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What the Industry Reads First

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Feeling Fine: Altice USA Isn't Sweating Verizon 5G Rollouts

Add **Altice USA** Dexter Goei to the list of cable CEOs throwing water on 5G's competitive threat. "When you look at 5G, including what other wireless operators are talking about here in the US and across other nations that are developing 5G, it's clear that what **Verizon** is currently launching is not a standard product today and it is not necessarily a commercially viable product going forward as it's on nonstandard equipment, and really in a testing phase today," Goei told reporters Monday in a call on the company's 3Q earnings. From a commercial standpoint, it's a discussion that's a few years out, he said, pointing to news that **Apple** expects to have its first 5G iPhone ready in 2020. Even then, "we don't see a substitution of our fixed line product coming from 5G," Goei said. "Today, we continue to see a tremendous uptake of higher broadband speeds today—80% of our gross adds take 200Mbps or more. The growth of our usage of data...is growing at a 25% clip, and we're seeing the top 10% of our subscribers taking about 1 terabyte of data download space." Altice USA just soft launched its fiber network in Long Island, delivering 1 gig symmetrical speeds, with the FTTH plant giving it a path to 10-gig speeds. Verizon has launched 5G in four US markets—none in Altice USA's footprint, even though the telco does offer **Fios** in its **Optimum** service area. Goei doesn't expect 5G to come to the NY-NJ-CT area, believing it would be even more uneconomical for Verizon to bring 5G to **Suddenlink's** footprint, which is comprised of small communities. "From our standpoint, we are somewhat isolated from this whole discussion," he said. The Altice chief continued to tout the advantages of the company's full MVNO partnership with **Sprint**, which he said gives the company a path to spectrum strategy (its currently testing CBRS spectrum) "whereas light MVNOs would have to completely switch strategies and build their own mobile infrastructure if they want to do this." It still plans to launch mobile in the first half of 2019. Altice delivered improved customer trends YOY, with total unique customer relationships net losses of 5K vs 8K a year ago. Pay TV saw a quarterly loss of 28K, better than last year's 33K. Suddenlink was lauded for the gains, with video losses down to -7K from -14K in Q317. It marks the third consecutive quarter of YOY improvements in video. Broadband net adds of 14K were in line with the year ago period's 16K gain. Revenue was up 4% YOY to \$2.42bln, with the company targeting up to \$500mln in share repurchases in the second half of 2018 (it had \$241mln in 3Q). Adjusted EBITDA grew 5.8% YOY to \$1.07bln, while FCF was up 28% YOY to \$276mln. As for Altice USA's recent decision to leave the **NCTA**, Goei said it was

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a decision related to the “mix of participants” in the trade group. NCTA “probably has way too many conflicts of interests than they don’t,” he said. “As you think about how dynamic this industry is, and how it’s becoming more and more dynamic with the convergence of telecom, content and technology, it’s very difficult to sit around the table with a lot of brethren we have commonality with, but also many others which we might not have as much commonality with.” He noted there are some extremely talented people at NCTA who do a very good job lobbying for industry, but ultimately, “the scope of what they push and lobby for... is becoming more narrow relative to our personal interest as Altice USA.”

High Court Toss Up: Whether or not the **US Supreme Court’s** decision not to review the now moot 2015 **FCC** net neutrality order is significant or not all depends on where you fall in the debate... Those happy with the current **FCC** Restoring Internet Freedom order, which overturned 2015’s rules establishing a Title II framework for ISPs, see it as simply procedural. That’s because there is already a legal challenge of the 2017 **FCC** rules winding its way through the legal system. “Once the current **FCC** repealed the 2015 Order, almost all parties—including **NCTA**—agreed that the case was moot. Today’s decision is not an indication of the Court’s views on the merits but simply reflects the fact that there was nothing left for the Court to rule on,” said **NCTA**, one of the parties who challenged the 2015 rules. Proponents of a Title II approach believe there’s more to it—arguing the move keeps the 2015 rules in the record and helps set precedent. “This means that the previous decision is binding on the current **FCC**, and on the DC Circuit panel that hears the current challenge. Much of the current **FCC**’s argument depends on ignoring or contradicting the DC Circuit’s earlier findings, but now that these are firmly established as binding law, the Pai **FCC**’s case is on even weaker ground than before,” said **Public Knowledge**. **FCC** commish *Jessica Rosenworcel*, who voted against the 2017 rules, tweeted along those lines Monday: “It wasn’t enough for this **FCC** to roll back #NetNeutrality. It actually petitioned the Supreme Court to erase history and wipe out an earlier decision upholding open internet policies. But today the Supreme Court refused to do so.” The SCOTUS decision was 4-3.

