Cablefax Daily ™

Winds of Change: Takeaways From This Year's TechExpo

Threats of a hurricane couldn't keep folks away from **SCTE** TechExpo. Nearly 1,500 companies and organizations participated in the show, which featured more than 300 exhibits (including 69 new exhibitors) and more than 100 hours of programming. Whether you found yourself gravitating to the immense amount of breakout sessions across nine tracks or to Harmonic's hybrid booth/smoothie bar on the show floor, there was plenty to take in at the largest cable and telecommunications technology show in the U.S. Here's our breakdown of the biggest takeaways from this year's show.

Continued Movement Toward a DOCSIS 4.0 Future

The drive toward 10G has been a key mission for **CableLabs**, SCTE, **NCTA**, operators and more since the unveiling of the vision at CES 2019. Now, nearly six years on, we're at a point where operators like **Comcast** and **Mediacom** are deploying 10G in markets across their footprints. That will be taken to another level thanks to the joint development of unified DOCSIS chipsets by **Charter**, Comcast and **Broadcom**. The introduction of the chipsets will support speeds upwards of 25 Gbps on existing networks while also incorporating features like cybersecurity protection.

And for those operators that aren't quite ready to scale up to DOCSIS 4.0, there's plenty of work being done to get the most out of DOCSIS 3.1. **Arris** unveiled its G20 DOCSIS 3.1 WiFi Cable Modem Thursday, its first with built-in speed optimization for the upstream. It promises upstream speeds of up to 100 Mbps for demanding use cases like HD streaming and AR/VR. It will be available across major retailers in the U.S. for an MSRP of $249.

Bringing the Network and Applications Closer

It's been a focus of CableLabs for years to enhance the communications between the providers building and running the nation's networks and the technologists building the applications on top of that network. That work was noticeable at this year's show with a program schedule that included executives with stints at companies like **Meta** and **PlayStation**, and attendees showed up in force to ask questions and gain insights into what network enhancements would be most helpful to gamers and other niche subscriber groups. The answers? Reliability, as little latency as possible and a strong overall quality of experience.

Connectivity Changing the Sports Experience

The sports ecosystem is rapidly shifting due to changing viewer behaviors and Comcast held an after-hours event at its Atlanta headquarters, conveniently located next to Truist Park, to discuss how connectivity is changing fan experiences within and outside of sports venues. **Atlanta Braves** SVP, Technology Services *Scott Waid* sat for a fireside chat with **Comcast Business** SVP *Tracy Pitcher* and talked about how he shapes his strategy around fan engagement at Truist Park around the network and peripheral experiences. He upgraded Truist Park's network to WiFi 6 and everything from ticket scanning and food and beverage orders have moved to mobile experiences.

"It's critical because of that dependency on the wireless

devices," he said of the connectivity backbone of the park. But which of the emerging technology opportunities is he most excited for? "When I was at **Bell South** and **Equifax**, I spent a lot of my time and energy on emerging technologies," he said. "I am constantly enamored with what the next technology evolution will be. For me personally at the Braves, it's the metaverse."

Future of AI Policy Remains Murky

Sessions tackling technology policy, particularly those around GenAI and President *Biden's* AI executive order were filled to the brim with many attendees choosing to stand through hour-long sessions on the subject when all seats were taken. *Lori Marrbjerg*, Deputy Bureau Chief of the **FCC** Media Bureau, was peppered with questions around the agency's proposal around whether to require the addition of an on-air disclosure for any use of AI in political advertising, many of which she said were better suited for the Commission's Office of General Counsel due to the continued evaluation of comments submitted from the public and the industry. Meanwhile, reps from **NTIA**, the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and the National Science Foundation used time during their sessions to highlight progress that may be flying under the radar. NTIA Acting Associate Administrator *Travis Hall* highlighted a request for comment that's currently open looking at policies to foster and head off challenges related to data centers, a core infrastructural component in the development of AI.

Workforce Development Top of Mind

No matter how advanced AI becomes, there will always need to be humans at the wheel using critical thinking and problem-solving skills to keep networks sharp and customer satisfaction at a high. The workforce development needs our industry faces to meet the BEAD moment are a huge focus of SCTE and conversation around training, retention and more dominated the main stage. **Deloitte** Partner, Global Future of Work Leader *Nicole Scoble-Williams* said during a Tuesday session that more than 23% of jobs are transforming significantly in the next three years, requiring more than 60% to be reskilled, and she expects 6% growth in the employment of technicians in the telecommunications industry.

