

Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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WEC 2018: Tech Trends to Watch For

NCTC's Winter Educational Conference is here, and while the show is moving in a decidedly less-tech direction than it has in the past, discussion of the upcoming trends in 2018 still found a place on the main stage. With DOCSIS 3.1 and 1 gig deployment out of the way for the NCTC members at Monday's general session, each said they were looking at how to use new internet capabilities as a springboard for further improvements. "It's only one part of the solution," said *Jason Nealis*, RCN's vp, operations and video engineering. "You bring a gig into the house. It then becomes how does the gig get received throughout the entire home. That's where the focus is now for us." Wireless in the home and customer understanding of it have combined to become seemingly the next big problem to tackle for the industry. When **Bluestream** launched DOCSIS 3.1 across its footprint last year, COO *Joe Canavan* said the biggest lesson learned was in the planning. "The in-the-home experience is important," Canavan began. "Customer education has been really important for us to make sure that we're retaining customers once we get them in the door on the higher speeds because, otherwise, they just don't understand that the average laptop or smartphone isn't going to pull a gig." Just because DOCSIS 3.1 is behind these companies, it doesn't mean they're done with upgrades. Switching to an all-IP platform has become yet another point of contention, but Nealis is embracing it wholeheartedly. "I'm all in. I think everything's got to go IP," Nealis said, adding that staying competitive will take making cheaper set-top boxes and encouraging self-installs—two initiatives that would require the switch to an IP-only platform. The switch would be a move for flexibility in the video space for RCN. However, smaller operators like Canavan's Bluestream may want to wait to make the IP switch. "Our hope is that somebody comes out with an IPTV-in-the-cloud solution and then we can subscribe to that," Canavan said, saying he'll most likely be waiting for 12-18 months before making any moves. Complimentary OTT services on set-tops are initiatives most on the panel still had yet to launch, at least not in any fully-developed form. Most were far more ready to embrace the placement of OTT apps on their boxes rather than entering into the content war outside of traditional video. Along those lines, NCTC announced a deal with SVOD service **CuriosityStream** at WEC, allowing co-op members to offer the service on VOD through cable boxes. CuriosityStream offers a

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7-day free trial, with both monthly and annual subscription plans that operators can offer subs. “It’s got to be more about surfacing the right content to the right consumer at the right time,” Canavan said. “Over time, you’re going to see software becoming so much more important. How can you link this with social streams and seeing what your friends are watching and liking?” The panel discussion came to a close with WiFi-in-the-home, a topic sure to continue to be a huge talking point over the course of the year. “The practical matter is how customers use one gig with twenty devices at a time,” said **Mediacom** CTO, svp, technology *JR Walden*. “It’s a lot more about having multiple access points in the home to segment all those clients along different channels.” Canavan urged the industry to take over the experience of managing WiFi in the home. “If we can do a better job than the telcos at serving the customer, get 1 gig WiFi everywhere in the house, you’re going to get stickier customers and you can charge more,” he said.

Comcast-TiVo Battle: Comcast has filed an emergency motion in a federal court of appeals to expedite proceedings around its appeal of an **International Trade Commission** order that found X1 boxes infringe on two patents held by **TiVo**. TiVo (formerly **Rovi**) filed a new complaint against Comcast at the ITC on Thursday, alleging that the X1 set-tops infringe on eight additional patents. Comcast wants a federal court to find that the ITC overstepped its authority in November by prohibiting Comcast from importing or selling boxes equipped with software related to the challenged patents. Comcast argues that a successful appeal will also show the ITC lacks authority in the new proceeding. Under Comcast’s proposed expedited schedule, oral arguments in the case would take place in June or as soon as practical thereafter. Comcast responded to the November ITC order by removing a remote recording feature, but TiVo argues that other features are also infringing on its patents.

Deconstructing Infrastructure Plan: President *Trump*’s infrastructure plan was revealed Monday, with a pledge of \$200bn aimed at spurring \$1.5 trillion in infrastructure investments. Of that money, \$100bn will be used for an incentives program to spur funds from states, localities and the private sector. Some \$50bn is earmarked for a Rural Infrastructure Program, with the bulk of that money allocated to state governors. The remaining funds will be distributed through rural performance grants. Democrats expressed disappointment that there wasn’t dedicated broadband funding in the proposal. “This glaring omission is a betrayal of the rural voters that supported him in his election, and a missed opportunity to close the digital divide that separates rural and urban America,” said Rep *Peter Welch* (D-VT), co-chair of the **House Rural Broadband Caucus**. **House Commerce** ranking member *Frank Pallone* (D-NJ) complained that it forces the majority of costs onto already cash-strapped state and local governments. **ACA** pres/CEO *Matt Polka* said the only way to deliver broadband to unserved areas is with the

