

Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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Being Hospitable: Cable Making Lots of Noise at Hospitality Tech Conference

When the largest hospitality tech tradeshow of the year takes place, you can bet the industry is well represented. Sure, there are big enterprise providers such as **Comcast**, **Cox** and **AT&T** on the floor of the **Hospitality Industry Technology Exposition & Conference (HITEC)** in Houston this week, as well as major vendors like **Cisco** and **Arri's Ruckus Networks**. But even programmers understand the importance of hospitality, with **CNN** sponsoring a portion of the show floor. There's been no shortage of news to come out of HITEC this week. **Charter** used it Tuesday to announce expansion of its **Spectrum Enterprise** video offering as well as the launch of IP-based **Spectrum U TV**. **Amazon** unveiled "Alexa for Hospitality." **Four Seasons Philadelphia**, slated to open later this year in the towering, under-construction Comcast Center, will feature the just-launched **X1 for Hospitality** offering. Everything from AI to blockchain is being discussed among those gathered at HITEC. "There's a lot going on in the hospitality industry. Hotels are looking at IPTV services and even modification to the current services that are out there. And there's a lot of push to define new ways to deliver content as the way we view and consume content is changing," *Peter Agnvall*, vp of Spectrum Enterprise TV, told **Cablefax**. "Brands are looking at more integration into other services they have and where TV is part of those services. That's where we want to be." For Charter, that includes "Fiber Connect Plus TV," an HD programming service over fiber that can be integrated with a third-party solution and requires no head-end equipment on the premises. The third-party integration lets brands keep a customized experience while using Spectrum content. Hotels, hospitals, etc that would prefer a more direct relationship with Charter can opt for the "Set-Back Box TV," which delivers programming via coax that is distributed to compact "set-back" boxes behind each TV. It features an IPG, the ability to pause live TV and a library of more than 7K hours of on demand content. Charter's biggest news at HITEC is the introduction of Spectrum U TV, a video streaming service delivering live TV with local channels, RSNs, an IPG and on-demand content. "We hear from universities all the time that they want an IP-based service for their services. Students are asking for a service where they can watch content on their mobile devices, laptops and they can do that at their time," Agnvall said. Similar to Comcast's **Xfinity on Campus**, it's launching after a field test with more than 24 clients. University of Saint Louis was among those early testers, with Agnvall noting

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that they're very excited to continue working with Spectrum. The service will launch later this month for colleges and universities in the Spectrum Enterprise national footprint. Additionally, Charter has worked to integrate its enterprise video offering across the acquired **Time Warner Cable** and **Bright House** systems, offering a 200 HD channel lineup that includes core bundles with sports, Latino and international programming and add-on premium and music channels.

A Company Worth Fighting For: Disney isn't backing down in the fight for **Sky**. A new statement from UK Culture Secretary *Matt Hancock* revealed improved terms from Disney and **21st Century Fox**, including a commitment from the former to operate and maintain a Sky News branded service for 15 years rather than the previously offered 10. During the 15 years, Disney will be unable to sell Sky News unless it gains proper consent with the UK government. It will submit a commitment to preserve the editorial independence of the brand while also increasing the funds available to Sky News to at least €100m/yr. 21CF also extended its funding commitment to 15 years. The revised terms were also proposed to satisfy the plurality public interest concerns that arose when 21CF and Disney first made the offer. "In my view, these revised undertakings meet the criteria that I set out to the House on 5 June and will help to ensure that Sky News remains financially viable over the long term; is able to operate as a major UK-based news provider; and is able to take its editorial decisions independently, free from any potential outside influence," Hancock said. 21CF welcomed the announcement, saying in a statement, "We now look forward to a final decision clearing our transaction." The revised undertakings are subject to a 15-day consultation before that decision can be made.

Begging for Approval: T-Mobile took the first step forward to have its merger with **Sprint** approved, filing a Public Interest Statement with the **FCC**. The statement says the proposed merger, forming "New T-Mobile," would enhance consumer welfare in the US with "the rapid and widespread deployment of 5G networks in a market structure that spurs rivals to invest in a huge increase in capacity, and, correspondingly, to drop tremendously the price of data per gigabyte." New T-Mobile promised to invest close to \$40bn into using Sprint and T-Mobile assets to build a nationwide 5G network, a move that the companies claim would lead to **Verizon** and **AT&T** moving towards improvements in order to compete. A promise was also made to deliver increased broadband coverage, signal quality and network capacity to rural Americans. FCC chmn *Ajit Pai* has been a major supporter of breaking the digital divide, recently gaining majority support for his proposal to increase funding for the **USF's** Rural Health Care Program by \$171m/yr. **Newstreet Research** thought the case presented was sound, but it isn't changing its approval odds just yet. "TMUS is making the right arguments, and they are well-made, but it remains to be seen whether they will sway the

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administration, and we may not know the administration's reaction until late in the process," Newstreet said in a note. Even if the merger is approved by the FCC, it still has to get the green light from the **DOJ** before New T-Mobile can be born. A new [website](#) has been created for the case for New T-Mobile.

