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What the Industry Reads First

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T-Mobile/Sprint: FCC Asks Cable to Weigh In; Cisco Give Deal Thumbs Up

The FCC is seeking info from various parties, including **Altice USA**, **Comcast** and **Charter**, on the proposed **T-Mobile/Sprint** merger. Responses are due Oct 17. Recall that Altice has raised concerns over what the union could mean for MVNO partners down the road and has asked the FCC to deny the deal or condition it to require the new company to commit to long-term, nationwide agreement for all MVNOs across the improved coverage. The MSO plans to launch mobile service in 2019 through its full MVNO with Sprint. Charter didn't touch on the merits of the merger, but told the FCC that it should not view its mobile service as serious competition in the marketplace. The FCC wants the cable companies to chime in on how the proposed transaction could impact mobile wireless business and their TV/internet business. The second part could be significant as it signals the Commission is thinking about more than mobile phone service. Mobile wireless is, of course, significant, with the Commission asking for details on the characteristics of mobile customers; revenue, costs and profitability of wireless customers; and plans to develop a facilities-based mobile wireless network. The FCC also sent letters seeking more info from **AT&T**, **Verizon**, **US Cellular**, **Cellular South** and **TracFone Wireless**. The FCC's voluntary 180-day merger review shot clock has been paused since Sept 11, with the agency declaring that more time was needed for staff and third-party review of newly submitted and anticipated modeling, including a "substantially revised network engineering model." The companies informed the Commission on Sept 28 that they have completed their modeling submissions and do not intend to further supplement the record. While the FCC and **DOJ** are the principal players in merger reviews, states have a role to play as well. For example, the Attorney Generals for Florida and Tennessee are among those investigating whether the proposed T-Mobile-Sprint deal would violate any laws. In the course of their investigations, both recently sent notice that they are seeking access to documents and information that may contain Numbering Resource Utilization and Forecast data and local number portability data. The deal has received some endorsements, including from various Chambers of Commerce and **Cisco**, which has a partnership with T-Mobile to deploy what is already the world's largest virtual evolved packet core [EPC] network. "Virtual EPCs allow carriers to customize networks to meet unique customer requirements. Virtual EPCs also help carriers reduce their reliance on special-

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ized hardware that can frustrate scale efficiencies and constrain real-time responses,” Cisco govt affairs vp *Jeffrey Campbell* wrote to the FCC last week. “Realizing the power of disaggregated network functions through much more extensive deployment and use of virtual EPC represents an important, if easily overlooked, element of the merger-specific synergies that the merger of T-Mobile and Sprint can realize.” Meanwhile, the FCC has extended the deadline for third parties to comment on the deal from Tuesday to Oct 31 to give them time to review and comment on recently submitted materials.

The Fox Meets The Mouse: The final preparations are being made for the integration of **21st Century Fox** assets as **Disney** revealed a new organizational structure for its Media Networks segment. The restructure will see several 21CF execs assuming leadership roles at Disney. *Peter Rice* will be named chmn, Walt Disney Television and co-chair, Disney Media Networks. Rice, who will report directly to Disney chmn/CEO *Bob Iger*, currently serves as pres of 21CF and chmn/CEO of **FNG**. Disney-ABC chief *Ben Sherwood*, as reports signaled last month, will leave once the deal closes. *Dana Walden* will assume the role of chmn, Disney Television Studios and **ABC Entertainment**, reporting to Rice. Walden serves as chmn/CEO of **Fox Television Group**. *John Landgraf* will be named chmn of **FX Networks** and **FX Productions**. He has served as CEO of the two entities since 2013. *Gary Knell* will also rise to chmn of **National Geographic Partners**. Knell currently acts as CEO. **Nat Geo Global Networks** CEO *Courteney Monroe* wasn't mentioned in the announcement, but is expected to stay on after the deal closes. At the same time, the company to be spun-off from the merger, “New Fox,” is continuing to fill its key exec roles as *Danny O'Brien* has been elevated to evp, head of government relations while *Hope Hicks* will become evp, chief communications officer. The appointments will take place at the closure of the Disney transaction. O'Brien will join the company from **GE**, where he serves as a senior government affairs and policy exec. Hicks most recently acted as White House communications director and director of strategic communications for *President Donald Trump* before resigning in February

Home Sweet Home: **Netflix** picked Albuquerque, NM, as the location of its new US production hub and is also in the final negotiations to purchase **ABQ Studios**. If the deal closes, Netflix plans to bring \$1bln in production to the state over the next ten years while creating up to 1K production jobs a year. This marks the first time Netflix has purchased a production studio complex

Play Ball: Sunday's NLDS Game 3 telecast (**Brewers-Rockies**) drew 2mln viewers and a peak audience of 2.4mln, making it **MLB Network's** 4th best MLB game telecast ever. In the local market of Milwaukee, the game delivered

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a 22.5 local market rating—the best local rating for any market in network history. The **Braves at Dodgers** NLDS Game One telecast on Thursday drew 2.1m viewers & a peak audience of 2.5m, marking MLB Network's 3rd-best MLB game telecast ever. -- **MLB** viewership on **ESPN** is up from 2017, according to **Nielsen**. The net finished the season with an average of 1.074m views across its 94 broadcasts, including the National League Wild Card broadcast. This is up 2% from 2016.

