Cablefax Daily™

Change of Message: Broadband
Aiming for Old Reliable vs. Fast & Furious

The speed wars seem to be coming to an end. Broadband providers are increasingly acknowledging that messaging needs to focus on more than numbers, particularly with the slower speeds of fixed wireless meeting many consumers' needs.

"I think maxing out at a gig symmetrical is really the Holy Grail. We can get there. I think I'm pretty happy. For most customers, 100 Mbps to maybe 200 is fine. I think people have a more grandiose view of how much speed that they actually require," Breezeline VP, Engineering *Aaron Brace* said this week during a panel at NECTA's annual convention in Newport, Rhode Island. "A Netflix stream is two to three megabits. Amazon Prime is similar. For 4K, maybe you're in five. I know the placards say higher, but really, when you actually speed test it and watch on the firewall, it's about two megs. So you figure 100 megs that's, that's 25 streams in the home. That's enough for most people."

Instead of speed, ISPs are focusing more on reliability. That was an issue front and center during last weekend's *Mike Tyson-Jake Paul* boxing match. "Most customers that had problems, which were all customers, probably blamed the ISP because they don't know what's going on," said fellow panelist *Evan Davis*, VP of Network Intelligence Solutions for Aispire, a network intelligence firm. "What happened on Friday night was, quite frankly, a Netflix server meltdown, and it melted down in numerous ways. The ISPs get blamed for that when it's actually

not even close to their problem. And so what we're trying to do is bring together all of these pieces to have that visibility."

That visibility includes examining things such as what's happening on the content provider side, the power supply, the ISP's network, and so on. Those are questions that Davis said are easy to ask, but difficult to answer unless you take a holistic approach. New technologies are making it easier to get that 360-view.

To help with reliability, Breezeline created a program management offering that examines everything from modems to spectrum, allowing it to see even which nodes are problematic. "It started out as a way to manage the tech resources most efficiently, but it turned into a proactive program once we got ahead of all the issues. Over the last three-ish years, we've reduced trouble calls… by 35%," Brace said. "Just in the trouble call cost alone, it's saving us $5 million a year." Profile Management Application solutions through OpenVault and others can allow operators to take the next step and actually adjust modem profiles if there is an impairment in the field, he said. It can be a way to schedule proper maintenance with the customer ever knowing there was a problem.

While a dead battery may be something more associated with cars, batteries and power sources also have a major role to play in network reliability. "A lot of times, you don't know what their life is or in most cases, how much they even have left. With new technologies, one of the things we're working on now is called hyper supercapacitors. This technology lasts 20 years and needs no maintenance. This technology allows

you to have reliability that if you do lose that power, that you know you're going to have a backup power that's reliable," said **ATX Networks**' *George Goncalves*, who serves as Director, Product Line Management. "And there's northbound communication that sends back analytics that can be reviewed and [to let you know] you only have about a couple of days' worth of power left."

Dan Nofs, **SCTE** member and former Engineering Manager for **Astound Broadband**, noted that the operator has been mapping its power supply. "We found a lot of the design work that was done in the past didn't really take into consideration power supplies that are pre-existing, and the designers were looking at signal levels as opposed to actual powering," he said. "We found a tremendous amount of power supplies that were underutilized, or not even required at all, that we were being billed on. That was a huge cost savings that RCN/Astound was able to recover."

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DISH-DIRECTV MERGER OFF

We are once again not in the year of a **DISH**-**DirecTV** merger. DirecTV notified **EchoStar** of its intention to terminate the deal under which it had agreed to acquire DISH DBS as of 11:59pm ET tonight. The company cited the failure of DISH DBS noteholders to agree to the proposed exchange debt offer terms issued by EchoStar, which was a condition of DirecTV's obligations to acquire DISH. DirecTV said it believed the combination would have benefited all shareholders, but it pulled out of the deal to protect its balance sheet and operational flexibility. "DirecTV will advance our mission to aggregate, curate and distribute content tailored to customers' interests by pursuing innovative products and providing customers with additional choice, flexibility and control. We are well positioned for the future with a strong balance sheet and support from our long-term partner **TPG**," DirecTV CEO *Bill Morrow* said in a statement. The termination of the DISH deal will not affect TPG's acquisition of the remaining 70% stake in DirecTV from **AT&T**, which is expected to close in the second half of 2025. **New Street Research** told clients in a note it was appalled the deal had fallen apart. With all three being worse off without a deal, it believes all involved in the deal have failed their respective investors. Any next iteration of a deal will have to wait until any litigation between EchoStar and bondholders is resolved, and that could take a while. "If there is no resolution of the litigation before July 2026, the next forcing mechanism will be large DBS debt maturities in July and December 2026. Bondholders are convinced that DBS is insolvent and that the maturities will force the Company [into] bankruptcy," New Street said. "If they are right, and if they take control of the

asset, they will undoubtedly pursue a deal with DTV. If they are wrong, EchoStar will pursue the deal."

