBSITE

NAMIC gave its [website](#) a makeover Tuesday with new features focused on easier navigation, ADA accessibility, interactivity and more. It was a multi-month process that resulted in a more modern web design, stretching the navigation options across the top of the page and putting a quick organization snippet in a prominent position. NAMIC still has a carousel of upcoming

events, but now gives users the option to learn more about programs, awards, events and news. NAMIC is celebrating the redesign by extending the deadline for early bird pricing for its Annual NAMIC Conference until Friday.

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MYBUNDLE RELEASES TV-BASED VERSION OF FAST SERVICE

MyBundle launched a new version of its FAST service MyBundle Free TV built for TV sets. It's rolling out with dedicated apps on **Roku**, **Android TV**, **Amazon Fire TV**, **LG** and **Phillips Smart TV**, and offers FAST channels like **Today's Homeowner Media**, **MAVTV** and **Giggle Mug**.

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CARRIAGE

Fuse Media is adding two more FAST channels on DirecTV: **Somos Novelas** and **El Rey Rebel**. The former features novelas from around the world, while El Rey Rebel comes with action movies, gritty crime and extreme sports content.

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RATINGS

At last, **TNT's** run at the top of the primetime ratings for cable networks came to an end the week of June 3-9, per **Nielsen**. **Fox News** reclaimed the spot with 2.14 million viewers P2+, and it solidified the ratings sweep as it topped total day with 1.31 million. **ESPN** and **MSNBC** battled it out for the next two spots in prime, with the sports net barely edging the news net with 1.159 million compared to 1.156 million. **HGTV** and **Hallmark Channel** followed with 776,000 and 734,000, respectively. MSNBC and ESPN swapped places in total day as MSNBC took second with 759,000 and ESPN third with 513,000. **CNN** had an average of 404,000 viewers and HGTV followed with 399,000. – The Yankees' 6-4 win over the Dodgers was **ESPN's** largest Sunday Night Baseball audience in two years with an average of 2.3 million viewers. Viewership peaked at 2.62 million from 9:15-9:30pm. Additionally, the MLB London Series game Sunday morning reeled in 1.36 million viewers. The Mets' 6-5 win over the Phillies was up 17% compared to the comparable London Series game last year between the Cubs and Cardinals. – After being released in theaters in May, "Hit Man" garnered 1.8 million U.S. households watched during the L+2D window of its **Netflix** premiere June 7, according to **Samba TV**. Older millennial households (A35-44) over-indexed by 5%.

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PROGRAMMING

The [cricket hype](#) continues to pick up in New York. **YES Network** signed a deal with **Willow** to air seven **Major League Cricket** matches with the defending champ MI New York. Matches will be available on the YES app and YES Network as well as through Willow. The first match will air July 5 at 3:30pm. – **AMC Networks** is adding more to the Anne Rice Immortal Universe.

"The Talamasca" is scheduled for a 2025 premiere across AMCN and **AMC+**. The series will feature those who track and contain witches, vampires, werewolves and other creatures from around the world. – After joining the network less than a year ago, **Shannon Sharpe** inked a multi-year contract to remain at **ESPN**. Sharpe joined in August following a seven-year run on **Fox Sports'** "Undisputed." – **Disney Branded Television** revealed new animated series and renewals. "Prep & Landing: The Snowball Protocol" was greenlit for a premiere next year. "Marvel's Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur: Moon Girl's Lab," a STEM-focused musical short series, will debut June 28 on **Disney Channel** and **Disney+** the same day. Lastly, "Superkitties: Su-purr Adventures" will premiere Aug. 7 on **Disney Jr.** and Disney Channel the next day. "Big City Greens" was renewed for a fifth season, and the premiere date for Season 2 of "Star Wars: Young Jedi Adventures" has been set for Aug. 14 on Disney Jr. and Disney+.

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ON THE CIRCUIT

A+E Networks EVP/Chief People Officer **Ravena Valentine** will be the chair of this year's **C2HR** Con, which is set to take place Aug. 5-6 in Brooklyn. Those on the committee include A+E Networks Senior Director, HR **Alisa Badiner**; **Charter** Director, HR Communications Products and Technology **Keely Buchanan**; **Vyve Broadband** HR Operations Manager **Allison Cottle**; **Warner Bros. Discovery** Director, Learning & Development **Brittany Moore**; WBD SVP, People & Culture **John Wilson** and **INSP** VP, HR **Rebecca Zambrana**. – Time is running out to send in [nominations](#) for **The WICT Network's** 2024 Women of the Year and Women to Watch Awards. The deadline is Monday. The Woman of the Year seeks to celebrate a woman who's made big contributions to their company and industry throughout their career. One honoree will be chosen from both a programmer and an operator. The Woman to Watch Award spotlights rising stars who have shined and shown promise in their careers. WICT Network will select one winner from a programmer, an operator and a technology company. The honors will be given out at the Touchstones Luncheon on Oct. 21 during the Leadership Conference.

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PEOPLE

Nexstar is making **Lisa Taylor** its SVP, Digital Advertising Sales. She arrives from Amazon where she was Senior Business Development Manager for **Amazon Ads**. Taylor's new role will have her oversee Nexstar's digital revenue growth. She'll begin Monday and report to President of Nexstar's broadcasting division **Andrew Alford**. – **INSP** doled out a pair of promotions, naming **John Rouda** its EVP, Technology and **Eric Edwards** its VP, Media Logistics. Rouda joined INSP in 2016 and has more than 25 years of experience in software engineering, DevOps, infrastructure and cybersecurity. Edwards, who spent six years at **NBCUniversal** before arriving at INSP in 2018, will continue leading initiatives built toward enhancing the transition to digital landscapes.