5G Storytelling: The **Independent Filmmaker's Project** (IFP) partnered with **Verizon's** entertainment studio **RYOT** to launch an initiative focused on storytelling forms developed for the 5G mobile network. IFP and RYOT will host a public discussion on Oct 18 at the Made in NY Media Center to demonstrate the tech and concepts that can be used to develop stories over 5G. RYOT recently announced it is opening a new production facility in Playa Vista to serve as a hub for experimentation in new storytelling forms on the 5G Network. Submissions for the initiative will be accepted by IFP beginning Wednesday through Nov 16. Ten projects will be selected to take place in a lab intensive later this fall, and three final projects will be invited to further develop and produce their projects.

Beyond The Strip: **AT&T SportsNet** came to an agreement with **DISH** to carry Vegas Golden Knights live regular season games, pre- and post-game shows in Nevada, parts of California and Mohave County, Arizona. The deal is the latest for the AT&T SportsNet RSN, which reached a deal with **Cox Communications** just prior to the Vegas Golden Knights' first game last October.

Cracking The Cloud: Launching Monday was the **Netcracker** Business Cloud, a new solution from the company that aims to eliminate the barriers that service providers typically face when deploying cloud-based applications and virtual connectivity services. While the typical deployment of an internally-built cloud can take one to two years, Netcracker claims that deploying on its Business Cloud can be eight times faster than self deployment, with a service launch occurring in eight weeks. It's the industry's first end-to-end, cloud-based SDN/NFV and IT solution. The Netcracker Business Cloud offers deployment flexibility using Netcracker's cloud or a multi-cloud environment with a service provider's private and public clouds, with Netcracker taking responsibility for the end-to-end service.

Silver Fox: **Paramount TV** signed a two-year first-look deal with *George Clooney* and *Grant Heslov's* **Smokehouse Pictures**. The deal includes all TV, digital and episodic projects from Smokehouse, excluding features. The two companies are currently in post-production of "Catch-22" for **Hulu**, a six-part series based on *Joseph Heller's* novel.

News Portal: **Newsy** scored the claim of being the first news brand on **Facebook's** new video calling devices for the home, **Portal** and **Portal+**. The voice-controlled tech is optimized for video calling with tablet-sized screens, and Facebook claims the Portal tech makes it easier to connect. With Newsy, Portal users will be able to stay up to date on breaking news. When a user opens the Newsy app, Portal will open a video news reel covering recent top stories from the US and around the globe. Newsy describes itself as the leading cable and OTT net for millennials.

News Ratings: **Fox News** handily topped **CNN** (1.2m viewers) and **MSNBC** (914K viewers) combined for coverage of the *Kavanaugh* vote on Saturday. The net had its highest-rated total viewership in total day since coverage of Hurricane Katrina on Sept 3, 2005. It averaged 4.3m in total viewers from 3pm-5pm ET, according to early **Nielsen** media research.

Programming: **Sundance Now** and **Shudder**, two of **AMC Networks'** streaming services, announced the entire season of "A Discovery of Witches" will premiere on both platforms on Jan 17. The drama stars Emmy-nominated *Matthew Goode*, *Teresa Palmer*, *Alex Kingston*, *Valarie Pettiford* and *Owen Teale*. -- **TNT** greenlit "Raised by Wolves," a sci-fi series from *Ridley Scott*, which is also his television directorial debut. -- **Disney Channel** and **DisneyMusicVEVO** debuted "Legendary," a music video in support of the **UN's** International Day of the Girl, on Monday. The video features 17 young actresses from Disney Channel's series and movies.

People: **OWN** president *Erik Logan* will be leaving the company for a position at with the **World Surf League**. The net named *Tina Perry*, current evp, business and legal affairs as gm, effective January 2019. Logan will remain on for the coming months and oversee the transition. Logan served as pres for seven years, and Perry currently serves as a board member of OWN. -- **Twentieth Century Fox Television Distribution** promoted *Chris Bettes* to svp, brand marketing & creative. Bettes has been with the company since 1999 and held nine titles, including executive creative director and vp, creative. He currently serves as co-chair of Fox Pride, the company's LGBTQ colleague network resource group. -- **Vast Broadband** announced that *Chris Karn* will join the company as regional director of operations. He comes over from **Pinpoint Holdings** where he served as COO.