Cable One CEO *Julie Laulis* and COO *Ken Johnson* said during a fireside chat that their associates are feeling the pressures of change and uncertainty already and they've had to start moving toward a future where associates will increasingly utilize tools that will manage the network. They've been trying to shape team members into what they called creative generalists. "This is an individual that's a multi-disciplinarian, someone with a strong creative streak and a big enterprise view that can help drive us in the future where we will be less focused on technical knowledge and more focused on how we actually do our job," Johnson said. At Cable One, they've started programs where they pair network engineers and developers, bringing the two sides together to prepare for these major shifts and change mindsets on what it means to manage the network in this new age.

············

NTIA APPROVALS FOR STATE BEAD PLANS IN FINAL STRETCH

NTIA on Thursday gave the green light to BEAD proposals from Georgia, Iowa, Minnesota and South Carolina. Georgia can request more than $1.3 billion through the program, while Minnesota can seek more than $651 million. South Carolina has access to more than $551 million, and Iowa can seek more than $415 million. The majority of states and territories have had their initial proposals accepted by NTIA at this point for the $42.45 billion federal grant program, but the three largest states by population, California, Florida and Texas, still need to be approved. Also on the waiting list are Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, North Carolina and Ohio.

············

CARR UNHAPPY WITH FCC PROCESS ON DISH 5G EXTENSION

FCC Commissioner *Brendan Carr* isn't sure he's on board with last week's Commission extension to some of **Echostar/DISH**'s 5G deployment deadlines, complaining to reporters that he first heard about the decision when news outlets reported it late Friday. Echostar's extension request "came in on a Tuesday night. I didn't hear anything from anyone at DISH after the filing came in. I didn't hear anything Wednesday, Thursday or Friday," he said, then the company puts out a press release that the FCC gave it the green light. "That's how I'm learning about it. There is a significant process foul on this one. I think we should get public input and, at a minimum, sort of a heads up before the decision was made." In 2019, **DOJ** settled with **T-Mobile** and **Sprint** over their proposed merger, by requiring that they divest Sprint's prepaid business, including Boost Mobile, to DISH (now an Echostar subsidiary). In connection with its purchase of Boost Mobile, DISH sought an extension of time to complete construction of its facilities for various of its licenses, so that it could build out a 5G broadband network to enter the mobile wireless market. To address concerns that DISH might not fulfill promises, its acquisition was subject to significant build-out and compliance conditions as well as penalties up to $2 billion if it missed deadlines. "So the question was can we trust they'll build out. Yes, because of these two mechanisms. And now I find out on Friday night… that both of those things are now gone," he said during a press briefing following the FCC's September Open meeting.

DISNEY LAYOFFS

Another major media company is undergoing layoffs this week. After **Paramount** conducted a [second phase of layoffs](#) Tuesday, news of layoffs happening at **Disney** has crept out. "We continually evaluate ways to invest in our businesses and more effectively manage our resources and costs to fuel the state-of-the-art creativity and innovation that consumers value and expect from Disney," a Disney spokesperson told **CFX** in a statement. "As part of this ongoing optimization work, we have been reviewing the cost structure for our corporate-level functions and have determined there are ways for them to operate more efficiently." It's the second set of layoffs for Disney recently, with the previous one [coming in late July](#) at **Disney Entertainment Television**. This round primarily impacts HR, legal, finance, communications and other corporate roles. Reports put the estimated number of people affected at around 300, but that could grow as layoffs continue through the end of the week.

