

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Status Report: Breezeline on the Joys and Challenges of Mobile

NCTC's MVNO partnerships with **Reach Mobile** and **AT&T** may not be a perfect fit for every company part of the co-op, but many are looking at the potential offering as a way to capitalize on growth opportunities within the mobile space.

The prospect of launching mobile to customers was analyzed during a panel at **The Independent Show** on Wednesday, and though there are still challenges that come with introducing mobile, early indicators for those that have already rolled it out are showing signs of a worthwhile investment.

"A lot of the telco market share is still out there left to steal, so there's plenty of room to run with this market," *Michael Grebb*, SVP/Lead Analyst for **One Touch Intelligence**, said. "You don't have a network to maintain. That's a really good part of being an MVNO. You don't have to buy spectrum. You don't have to put towers anywhere. It's nice, and generally speaking [there are] good margins—even better if you can do the WiFi offloading, if you can really cap your data usage from whatever is competitive in your markets."

One of the early entrants into the mobile space through NCTC's partnership, **Breezeline**, did its due diligence before making a commitment. VP, New Business & Business Transformation *Heather McCallion* said the company did three provision studies—the first two coming even before NCTC had partnerships in place—to get more insight into its customer base, the interest in buying a product and the possible motivating factors into buying

mobile. Approximately 1/4 of its customer base indicated they'd consider or highly consider buying mobile from Breezeline.

Breezeline made launching Breezeline Mobile one of its top priorities for fiscal year 2024. Once it started working with NCTC on the paperwork, it was a rather quick process for Breezeline that entailed hiring both part- and full-time resources while also pulling from within the company. However, because the company wanted to meet its goal of launching in March, it required a leap of faith to get the wheels in motion.

"We knew that it might just be 85% when we launched, but we were not going to miss that March date," *McCallion* said. "That was the risk of waiting for perfection. Sometimes you never go. We chose to go, and in some ways, that paid off really well because we're in market, we're viable and we have customers. In other ways, it was a little faithful, because you launch and you learn as you go."

Breezeline's learning process involved changing up some of its support strategies while educating its frontline workers about how to pitch mobile. All frontline support was initially in-house, but some of that was then outsourced to offer support reps who have dealt with the sophisticated issues that arise with phones/mobile.

It took Breezeline around six weeks to fully train its entire frontline—including partial resourcing—but the challenge still remains with trying to sell products outside of its call centers. *McCallion* said Breezeline would rather sell via digital platforms, but "that's just not where our customers are yet."

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“I think the learning from that was we trained everyone really well, one. You need to constantly indoctrinate and refresh. Once is not enough,” McCallion said. “You’ve got to have digital snacks. You have to have surveys and things to make sure that it’s top of mind.”

Despite any roadblocks, McCallion and Breezeline have been pleased with the early results of launching Breezeline Mobile. The hope is to have the company’s mobile segment become profitable within the first few years, along with added benefits for its broadband and video segments.

“It’s a personal decision for every company. I think there’s a positive ROI in it. We’ve seen that already, and I do think that if you wait forever for the product to be 100% perfect, you’re going to be waiting forever,” McCallion said. “The product’s going to continue to evolve. We’ve gone through growing pains, and even with that, we’ve seen really solid commercial success.”

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## ABBOTT, GREAT AMERICAN MEDIA NAVIGATE TOUGH TV ENVIRONMENT

You don’t have to tell **Great American Media** Founder/President/CEO *Bill Abbott* about the difficulties of being an independent network in the modern TV landscape, let alone creating and launching one. “It’s nearly impossible. You have so many obstacles,” Abbott said Thursday at TIS24. “It’s a challenging business, so we had to build back up the distribution, and we had to program it, and we had to rebrand it, and then we had to market it. Those were some long days.” As more viewers migrate to streaming platforms and drop traditional cable, Abbott sees a lack of commitment toward original content on linear. Instead, he sees other networks morphing into drivers toward digital properties. “You look around the landscape, especially now in the linear space, where the commitment to linear TV is basically dead,” Abbott said. “You look at channels... all they’re doing is driving to **Peacock** or **Max** or wherever they’re going. They’re not focused on original content on linear networks.” That doesn’t mean linear TV is dead, of course. There are still pathways for independent programmers to find success, with Abbott boasting some of GAM’s success with advertising. “Probably 35% of our inventory is sold to direct response advertisers,” he said. “They keep coming back, and they keep raising the rate because the success is there. So linear TV is certainly not dead.”