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assistance of direct government subsidies. “We are pleased that the President’s plan recognizes this fact and sets aside money that can be used by the states for this purpose. ACA’s broadband provider members operate in rural areas throughout the country, and they look forward to working with the Trump Administration, Congress, and the states to ensure that all households, regardless of location, have access to high performance broadband service,” he said in statement. **NCTA** also applauded the administration’s proposal and pledged a willingness to induce more rural investment. “Any funding should be dedicated to connecting those homes without any access to broadband. It should be a national imperative to connect the unserved so that all Americans can enjoy the benefits of this technology,” **NCTA** concluded, referring to its 2017 recommendations for broadband policies. In addition to focusing on the unserved, the association calls for government to identify problem areas before spending money to fix them and embracing alternative technologies in problem areas.

Tech Vendor Deals: **Mediacom** signed on to offer **Evolution Digital’s** eBOX IP Hybrid set-top, powered by **TiVo**. **Mediacom** has designated it as the company’s primary next-gen, non-DVR set-top for households throughout its systems. Others deploying the IP box include **GCI**, **RCN**, **WOW!** and multiple **NCTC** members. -- **Shentel** is working with vendor **Hitron** to provide “Wall to Wall WiFi,” enabling WiFi throughout the home with signal extenders and enhanced control over the wireless network with the MyHitron mobile app. -- **Windstream** renewed its existing portal and ad relationship with **Synacor**.

On the Hill: **Senate Commerce** will consider the president’s four nominees to the **FTC**, including *Joseph Simons* who Trump selected as chairman, on Wednesday at 9:30am. -- *Mike Bloomquist* was named staff director for **House Energy & Commerce**. Previous staff director *Ray Baum* passed away Friday after a years-long battle with cancer. Bloomquist has served as deputy staff director of the committee under chmn *Greg Walden* (R-OR). -- The **House Communications** subcmte canceled a hearing slated for Friday with the **FCC’s** commissioners, citing changes to the House calendar.

Cleaning the Stacks: One last administrative act in the **FCC’s** decision to presume cable systems nationally are subject to effective competition—meaning MVPD competitors, such as satellite, have at least 15% of the local pay TV market—unless proven otherwise. On Monday, the Media Bureau dismissed **NAB**, **NATOA** and the **Northern Dakota County Cable Communications Commission’s** petition seeking reconsideration of the 2015 effective competition order. In July, the DC Circuit denied the petition for review, upholding the FCC’s action. On Feb 2, the NAB and the other requested to withdraw the petition based on their belief that it’s moot. The Bureau agreed and effective competition remains the law of the land.

Ratings: **CNN’s** “The Radical Story of Patty Hearst” averaged 294K 25-54s for its Sunday premiere, according to early Nielsen data. That put CNN ahead of **Fox News** (209K) and **MSNBC** (130K) in the demo for the 9pm hour. Fox News was still tops in total viewers (1.061mln), while CNN (947K) outpaced MSNBC (406K). CNN is airing two eps of the six-part series each Sunday.

Programming: **MLB Network** returns us to the days of *Greg Maddux*, *John Smoltz* and *Chipper Jones* with “Atlanta Rules, The Story of the ’90s Braves” Tuesday at 9pm. -- **DISH** signed on as a presenting sponsor for The American one-day rodeo, presented on **RFD-TV** and **The Cowboy Channel** on Feb 25, 3pm ET. DISH is sponsoring two \$5K prizes for the youngest and most inspiring competitors. The American features a \$1mln cash prize, making it the world’s richest rodeo. -- **Tennis Channel** inked a multiyear extension with the **ATP** that includes the right to offer almost all Masters 1000 and ATP World Tour 500 events on OTT subscription service **Tennis Channel Plus**, starting this week. -- **MTV** unveils “Teen Mom: Young and Pregnant,” following five new young women on March 12. Note, it’s not called “16 and Pregnant,” with the youngest moms 17 and oldest 20.

SCTE Leadership Program: **Charter** evp *Tom Adams* will join **Comcast Cable** CEO *Dave Watson* at the **SCTE-ISBE** Leadership Institute at Tuck Executive Education at Dartmouth. Adams, vice of the SCTE-ISBE board, will speak on the importance of managing change and bringing together diverse corporate cultures in today’s dynamic business environment (May 9).

People: *Tony Goncalves* was named CEO of **Otter Media**, the jv between **The Chernin Group** and **AT&T** for media and digital brands, including **Fullscreen** and **Crunchyroll**. He was most recently CEO, digital brands for AT&T, which included leading strategy for **DirectTV Now**. He succeeds Otter Media pres *Sarah Harden*, who was named CEO of *Reese Witherspoon’s* **Hello Sunshine** production company last month. -- **Roku** strategic adviser *David Krall* was named to **Harmonic’s** board. Krall previously was Roku’s pres/CEO.