HURRICANE HELENE PREP MODE

Preparations are being made as Hurricane Helene is expected to make landfall late Thursday. It's currently a Category 3 storm, with concerns it could intensify even more. **DirecTV** is stepping in and working with local broadcasters and national weather services to launch a **Severe Weather Channel** and four-channel **Severe Weather Mix** emergency weather mosaic to satellite and U-verse customers before Helene's landfall. The Severe Weather Channel will bounce around local news coverage from stations in Tampa-St. Petersburg, Tallahassee, Atlanta, Nashville and Thomas, Georgia. Additionally, major station groups including **Cox Media Group**, **Fox**, **Gray**, **Nexstar**, **Sinclair** and **TEGNA** have agreed to provide local coverage. The four-channel mix features the **Severe Weather Channel**, **Weather Channel**, **AccuWeather** and **CNN**. **Fox Weather** is also providing continuous coverage of Helene. The FAST channel will have meteorologists and correspondents scattered throughout the southeast along with *Mike Seidel* being stationed in Keaton Beach, Florida. **Fox News** will simulcast Fox Weather overnight tonight from midnight-5am ET. **Cox Communications** conducted pre-storm facility preparation, fuel allocations and has recovery materials positioned to deploy for recovery efforts. It has damage assessment teams in place to evaluate damage once safe to do so, and its vendors are ready to support restoration efforts. **Mediacom** has teams in place to assess the damage once the storm has passed, with warehouses stocked with restoration materials. **Charter** is offering free, unlimited access to Spectrum WiFi access points in impacted areas across Florida, Georgia and Alabama. **AT&T**, **T-Mobile** and **Verizon** are prepping their networks and customers for Helene. AT&T initiated its storm preparedness plan ahead of the imminent landfall while Verizon has its Frontline Crisis Response Team standing ready. T-Mobile is offering all customers in select counties across Alabama, Florida and Georgia unlimited talk, text and data—including for customers who aren't subscribed to unlimited plans—through Wednesday. The **FCC** has activated its Disaster Information Reporting System for areas in Florida, the Carolinas, and Georgia in anticipation of Helene's landfall. It's also activated its Mandatory Disaster Response Initiative, which requires wireless providers to work together to reduce outages for the public, and has staff on the ground to conduct surveys of communications services and provide on the ground support. The Commission's Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau issued a reminder, encouraging debris removal and utility repair teams to avoid damaging critical communications infrastructure.

NEWSMAX SETTLES SMARTMATIC DEFAMATION LAWSUIT

Newsmax and the voting machine company **Smartmatic** have reached a conclusion in their legal battle on the day before the two were set to go to trial. "Newsmax is pleased to announce it has resolved the litigation brought by Smartmatic through a confidential settlement," the network announced. Details of the settlement weren't disclosed. Smartmatic originally filed the defamation lawsuit in 2021, accusing the network of airing false reports about the company's software and results of the 2020 election. Jury selection had begun earlier Thursday and opening statements were set for Monday.

FUBO ADDS MULTIVIEW BETA ON ROKU DEVICES

Fubo is launching multiview on select **Roku** devices as a beta feature over the next few weeks. Customers can stream up to four live channels simultaneously and can pick from any channel on their lineup to create the multiview option, a difference from **YouTube TV**'s multiview, which offers some customization with different games across networks.

FIBER FRENZY

Comcast has connected its first residents in Kent Island, Maryland, to its Xfinity and **Comcast Business** services. The company's expansion on Kent Island as well as surrounding communities such as Grasonville, Kent Narrows and Queenstown will reach over 9,000 homes and businesses once wrapped up. The project is set to be completed by the end of 2026. – The town of Timnath, Colorado, and **Pulse** broke ground on a broadband infrastructure project Tuesday. Network construction is already underway, and Phase 1 of the project is expected to take between six to nine months.

FCC ISSUES $6M FINE FOR DEEPFAKE ROBOCALL

The **FCC** adopted a $6 million fine Thursday against political consultant *Steve Kramer* for illegal robocalls made using deepfake, AI-generated voice cloning technology and caller

ID spoofing to spread election misinformation to potential New Hampshire voters prior to the state's January primary presidential election. Kramer will be required to pay the fine within 30 days or the matter will be referred to the **U.S. Department of Justice** for collection. In voting for the item during Thursday's Open Meeting, FCC Chairwoman *Jessica Rosenworcel* took a moment to stress that the agency is "committed to making clear that when this technology is used it must be disclosed." She pointed to a proposed rulemaking to require AI disclosures in TV and radio political ads, as well as for robocalls. "As the tools become more accessible, every one of us has a right to know if they're being used," she said.