ACLU Objects to Sinclair-Tribune Deal: The **ACLU** on Tuesday urged the **FCC** to deny assigning **Tribune** licenses to **Sinclair**, saying the companies have failed to show their merger will serve the public interest. "The proposed merger not only consolidates an unprecedented amount of market power into one corporate entity, it does so deceptively, purporting to divest Sinclair of control over several stations while simultaneously fanning pacts for Sinclair to operate these stations for the new owners," the ACLU said. The group also complained that consumers of smaller broadcasters will likely see increased prices and more blackouts. ACLU also alleged that Sinclair has a "well-documented practice" of forcing local broadcasters to read ideological scripts and take positions on partisan issues.

Talking Guide Waiver: **ACA** has asked the **FCC's** Media Bureau to waive the talking guide requirement on a partial or full basis for certain MVPDs. There's a Dec 20 deadline that requires MVPDs with 400K or fewer subs and systems with 20K or fewer subs to make their user interfaces audibly accessible upon request to blind or visually impaired subs. Larger entities had to meet that requirement back in December 2016. ACA says many midsized cable ops will be able to meet the deadline, but that a waiver should be granted to some companies. Those include mid-sized and smaller systems that use QAM modulation to offer two-way services and offer some programming in analog format or don't offer broadband access to residential video subs.

Media Modernization: **NCTA** offered its rebuttal to a number of [groups](#) who have told the **FCC** that cable operators should keep channel lineup info in their online public file. **NAB's** argument that consumers can use the files to comparison shop doesn't make sense since two of the top four MVPDs are DBS providers with no government-imposed mandate to make channel info available, NCTA said in comments filed at the FCC last week. NCTA also rejected **Alliance for Community Media's** argument that cable ops' might have inaccurate listing about program aired on PEG channels, noting that no FCC rules require descriptions of program of any channels carried. As for **NATO's** suggestion that the public file requirement lets franchise authorities verify operators' compliance with rules and other obligations, NCTA dismissed it as imposing a new burden on companies.

And the Nominees Are...: **TCA** revealed the nominees for the **34th Annual TCA Awards** Tuesday. **FX** led all networks with 10 nominations. **Netflix** and **NBC** were on its heels with nine and seven nods, respectively. **BBC America** and **HBO** were neck and neck with six while **Hulu** and **Amazon** did the same with three nods each. **BBC America** scored with "Killing Eve," which led all series with five nominations. This year's show introduced a new category honoring the best in sketch/variety shows. Winners will be announced August 3 at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in LA.

Building Out: **Nielsen** and **Comcast** company **Freewheel** are working together to expand measurement to OTT and set-top box VOD inventory. The move is an effort by the two to give advertisers a greater understanding of the entire TV marketplace while taking advantage of the additional impressions they've earned. More details about the initiative will be announced prior to the 2019 TV upfront.

Distribution: **Starz** and **Starz Encore** premium channels have come to **YouTube TV**. The deal includes 14 channels total for \$9/month along with access to the network's VOD offerings.

Ratings: Thanks to the World Cup, US Open and some truly competitive baseball games, **FS1** saw 30.039mln viewers watching at least 6 minutes of its programming over the week of June 11-17. This was enough to boost it above **ESPN**, marking the first time it beat ESPN and was No 1 among sports networks based on total audience. ESPN came in second (28.003mln) and was followed by **ESPN2** (15.548mln). -- **Hallmark Movies & Mysteries** kicked off its first annual "Summer of Mystery" with three back-to-back Sunday night premieres from the "Hailey Dean Mysteries" series. The three premieres averaged a 1.6 HH rating, 1.3mln total viewers and 150K W25-54. The net ranked as the No 1 household-rated non-sports cable network in the Sunday 9-11pm time period and No 3 among total viewers for three consecutive weeks.

Blockchain Breakthroughs: Advertising software provider **Mediaocean** teamed up with **IBM iX** to launch a blockchain consortium for the digital media supply chain. The consortium, powered by IBM's Blockchain platform, is meant to give advertisers and agencies greater visibility over the lifecycle of media dollar flow. "Much like HTML transformed the internet, blockchain represents transformative technology that can be applied to different facets of business," Mediaocean CRO **Ramsey McGrory** told **Cablefax**. "The real value of blockchain will be realized when all participants in the marketplace adopt blockchain as a standard operating practice." The program is set to launch in July.