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CRUZ PROMISES BEAD RULE REVIEW IN 2025

Sen. *Ted Cruz* (R-TX), who will become Chair of **Senate Commerce** next Congress, has announced his plans to launch a comprehensive review of the BEAD program in early 2025. In a letter to **NTIA** Administrator *Alan Davidson*, he claimed the agency had evaded congressional inquiries into the running of the BEAD program and said states soon will no longer be subject to bureaucratic obstacles imposed by the NTIA. As Senate Commerce Chair, he promised to review the program, paying specific attention to any technology bias, any imposition of rate regulation, unionized workforce and "DEI labor requirements," climate change assessments, excessive per-location costs and more. "It is incumbent on you to bear these upcoming changes in mind during this transition term. I therefore urge NTIA to pause unlawful, extraneous BEAD activities and avoid locking states into any final actions until you provide a detailed, transparent response to my original inquiry and take immediate, measurable steps to address these issues," Cruz wrote.

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COMCAST RAISING RATES

Price increases are coming to **Comcast** customers with price change notifications rolling out across some markets. Others will arrive in the coming weeks as billing cycles roll on in the company's markets. "We are sensitive to the impact of programming costs on our customers and are trying to manage that as we negotiate with programmers. We're also continuing to invest in our broadband network to provide the best, most reliable internet service in the country and to give our customers more low-cost choices in video and connectivity so they can find a package that fits their lifestyle and budget," Comcast said in a statement. They've already begun in Connecticut, with the company filing price adjustments with the Connecticut Public Utilities Regulatory Authority this week. Changes in those markets are set to take effect Dec. 20. In the state, the Xfinity TV limited basic tier will move from $56.75/month to $61.50. Choice TV Select will increase from a monthly rate of $43.50 to $48, while Choice TV will change from $67.75/month to $72.50/month. The Popular TV plan moves from $117.90/month to $125.75 and the Ultimate TV option will become $145.75/month after being $137.90. For Xfinity Internet, each plan will get a $3 bump. The Connect plan is now $71/month and the Connect More plan is $93/month, while Fast and Superfast are $108/month and $113/month, respectively. Xfinity's Gigabit

option is now running at $118/month, Gigabit Extra at $123/month and Gigabit x2 at $123. The broadcast TV fee moved from $32.75/month to $37.50/month, and the RSN fee is being bumped from $15.15 to $18.25/month. While these are the changes in Connecticut, changes to pricing plans will vary across Comcast's footprint due to variations in notable areas like the RSN fee, and revamped programming agreements may allow the operator to actually decrease charges to customers in certain markets. There will be no changes to Comcast is also changing its billing format to show the total price for video packages, whereas previous bills showed service charges and programming-related fees separately. Those will kick in Dec. 10.

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SCOTUS TO TACKLE USF

The U.S. Supreme Court announced Friday that it will review the Fifth Circuit's decision declaring that the **FCC**'s mechanism for funding USF is unconstitutional. **NTCA**, **CCA**, **USTelecom** joined the federal government in petitioning for the review. "The Fifth Circuit's decision is contrary to Supreme Court precedent and the decision of several other circuit courts of appeals, and it threatens to undermine universal service programs that, for many decades, have served to promote the availability and affordability of critical communications services for millions of rural and low-income consumers, rural health care facilities, and schools and libraries across the nation," the associations said in a joint statement. "We look forward to presenting arguments in defense of the USF contribution mechanism as the case moves forward, and ultimately to dispelling the uncertainty that these challenges have created in furthering our nation's mission of universal service."

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Cablefax Daily will not publish next week as our editors enjoy a Thanksgiving break. Keep an eye to Cablefax.com for any breaking news updates.
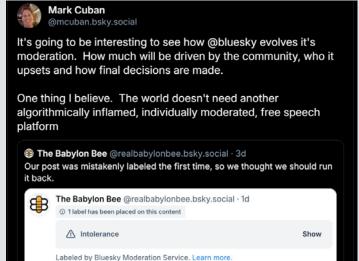

📢 CABLEFAX DASHBOARD

Social Media Hits

Grant Spellmeyer ✓
@GRANTatACA

We just wrapped up our Q4 @ACAConnects Board meeting where we had a fantastic discussion about our agenda for 2025 and beyond. I have the best trade association board in America!

Mark Cuban
@mcuban.bsky.social

It's going to be interesting to see how @bluesky evolves it's moderation. How much will be driven by the community, who it upsets and how final decisions are made.

