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What the Industry Reads First

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Experience 4: Cable Ops Ramping Up Marketing Around New TiVo Upgrade

For years, **Comcast** has boasted that X1, particularly the launch of a voice remote, has helped with churn. Indeed, earlier this month CEO *Brian Roberts*, speaking at an investor conference, talked about how Comcast customers move outside the company's footprint and get frustrated. "They go, 'Where is my voice remote?' and 'How do I do that?'" he said. Now more cable operators are getting to offer similar benefits, thanks to the new **TiVo Experience 4** upgrade. The platform features more intuitive navigation, hyper-personalized viewing recommendations, and yes, a voice-controlled remote. **Blue Ridge Communications** started the process with a soft launch of the software in late August. "We are just promoting it now," explained marketing director *Joe Lorah*. "We wanted to give existing customers two or three weeks to deal with the upgrade and voice remotes. Then when that dust settles, we'll go into full campaign mode... With the unknown of changing the guide for 20K people, we didn't know what kind of noise it would create and we didn't want to create a new acquisition campaign at the same time." The Pennsylvania-based operator has started to market the upgrade along with the launch of TiVo 4K boxes to customers, with plans to ratchet up the promotion next month. Marketing plans include a contest tied to the voice remote. **Mediacom** is taking a different approach, with plans to roll out the TiVo Experience 4 upgrade this month starting with new customers. Eventually, the MSO will transition to include existing customers and launch marketing around it. **Atlantic Broadband** has deployed the upgrade in all of its legacy markets across CT, PA, MD, DE, SC and FL over the past two months. It has started launching the service in former **MetroCast** markets with all markets served by Atlantic Broadband to have access to the platform by November. "Atlantic Broadband has had a very strong early response to the market launches, exceeding expected adoption rates," said *Heather McCallion*, vp, products and programming. "We've also had enthusiastic customer feedback, both regarding the voice remote and the improvements to the user interface through Experience 4. Because of this, we anticipate that the TiVo enhancements will not only help drive new customer growth, but also will add value for our existing video customers, benefiting long-term video retention rates." Atlantic Broadband took the strategy of offering the upgrade and voice remotes to all eligible existing TiVo DVR customers as an enhancement free of charge. They can upgrade the software through their existing UI and can order a voice remote online. New customers automatically get the offering.

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Atlantic Broadband created special one-sheeters for the launch as well as mailers, billboards, print ads and a [digital TV spot](#). TiVo has created customizable marketing for its operator partners, including tips and tutorials. “In addition, our own team members, who played such a key role in the deployment planning and launch, have been testing and using the product, to build excitement and solicit feedback. Because they see it as a game-changer, they are natural, enthusiastic ambassadors for us inside and outside the organization,” McCallion said. TiVo said it works hand-in-hand with each operator to ensure a successful rollout, though it leaves the pace of launches to its partners. TiVo has a technical support team that helps manage the rollout with regular syncs and check-points with operators as well as a field trial program for operators. TiVo provides analytics, monitors “take-rates,” conducts consumer surveys, as well as provides on-going support for any issues that may arise. Additionally, strategic engagements via forums like the TiVo User Group allows the operators to engage with TiVo as a community and share best practices, the vendor said.

More Florence Support: Altice USA is providing a \$25K direct contribution to the Northeastern NC Chapter of the **American Red Cross** to assist overall recovery efforts for Hurricane Florence and the flooding the storm created. The operator also will provide the organization with \$500K in free ad time across its systems nationwide. Like other operators in the region, Altice USA is making WiFi access available to customers and non-customers alike. It’s also set up several mobile units across affected areas. The vast majority of its customers in impacted areas have service, and those without service are largely due to power-related issues. On Wednesday, the **FCC** partially deactivated its voluntary Disaster Reporting System for Florence. It remains active for NC, but communications providers no longer need to provide outage reports for counties in GA, SC and VA. The most recent report released, which is as of 11am ET Wednesday, showed more than 283K cable subscribers without service. That’s not much better than the near 286K reported as of Tuesday morning. **Charter** said that in eastern NC, about 70% of customers have service (that number is greater than 90% in eastern SC). Ten of its retail stores remain closed, mostly due to lack of power.

Future Thinking: IBM took a step to make AI more accessible Wednesday, introducing software that offers more transparency into the technology. The service automatically detects bias and explains on decisions are being made by AI. Running on the IBM Cloud, the software also helps organizations manage AI systems from various industry players. IBM Research is also releasing an AI bias detection and mitigation toolkit into the open source community, making forward tools and education widely available while encouraging collaboration on the issues of bias in AI. 82% of enterprises are considering AI deployments, 60% fear liability issues and 63% lack in-house talent capable of confidently managing the technology, according the new research by IBM’s Institute for Business Value.