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## WRAPPING UP TIS24

Wednesday night’s festivities at The Independent Show included the awards dinner. **Cablefax** kicked the ceremony off by recognizing **Schurz Communications** as its [Top Ops](#) Independent Operator of the Year before **NCTC** CEO *Lou Borrelli*

honored **Buckeye Broadband**’s *Brad Mefferd* with a custom Cleveland Browns jersey for his time spent on the NCTC board. After being kept a secret throughout the week, a surprise came after Mefferd’s recognition. **ACA Connects** EVP/COO *John Higginbotham* was given a Lifetime Achievement Award, which he humbly accepted by saying, “This is ridiculous. Am I being fired?” – Could **NCTC** and **ACA Connects** bring The Independent Show back to Nashville? It sounds like that may be in the works. “I don’t know about you, but I’ve fallen in love with Nashville,” ACAC President/CEO *Grant Spellmeyer* said to **NCTC** CEO *Lou Borrelli* on Thursday. “I think we should come back. The venue, the access to Broadway, the speakers—I couldn’t be happier for the way this year’s show turned out,” Borrelli responded, later saying that Nashville made the short-list of venues TIS may return to on a semi-regular basis in the future. The countdown is on for TIS25 in Salt Lake City from Aug. 10-13. Then it’s on to Disney in Orlando for TIS26, which is slated for July 26-29. – **ACA Connects** revealed the eight members that’ll serve three-year terms on the association’s board. They are: **Hotwire** Chief Product & Strategy Officer *Jonathan Bullock*; **Vyve Broadband** SVP, General Counsel & Secretary *Marie Censoplano*; **i3 Broadband** CEO *Paul Cronin*; **Astound Broadband** EVP/CAO *John Gdovin*; **MCTV** President *Katherine Gessner*; **Vexus Fiber** President/CEO *Jim Gleason*; **GCI** SVP, Law & Corporate Advocacy & General Counsel *David Hymas* and **Cable One** VP, Operations *John Walburn*. Bullock, Gessner and Walburn are all new members of the board. Additionally, **Cogeco** Chief Legal and Corporate Affairs Officer *Paul Cowling* will replace *Leslie Brown* on the board. Brown recently departed **Breezeline** for **FiberLight**, where she’ll serve as CLO.

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## DISNEY’S SUCCESSOR SEARCH

**Disney**’s board is going with a fellow board member to help find the successor to CEO *Bob Iger*. *James Gorman*, who recently oversaw the succession process at **Morgan Stanley**, will be the chair of the company Succession Planning Committee. Gorman will work with board chairman *Mark Parker* as well as directors *Mary Barra* and *Calvin McDonald*. Each has experience in CEO and senior leadership succession planning. Time will tell if Iger’s second succession plan will work better than the first after *Bob Chapek*’s reign lasted two years.

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## PARAMOUNT+ ROLLED OUT TO SPECTRUM CUSTOMERS

Part of **Paramount**’s renewed distribution agreement with **Charter** included a streaming facet, and Thursday saw the ad-supported tier of **Paramount+** introduced to all Spectrum

TV Select and Mi Plan Latino packages across the U.S. It comes at no added cost for eligible customers. Paramount+ joins other streamers made available to Spectrum video customers this year, including **Disney+**, **ESPN+** and **VIX Premium with Ads**.

## CARRIAGE

**BKFC TV**, the first FAST channel from the Bare Knuckle Fighting Championship, is now available on **Fubo**. BKFC TV will have its flagship events from over the years as well as the BKFC Prospect Series and BKFC Fight Night events.

## FIBER FRENZY

**Metronet** began construction on a new multimillion-dollar fiber project in Oklahoma. The groundbreaking took place in Broken Arrow, celebrating the start of a \$35 million project to build the company's first comprehensive fiber optic network in the Sooner State. The project is expected to take two years, with the first customers able to access the network by the end of the year. – **Consolidated Communications** is planning a new fiber network expansion in three Florida communities. The expansion will bring gigabit speeds to Port St. Joe, Perry, and Blountstown this year. The project is part of Consolidated's efforts to increase network reliability in its Florida service area. The fiber expansion in Florida will continue through 2025. – **Lumos** is making its first foray into the Bluegrass State, announcing a nearly \$150 million investment to build more than 1,300 of its network in parts of Jefferson County and Louisville, Kentucky. Engineering work in the Louisville Metro area will begin in 2H24. To help guide the ship for Lumos' Kentucky operations, it named Grace Simrall as Kentucky Director of Market Development.

## ON THE CIRCUIT

Essence Ventures CEO/President *Caroline Wanga* will deliver the opening keynote at the 38th Annual **NAMIC** Conference on Oct. 22 in NYC. Wanga joined Essence in 2020 from Target Corporation, where she served as chief culture, diversity, and inclusion officer. The conference, themed "Diverse Voices, De-

fining the Future," will also feature **MSNBC's** *Rashida Jones* and Dorsey Group founder *Dr. Charles Lamont Dorsey*.

