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WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Innovative Spirit: Fiber Connect Panel Dreams of Hyper-Fast Future

With fiber buildouts destined to accelerate in the coming years thanks to a mixture of private investment and grant programs like BEAD, attendees at **Fiber Connect** are dreaming of what an America covered in high-speed connectivity would look like.

As speed offerings rising higher into the multi-gigabit levels by the year, naysayers might argue whether there is a customer need for such plans. To **Google Fiber** Senior Director, Product & Billing *Liz Hsu*, it's not a question of whether customers will need those speeds—it's an inevitability.

"It is going to be the new normal that multi-gig speeds are going to be really prevalent and needed. When we think about the emerging use cases like more immersive content experiences, artificial intelligence and cloud computing becoming more prevalent, it is not that far-fetched to me," she said during a panel Tuesday morning. "It is a world where every single device, every single app is going to need more bandwidth, and so it really is about practical use cases where these new product solutions, densifying our network and building for speed even before consumers need it."

For **Nokia** President, Fixed Networks and U.S. Country Manager *Sandy Motley*, speeds are only one part of the equation. Her excitement comes when she envisions fiber not only connecting a residence, but running down Main Streets across America connecting every streetfront. From there, the opportunities are endless.

"We can connect to businesses, 5G cells, smart cities and this gives the opportunity to innovate on networks and to have

our networks support more than just speed, more than being a dumb pipe," Motley said. She also noted that other capabilities built on top of the network can lead to significant increases in revenue. "Another point to make about innovation is in automation, and the fact that now you can slice up the network and we can have a slice dedicated to gaming, high performance or we can even have a slice that's dedicated for working from home. This gives some real advantage for increases in revenue."

But beyond the smart cities that exist today are the rural communities that are a challenge to serve for a variety of economic reasons, and it is in those hard-to-reach areas where **Ciena** CTO of the Americas/VP, Sales Engineering and Strategic Solution Sales *Kevin Sheehan* is seeing an abundant amount of creative thinking.

"What we've seen being very successful is having smaller purpose-built solutions that are ideal for going out and reaching a handful of residences, maybe hanging on a strand above rather than being in some type of structure," he said. "And then modular solutions. One of the big economic challenges service providers face is the ability to make the business case work, so we've seen a lot of attraction around putting mixed services out in a rural location... At the same time you're serving some active Ethernet connection, you can either pick up mobile wireless backhaul or even business connections."

None of this matters if the customer experience doesn't back up the marketing claims. **Consolidated Communications** COO *Gaurav Juneja* spoke to the importance of pushing innovation across all areas of the business to ensure that you not only attract customers,

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but keep them from churning to another provider. That can mean investing heavily in network resiliency to protect against outages during weather events, proactive network maintenance and stellar operational support when things do go awry. Above everything, he believes the drive to be better has to be a core value of the entire organization for an operator to truly rise above the rest.

“The more you can think about those boxes proactively and innovate, you’re going to instill that DNA, that top leadership DNA and proactive thinking DNA, within the entire culture of the organization,” he said.

DISNEY, FOX AND WBD FIRE BACK AT FUBO IN LAWSUIT

The trio of **Disney**, **Fox** and **Warner Bros. Discovery** came out swinging in their response to **Fubo**’s antitrust lawsuit centered on the imminent **Venu Sports** jv. The lawsuit, [which was filed by Fubo back in February](#), alleged that Disney, Fox and WBD engaged in a pattern of harmful and anticompetitive behavior to stunt the growth of Fubo since 2015. The trio responded last week by saying that blocking a new sports streaming competitor may benefit Fubo, but it would still harm consumers. “Fubo hopes to throttle competition because it is (and always has been) a weak competitor. It adds little value to the TV ecosystem,” the trio said in a filing with the Southern District of New York. “Fubo thus remains an undercapitalized startup with minimal differentiation that acts as a middleman aggregator of content that other companies make possible. Because Fubo does nothing different or better than other companies, it has long struggled to stay afloat in a highly competitive market. That is not anticompetitive; to the contrary, that is competition.” The trio reiterated that the Venu Sports platform will still pay market rates to license content from its own networks, and that they’ll also continue to license those same networks to competitors—including Fubo. Each jv company will continue to negotiate with leagues to acquire sports rights individually, and each company will also continue to individually negotiate carriage agreements with Venu and other distributors. Venu won’t have any exclusive content and won’t have any say in how its members license content to others. “Venu will offer less sports content than traditional MVPDs and vMVPDs but more sports content than any SVOD or DTC service offers on its own. It will cost less than many traditional MVPDs and vMVPDS, but more than any single SVOD or DTC service. Venu will attempt to compete by offering a niche product that sports fans among the ‘cord cutters’ and ‘cord nevers’ will want to buy, bringing them back into the fold of the linear TV ecosystem,” the trio said.