Cablefax: What's Happening in November

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Supporting Veterans

The US Veterans Administration projects there will be more than 3.4 million veterans who served in post 9/11 conflicts by 2020, with 1.8 million of these veterans under the age of 34. This is an important and growing segment of the population that has served us at home and abroad while making great sacrifices. In honor of Veterans Day, Cablefax looks at how the industry is recognizing these men and women—including veteran hiring initiatives, special programming and training/support.

Most Powerful Women Magazine

Cablefax’s annual Most Powerful Women in Cable magazine, honors the women whose outstanding leadership, innovation and community continues to change the industry for the better.

Holiday Programming

It’s a time when many families gather around the TV together. We’ll look at what’s hot this holiday season.

Big Data & Cross Platform Measurement

Cablefax will demystify and break down the enigmatic world of measurement and how it’s rapidly evolving to serve the needs of an increasingly complex multiscreen world that integrates traditional content, digital platforms and social interaction into a chaotic and consumer-driven business.

Awards	Events
Tech Awards Deadline: November 9 Final Deadline: November 16	Program & Trailer Awards/Gala November 8 Taglyan Complex, Los Angeles Most Powerful Women Luncheon November 15 583 Park Ave, NYC

Cox Sells: Cox Media Group sold **Mundo Hispánico** to **Mundo Hispano Digital Network**, headed by former Georgia state senator *Sam Zamarripa*, now **CEO of Intent Solutions of Atlanta**. The tech and Latino-focused media company also has two partners *Marcos Gonzalez* and *Rene Alegria*, both with strong ties to the local Atlanta Hispanic Community. Mundo Hispánico launched in 1979 and is metro Atlanta's largest Spanish-language newspaper. The terms of the sale were not released.

Across The Pond: The partnership between **Netflix** and **Sky** will head to the next level in November when the former becomes available on the latter as part of a bolt-on addition. The addition, called Ultimate On Demand, will be priced at £10/month for all new and existing customers with a Sky Q subscription.

Living Hulu: Hulu's live TV service reached the milestone 1mln subscriber mark. The service launched just last year and has 60+ live channels. Overall, Hulu has more than 20mln subscribers including its on-demand streaming service. Hulu is now the third live TV streaming service to announce it has surpassed the 1mln subscriber mark, following **Sling TV** with 2.3mln and **DirectTV NOW** with 1.8mln. **YouTube TV** is likely fourth in line. The streaming service announced it had 800K subscribers in May.

Around The World: **Liberty Global** revealed its Horizon 4 next-gen TV entertainment platform at its annual Tech Summit in Amsterdam. The product suite includes a set-top box with 4K UHD picture quality, a remote control with voice capabilities and an upgraded version of the company's GO mobile app. The platform will be rolled out over the next few months to select customers in The Netherlands, Switzerland and Belgium, with a wider rollout to follow. -- **ProSieben-Sat.1** teamed up with **Discovery** to launch an integrated streaming platform for Germany. Set to be the "Hulu of Germany," the platform promises live streams, a sizable media library with local content, Hollywood productions and sports content. Coming in the first half of 2019, the project is projected to bring in 10mln users in the first 2 years.

Discovery Cares: More than 4,000 **Discovery** employees worldwide will volunteer in their local communities as part of the company's 9th annual "Impact Day." Employees from offices in nearly 40 countries across 5 continents plan to volunteer at zoos, food banks, animal shelters, retirement homes, schools and more. The day of service began in 2010 as a celebration of Discovery's 25th anniversary.

Max Volume: FCC commish *Jessica Rosenworcel* took to the airwaves Wednesday, launching the "Broadband Conversations" podcast, a celebration of women making an impact in digital spaces. Each episode will feature Rosenworcel talking to women who are forging new paths in technology, media and innovation, asking them what's ahead for the future of the industry. The first episode, featuring *Sen Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV)*, discusses how to get more girls coding, smart cities and the importance of connectivity. The podcast is available on the FCC's website, iTunes, Google Podcasts on Android and Google Play.