DOING GOOD

Charter is dishing out $1.3 million in grants to 66 nonprofits through its Spectrum Digital Education program. Of those 66, 27 organizations are receiving grants from the program for the first time. That includes The Ladder Alliance in Ft. Worth, Texas, which offers workforce development and computer skills programs to low-income women and survivors of domestic violence. Other recipients include Montana's Code Girls United, the Akron Urban League in Ohio and Mapunawai, which will use the funding to support its Digital Ready Hawaii program that offers rural residents language-specific training and free devices. -- **Frontier** is providing the recently opened Best Buy Teen Tech Center at the Antelope Valley Boys & Girls Club high-speed fiber internet via the company's Broadband for Good program. The Tech Center offers digital learning and development opportunities for underserved youth in Los Angeles County, California. Subjects and skills include video editing, photography, 3-D design, audio engineering and more. The center is also part of the Los Angeles Community Impact Hub, which seeks to open up to 12 Best Buy Teen Tech Center in the LA area.

RATINGS

The primetime debut of the NASCAR Xfinity Series on **CW Network** was the network's highest ratings in over eight months after

recording an average of 906,000 total viewers, according to **Nielsen**. Viewership saw increases in specific demos compared to the Watkins Glen race on Sept. 14, including 52% among A25-54 (234,000), 50% in A18-49 (161,000) and 16% in total viewers. The race peaked at over 1 million total viewers between 9:30-9:45pm. The next race is set for Saturday in Kansas starting at 4pm.

PROGRAMMING

The Season 2 debut of "The Walking Dead: Daryl Dixon – The Book of Carol" will roll out in a global premiere throughout the week. The U.S. premiere on **AMC** and **AMC+** will be Sunday before it's released in over a dozen countries globally on **AMC Networks** and partner platforms. -- The first **NASCAR** Cup Series Round of 12 playoff race begins with the Hollywood Casino 400 this Sunday. Coverage starts at 2:30 p.m. with "Countdown to Green," with the race beginning at 3 p.m. The event, taking place at Kansas Speedway, will be available on **USA**. -- "Rock the Block" is returning in 2025 with a new format. The **HGTV** show will feature competitions between longtime and newcomer designers and renovators. Hosted by *Ty Pennington*, each team will have six weeks and a budget of $250,000 to transform and renovate various properties. Rock the Block is available to stream on **Max** and **discovery+**.

PEOPLE

Technetix Canada President *David Atman* is retiring Friday after a 45-year career in the cable industry. Atman got his start at Lindsay Electronics as he climbed to several leadership roles. He was eventually appointed President of **Lindsay Broadband** in 2005 before becoming President of Technetix Canada following Technetix's acquisition of Lindsay Broadband in 2022.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Cablefax Daily will not be publishing Friday, Sept. 27. The next issue will hit your inbox Monday, Sept. 30. Cablefax.com will keep you updated on any breaking news.

BASIC CABLE P2+ PRIME RANKINGS* (09/16/24-09/22/24)		
MON-SUN	MC US AA%	MC US AA (000)
ESPN	1.044	3312
FNC	0.773	2451
MSNBC	0.452	1433
CNN	0.211	669
HALL	0.210	665
USA	0.177	562
HGTV	0.170	539
FOOD	0.156	496
INSP	0.152	481
TBSC	0.151	480
DISC	0.126	401
TLC	0.119	378
ID	0.111	352
HIST	0.104	329
TVLAND	0.100	317
ESPN2	0.095	300
GSN	0.092	292
LIFE	0.091	289
FX	0.089	283
NWSMX	0.079	251
REELZ	0.079	249
HALLMYS	0.078	247
WETV	0.076	240
AMC	0.074	235
TNT	0.073	231
OXY	0.069	219
A&E	0.068	217
BRAVO	0.061	195
NAN	0.060	190
NATGEO	0.058	185
BET	0.058	184
ADSM	0.057	181
NFL	0.056	179
FETV	0.056	177
IFC	0.051	162
TRAVEL	0.051	161
E!	0.051	161
SYFY	0.049	155
COM	0.049	155
MTV	0.048	152
SNDNCE	0.045	142
APL	0.044	140
PRMNT	0.044	139
FRFM	0.043	135
LMN	0.041	130
HLN	0.039	123
MLB	0.038	121

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