BRONFMAN JR. STILL PONDERING PARAMOUNT BID

As **Paramount** and **Skydance Media** continue through their 45-day “go-shop” period, potential interested parties are hovering before determining whether or not to send a bid. [Axios reports](#) one of those parties still in the hunt is **Edgar Bronfman Jr.**, who’s continuing to hold talks with bankers regarding a possible bid to purchase Paramount’s parent company **National Amusements**. Bronfman Jr., who was previously Warner Music’s CEO and is currently Executive Chairman of **Fubo**’s board, was interested when Paramount and Skydance struck their first agreement to merge. His first bid was backed by **Bain Capital**, but it’s unclear if this bid will have the same structure. One thing to note is any non-Skydance party that scores an agreement will be stuck with a \$400 million “breakup fee.”

PARAMOUNT, NEXSTAR RENEW

Paramount and **Nexstar** finalized a carriage deal, with the two announcing a new multi-year agreement to renew **CBS** affiliations in 42 markets. That includes 40 stations owned by Nexstar and two owned by **Mission**, which in total reaches 15% of the U.S. audience or 19 million TV households. Additionally, two Paramount-owned independent stations in Miami (WBFS-TV) and Detroit (WKBD-TV) will become **CW Network** affiliates starting Sept. 1.

FCC DEFENDS DATA BREACH REGS

The **FCC** on Tuesday filed its brief explaining why it thinks a petition by **NCTA**, **CTIA** and **USTelecom** for review of its data breach rules should be denied. “In this challenge to the Commission’s updated privacy rules, petitioners ask this court to impose sweeping new restraints on the federal government’s ability to protect the personal information of telecommunications customers. If adopted, those restraints would not only leave tens of millions of such consumers without any federal regulatory protection for their most private data held by carriers—including social security numbers and biometrics—but would also permanently forbid the Commission from issuing similar protections,” the agency told the Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit. The Commission argued that the broadband groups are trying to rewrite the text of the Communications Act and disregard its history of protecting telecommunications customer privacy. The FCC’s updated data breach rules were adopted in December 2023 and went into effect in March. The broadband groups have argued that Congress has directly forbidden the agency’s action, exercising its authority under the Congressional Review Act to stop similar FCC regulatory measures from taking effect in 2016. Their argument hinges on the new rules exceeding FCC statutory authority by prescribing data privacy rules for a new class of data—personally identifiable information.

NAD SIDES WITH COMCAST

The **National Advertising Division** sided with **Comcast Cable** regarding its claims that Xfinity Internet is fast, reliable and “powerful.” **AT&T** challenged the claims, which appeared in two commercials that separately featured **NFL** running back *Christian McCaffrey* and **WNBA** star *Caitlin Clark*. AT&T alleged that the commercials conveyed a comparative superiority message, however, NAD found that there’s no performance comparison in the commercials beside the general statement that “not all internet providers are the same.” Comcast said in its advertiser statement that it “appreciates NAD’s determination that the commercials are humorous ads that highlight truthful claims about Xfinity Internet service that do not convey a superiority message against all competing services.”