Programming: **Amazon Studios** signed Emmy-winning producer and director *Reed Morano* in an exclusive TV deal. Morano won an Emmy for her work directing **Hulu's** "The Handmaid's Tale," but will now take her talent to the Seattle-based giant. Morano also made history as the first woman to ever win both the Emmy and DGA Award in the same year for a dramatic series, and was also the first woman to win an Emmy in the Drama category in 22 years. -- **Netflix** will produce a live-action series based on the **Nickelodeon** animated series "Avatar: The Last Airbender." The original series aired for three seasons on Nick and was made into a live-action film in 2010. -- **Discovery Channel's** "Brake Room" premieres Oct 1 at 11pm. The motor game show features celebrity contestants trying to predict what happens in viral videos from the motor world. -- **FX** ordered a third season of "Snowfall," to premiere in 2019. Season 2 of the series will wrap up Thursday. -- **OWN** renewed drama series "Greenleaf" from Lionsgate for a fourth season.

On the Circuit: *Bonnie Hammer*, chairman of **NBCUniversal Cable Entertainment Group**, will open the **WICT** Leadership Conference in NYC on Oct 15. "MSBNC Live" anchor *Stephanie Ruhle* will join her, facilitating a "fireside" chat. The conference serves as the kick-off to Diversity Week 2018.

Ratings: The Grand Prix of Sonoma tied for the fourth most-watched live IndyCar race on **NBCSN** in 9 years. It delivered a total audience of 638K average viewers, up 19% since 2017.

People: *Howard Swartz* will rejoin **Discovery Channel** as svp, production and development. Swartz most recently served as evp, development and production at **Arrow Media**. Prior to Arrow, he operated as vp, documentaries and specials for Discovery. Being elevated to vp, documentaries and specials at Discovery is *Jon Bardin*, who will report in to Swartz. Two others were promoted, with *Scott Lewers* upped to evp, multiplatform programming and digital media while *Jennifer Williams* will serve in the newly-created role of evp, global talent management and brand strategy and operations, Discovery and Factual.

Think about that for a minute...

A Gordian Knot

Commentary by Steve Effros

Imagine, for a moment, if cable operators did what Ted Turner did many years ago. He wanted to pick up a local broadcast station (his own, in Atlanta) and transmit it via the then-new satellite technology to small cable operators throughout the country. He ran into an immediate problem; the satellite company, if owned by the same party as the television station, would violate all sorts of rules and regulations, not the least of which were the contracts the local station had with copyright owners.

Turner's solution; he built the satellite business and then in essence gave it away to someone else, who then became an independent "carrier" and was allowed to pick up and transmit the signal. Thus the first "Superstation" was born.

Why is this significant today? Well it all has to do with the definition of what a cable system is, and what "OTT" is, and whether Netflix and its kin can now be considered "cable-like" for other purposes, like cities imposing franchise fees. That case is now going to court since some localities have said they want to impose the fees on the OTT streaming folks because they now look very much like they are offering the exact same service packages over the same wire that the local cable operator is offering, and the local operator is paying 5 percent of gross revenue from that service to the town and Netflix isn't. Meanwhile, Netflix is being seen as a clear "substitute" for the cable service and folks are moving from one to the other and the city is losing anticipated revenue.

The Netflix response is that they don't own the wires, so they aren't a cable operator. But, but... what if Charter, say, spun off its aggregated video service to a new company and retained the wireline system to provide leased video, broadband, voice, business services, etc.? Would



that be a "Turner" and result in the local "cable operator" no longer having to pay fees for the income from subscribers?

This all comes at the same time companies like Charter are pointing out to the FCC that services like DirecTV Now, an OTT service delivered over AT&T's own infrastructure, has clearly become a direct competitor of cable service as can be seen from their own nationally broadcast advertising. The packages and prices are similar and competitive. Charter argues this proves that they are experiencing "effective competition" from AT&T and therefore any remaining local rate regulation should be dropped.

This is much more complicated than I can summarize in a couple of paragraphs. The copyright, franchise fee, and local regulatory implications are all getting tied up in a grand "Gordian Knot" that I suspect will lead to contradictory and very inconsistent court decisions and challenges. There's no easy way out of this. The "Emmys" proved the point this week. They originally were awards for "television" excellence. But HBO, Netflix and Amazon walked away with the major awards. None of those companies would have been characterized as offering "television" years ago, but nobody questions it today.

Does it make sense to have government regulation of some types of "television" but not others? Does it make sense to have franchise fees for one channel aggregator but not others? How about different copyright rules? The EU just tentatively decided to throw the Internet edge providers into the copyright liability pool. Should we? This "knot" is only going to get bigger and tighter. We're foolish if we're not working on legislation to cut it.

Steve

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(Steve Effros was President of CATA for 23 years and is now an advisor and consultant to the cable industry. His views do not necessarily reflect the views of Cablefax.)

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