One thing I believe. The world doesn't need another algorithmically inflamed, individually moderated, free speech platform

🐝 **The Babylon Bee** @realbabylonbee.bsky.social · 3d
Our post was mistakenly labeled the first time, so we thought we should run it back.

🐝 **The Babylon Bee** @realbabylonbee.bsky.social · 1d
ⓘ 1 label has been placed on this content

⚠ Intolerance   Show

Labeled by Bluesky Moderation Service. Learn more.

National Association of Broadcasters ✓
@nabtweets

Happy #WorldTelevisionDay2024 from NAB! 📺
From breaking news and live sports to our favorite sitcoms and game shows, broadcast television has brought people together and kept communities informed for nearly a century. #WeAreBroadcasters

📅 **Up Ahead**

DEC. 4: Cablefax Most Powerful Women Celebratory Luncheon; NYC

DEC. 11: FCC Open Meeting; D.C.

JAN. 7-10: CES 2025; Las Vegas

FEB. 23-25: NCTC Winter Educational Conference; Atlanta

MARCH 4-6: ACA Connects Summit; D.C.

Operational Efficiency: Small Changes Yield Big Results

Service providers today are facing a variety of complex challenges, contending with rising operational expenses (Opex), meeting diverse customer needs and continuously innovating to bring new offers and experiences to the market. That's why operational efficiency must be more than a back-office focus; it needs to take center stage as the key driver of customer experience (CX) and profitability. The adoption of a "small changes, big results" approach allows service providers to make targeted improvements that transform key cost centers into strategic revenue generators.

Michael Woods
EVP, President of Communications, Media & Technology
CSG
www.csgi.com

By focusing on the contact center, customer communications and the billing experience, service providers can reduce costs, drive growth and build customer loyalty. When optimized, these areas form a catalyst for competitive advantage and exceptional CX.

Step Up Contact Center Performance with AI-Driven Solutions

Contact centers are a major Opex cost for service providers, but when optimized, they become a powerful channel for driving cost reduction and loyalty. Intelligent call routing can connect customers to the right agents, providing a quick win for improving resolution rates, eliminating delays and minimizing frustration for customers and agents. One CSG customer was experiencing ongoing contact center challenges, resulting in bottlenecks and dissatisfied customers. By implementing CSG's call routing system, the customer reduced misdirected calls by 43% and achieved significant savings each month. This change rapidly lowered Opex and turned the contact center into a revenue-driving channel.

Simplify the Billing Experience to Reduce Opex

Customer communications is another major cost center. Yet, every interaction, from service notifications to bills, is an opportunity to further reduce Opex, improve customer satisfaction and sell more. Billing is the most frequent, impactful interaction between a service provider and its customers. One leading tier 1 service provider, for example, transformed its billing statement into a proactive self-help channel with CSG's bill presentment solutions. By adding targeted offers based on usage to the billing statement, the service provider achieved a 33% increase in mobile sales and a significant decrease in call volumes. When it took personalization further by visually highlighting the customer's name within the ad, response rates increased by 56%. This approach shows how small changes to a bill can reduce call volumes while creating an opportunity for customer engagement and incremental revenue growth.

Boost Self-Help Success as a Key CX Metric

Customers increasingly value the ability to resolve issues independently. Effective self-service options give customers control and reduce the need for live support, lowering the cost to serve and improving the experience. Self-help success rates are emerging as a key metric for CX, especially in billing, where customers prefer immediate answers. AI-enabled tools can empower customers to handle routine tasks like billing inquiries or service troubleshooting. This shift towards self-help support is both a cost-saving measure and a boost to customer satisfaction. When customers feel capable of managing their accounts on their own, they are happier, more loyal and more likely to buy more.

Three Key Takeaways: Immediate Actions, Lasting Impacts

Service providers can embrace the "small changes, big results" approach with three strategies:

- Use AI to Optimize Call Center Operations: Intelligent routing and resolution improvements can streamline support, reduce costs and improve customer loyalty.

- Redesign Billing for Self-Help and Revenue Generation: A straightforward, user-friendly bill can reduce call volumes and enhance customers' trust in the service.

- Adopt Proactive Self-Help Strategies: AI-driven self-help tools anticipate customer needs, reducing Opex while creating a proactive experience to enhance loyalty further.

Acting on these strategies, service providers will see quick wins in customer satisfaction, cost reduction and revenue growth, which, in turn, establish a strong foundation for sustainable, customer-centered growth. Operational efficiency becomes a pathway to delivering exceptional customer experiences that keep customers loyal and satisfied. Now is the time for action; the service providers who focus on operational efficiency and customer experience today will be the winners tomorrow.