OLYMPICS SCORE WINS IN RATINGS, ADVERTISING

Sunday capped an expected big ratings pull from **NBCUniversal** and its Olympics coverage. **NBC**, **Peacock** and other NBCU platforms recorded a total audience delivery (TAD) of 41.5 million viewers, according to custom fast national data from **Nielsen** and **Adobe Analytics**. That’s nearly double the viewers from the opening Sunday for the Tokyo Olympics, which recorded 21.7 million viewers across all platforms. NBCU’s three-day TAD average sits at 34.5 million viewers across the combined live Paris Prime (2-5pm) and U.S. prime (8-11pm) time frames—a 79% improvement from the same point during the Tokyo games (19.3 million). Leading that was the U.S. men’s basketball team’s win over Serbia gaining 10.9 million viewers on NBC and Peacock. Additionally, the U.S. women’s soccer team’s victory against Germany had 4.2 million viewers across **USA** and Peacock. Through Sunday, 4.5 billion minutes of Paris Olympics coverage has been streamed on NBCU digital platforms, which surpasses the 4.48 billion total minutes streamed during the entire Tokyo Olympics. NBCU is also seeing success on the advertising front, with the company revealing that it’s recorded the highest Olympic and Paralympic advertising revenue in history for the Paris Games. NBCU signed on more advertisers than the Rio and Tokyo Olympics combined, with more than 70% of the Paris advertisers being new and nearly half a billion dollars coming from first-time sponsors. Digital ad revenue also reached a record high as it more than doubled the digital mark set by the Tokyo Games.

HOLDING OUT ACP HOPE

Reps. *Nikki Budzinski* (D-IL) and *Mike Carey* (R-OH) introduced a companion bill in the House to Sen. *Ben Ray Lujan*’s (D-NM) legislation that would provide \$6 billion to fund the Affordable Connectivity Program. Some 23 million households lost the monthly broadband subsidy, typically \$30/month, when the program ended June 1. “On behalf of the 1,700 digital inclusion programs we represent, we urge Congress to act quickly to fast-track this legislation and reverse the devastating impact that ACP’s end has had on household budgets across the country,” **National Digital Inclusion Alliance** Policy Director *Amy Huffman* said in a statement.

MONTHLY RATINGS

To say July was an eventful month in politics is an understatement, and it’s not surprising that **Fox News**, **MSNBC** and **CNN** took the top three spots in both the primetime and total-day ratings for the month. Fox News took the prime crown thanks to an average of 3.45 million viewers P2+, while MSNBC and CNN recorded 1.18 million and 856,000, respectively. **ESPN** had 757,000 in prime while **Hallmark** had 740,000.

PEOPLE

As **Hallmark Media** looks to get its new Hallmark Studios division off and running, the company appointed *Wondwossen Dikran* as SVP, Hallmark Studios. Dikran, who was previously Head of Development and Production at **Falkon Entertainment** and Head of Production and **NBCUniversal/Dreamworks TV**, will report to EVP/Programming *Lisa Hamilton Daly*. – *Maureen McCabe Moore* is penning the next chapter in her 27-year **GCI** journey, stepping into the company’s senior leadership team as SVP and Chief Customer Experience Officer. Moore first joined GCI in 1997 as its Advertising Manager. Since then, she’s held several positions including 10 years as VP, Consumer Services and nine years as Chief Customer Experience Officer. – *Ellen Johnson*, EVP and CFO of **Interpublic Group of Companies**, will join **Nexstar**’s board on Oct 1. Following her appointment, Nexstar will have 10 board members, nine of whom are independent and three of whom are women.

OBITUARY

Our condolences to **NCTA** CEO *Michael Powell* on the loss of his mother *Alma Johnson Powell*. “(Powell) was the grounding force of our family,” the couple’s three children, *Michael*, *Linda* and *Annemarie*, said in a [statement](#) provided to **CNN**. “During childhoods marked by constant moving to new homes, we always felt secure, because home was wherever she stood. She was an exemplary role model for us and for the world. She served our country, alongside our father, with intelligence and grace. We will miss her terribly but take comfort in the fact that she had a life so well-lived and is reunited with our father.” Powell, the wife of the late Secretary of State *Colin Powell*, was a successful author and speaker who championed young people in need for more than four decades.

EDITOR’S NOTE

Time is running out on the extended deadline to [submit nominations](#) for **Cablefax**’s Diversity and Pride List. The nomination window closes Wednesday, and as a late treat you can get a 10% discount on your submission by using the code “CFXREADER.” New to this year’s magazine is A Celebration of Work Culture in 2024 & Beyond, which spotlights companies leading the charge on modern and forward-thinking work environments. There’s no limit to the amount you can enter, and nominations for multiple categories are encouraged.