## PROGRAMMING

**The Africa Channel** announced a new lineup of dating, reality, documentary and other series across its linear and streaming channels for fall 2024. On linear channels, the scripted comedy-drama series "Lavish" will premiere Sept. 29, at 8:30 p.m., and the medical drama "Wounds" will debut Sept. 1, at 8 p.m. The Nigerian drama "Flawsome" premieres Oct. 27, at 9 p.m. All series will be part of TAC's weekday drama block, airing from 10 a.m. to noon. – The PGA Tour's FedEx Cup Playoffs move to the BMW Championship in Colorado. The top 50 men's players will tee off Friday, with **Peacock** and the **NBC Sports** app going live with coverage from 2:45-4:45pm. **Golf Channel** will have same-day delay coverage from 10pm-midnight. Saturday's happenings will be on Golf Channel from 3-6pm before the tournament wraps up Sunday from 2-5pm. The LPGA Tour's AIG Women's Open will be on **USA** from Thursday-Sunday at 7am-noon. For the final two days, **NBC** and **Peacock** will take over from noon-2pm. – "Jersey Shore Family Vacation" will return Sept. 19 at 8pm on **MTV**.

## PEOPLE

**Hallmark** appointed *Jason Wood* as its new SVP of Talent Engagement and Strategy. He will oversee Hallmark Media's talent operations and drive strategy across scripted and unscripted programming, events, and appearances. Previously, he served as VP, Casting at **A+E Networks**, a position he held since May 2010. Wood also brings experience as an independent casting director, having worked with the likes of **Netflix**, **NBC** and **Discovery**. – **Cox Enterprises** selected *Charles Odom* to succeed *Maria Friedman* as EVP, Finance. Friedman will transition to a senior advisory position within Cox. Odom will add to his current corporate finance and treasury responsibilities with oversight of the Cox Enterprises financial arm, which includes accounting, tax, audit, treasury and financial reporting, planning and analysis. Odom has been under the Cox umbrella since 1996.

BASIC CABLE		
P2+ PRIME RANKINGS*		
(08/05/24-08/11/24)		
MON-SUN	MC	MC
	US	US AA
	AA%	(000)
<b>FNC</b>	<b>0.709</b>	<b>2236</b>
<b>MSNBC</b>	<b>0.454</b>	<b>1433</b>
<b>CNN</b>	<b>0.249</b>	<b>783</b>
<b>HGTV</b>	<b>0.211</b>	<b>667</b>
<b>NFL</b>	<b>0.209</b>	<b>659</b>
<b>HALL</b>	<b>0.207</b>	<b>651</b>
<b>INSP</b>	<b>0.170</b>	<b>536</b>
<b>USA</b>	<b>0.156</b>	<b>493</b>
<b>DISC</b>	<b>0.148</b>	<b>468</b>
<b>HIST</b>	<b>0.148</b>	<b>468</b>
<b>TBSC</b>	<b>0.146</b>	<b>461</b>
<b>FOOD</b>	<b>0.144</b>	<b>454</b>
<b>ESPN</b>	<b>0.128</b>	<b>402</b>
<b>TLC</b>	<b>0.128</b>	<b>402</b>
<b>ID</b>	<b>0.123</b>	<b>387</b>
<b>TVLAND</b>	<b>0.118</b>	<b>372</b>
<b>HALLMYS</b>	<b>0.105</b>	<b>333</b>
<b>A&amp;E</b>	<b>0.099</b>	<b>311</b>
<b>FX</b>	<b>0.097</b>	<b>305</b>
<b>GSN</b>	<b>0.097</b>	<b>305</b>
<b>WETV</b>	<b>0.094</b>	<b>297</b>
<b>LIFE</b>	<b>0.094</b>	<b>297</b>
<b>REELZ</b>	<b>0.092</b>	<b>292</b>
<b>TNT</b>	<b>0.090</b>	<b>285</b>
<b>BRAVO</b>	<b>0.090</b>	<b>284</b>
<b>NWSMX</b>	<b>0.084</b>	<b>265</b>
<b>AMC</b>	<b>0.074</b>	<b>234</b>
<b>SYFY</b>	<b>0.074</b>	<b>233</b>
<b>OXY</b>	<b>0.074</b>	<b>233</b>
<b>NATGEO</b>	<b>0.070</b>	<b>220</b>
<b>NAN</b>	<b>0.069</b>	<b>217</b>
<b>PRMNT</b>	<b>0.068</b>	<b>215</b>
<b>BET</b>	<b>0.065</b>	<b>205</b>
<b>COM</b>	<b>0.064</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>ADSM</b>	<b>0.062</b>	<b>195</b>
<b>SDNCE</b>	<b>0.061</b>	<b>192</b>
<b>TRAVEL</b>	<b>0.057</b>	<b>180</b>
<b>APL</b>	<b>0.054</b>	<b>172</b>
<b>MLB</b>	<b>0.051</b>	<b>159</b>
<b>IFC</b>	<b>0.050</b>	<b>158</b>
<b>FETV</b>	<b>0.049</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>MGNLA</b>	<b>0.047</b>	<b>147</b>
<b>LMN</b>	<b>0.046</b>	<b>146</b>
<b>HLN</b>	<b>0.046</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>FRFM</b>	<b>0.045</b>	<b>143</b>
<b>FXX</b>	<b>0.044</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>MTV</b>	<b>0.044</b>	<b>139</b>

\*P2+ L+SD rankers are based on national Nielsen numbers, not coverage.