Change of Title: **AMC Networks** is shaking things up, introducing a new management structure for its networks as well as three key promotions. *Sarah Barnett*, current pres/gm of **BBC America**, will become pres, entertainment networks for the company. Barnett, a 2018 **Cablefax** TV Hall of Fame inductee, will oversee **AMC**, **BBC America**, **Sundance TV**, **IFC** and SVOD service **AMC Premiere**. Barnett will continue to report to **AMC Networks** COO *Ed Carroll*. She’s achieved strong growth and seen major success with “Killing Eve” and “Orphan Black” both receiving Emmy nominations. *David Madden*, the current president of programming for **AMC**, **Sundance TV** and **AMC Studios**, is adding **BBC America** and **IFC** programming to his list of responsibilities. He’s becoming president of programming, report-



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ing to Barnett. Madden joined AMC Networks a year ago after spending two decades at **Fox**. *Linda Schupack*, evp of marketing for AMC and SundanceTV, is rising to president of marketing, entertainment networks. She gains oversight over all marketing functions for AMC, BBC America, SundanceTV and IFC. She'll also report to Barnett. Schupack has expanded AMC's audience through her marketing leadership across "Mad Men," "Breaking Bad," "Better Call Saul" and more. Lifestyle network **WE tv** will continue to be managed by *Marc Juris*, reporting to Carroll.

Three For 5G: Verizon's putting many of its eggs into the 5G basket, revealing a new operating structure focused on three areas: consumer, business and Verizon Media Group/**Oath**. The changes, effective Jan 1, is meant to reflect a clear strategy that starts with Verizon customers as it builds on its network transformation efforts and the Intelligent Edge architecture, according to CEO *Hans Vestberg*. The Verizon Consumer Group, led by evp/president of Verizon Wireless *Ronan Dunne*, will include the wireless and wireline businesses. *Tami Erwin*, evp of wireless operations, will lead the Verizon Business Group, including the wireless and wireline enterprise, small and medium business, government businesses and Verizon Connect. Oath CEO *Guru Gowrappan* will head the final group. Verizon's Global Network & Technology organization, guided by chief network operations officer/CTO *Kyle Malady*, will support all functions. -- Verizon CEO Hans Vestberg is set to deliver a keynote address at **CES 2019**. He'll take a deep dive into 5G and its impact in areas like smart cities and education.

Smaller MVPD Relief: The **FCC** Media Bureau issued two narrow waivers to an upcoming Dec 20 deadline for making user interfaces and video programming guides and menus accessible on TVs, set-tops and other devices under the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010. Larger MVPDs already have had to meet these deadlines, but MVPDs with 400K or fewer subs as of year-end 2012 and systems with 20K or fewer subs not affiliated with an op serving more than 10% of all MVPD subs were given a two-year deference. The Bureau said that most entities are expected to meet the deadline, but it granted waivers requested by **ACA** for a narrow subset that won't—small/mid-sized MVPDs who use QAM as they apply to the systems two-way offerings like VOD and small cable systems that offer any video in only analog or do not offer broadband to their residential video subs. "The Media Bureau action is very welcome news for small and medium-sized systems that would have incurred costs of at least \$100K per system to comply, absent the waivers, because the market did not develop as the FCC had expected five years ago," ACA chief *Matt Polka* said. "In some cases, these costs would have forced companies out of business, which would provide no benefit to their blind and visually impaired customers. In other cases, these costs would have significantly driven up all customers' monthly rates."

Robocall Battles: **FCC** chmn *Ajit Pai* demanded the industry adopt a call authentication system to combat illegal caller ID spoofing, to be implemented next year. Pai sent letters to phone providers, including **AT&T, Charter, Comcast, Cox, Sprint, T-Mobile, Google** and others. He said in particular those that have not yet established plans to protect customers under the SHAKEN/STIR framework need to do so without delay.

Walking Wounded: Spoilers ahead! After Sunday night's departure of *Andrew Lincoln* from **AMC's** "The Walking Dead," fans were mourning the loss of Rick Grimes after he appeared to be mortally wounded. AMC announced the first projects in development from CCO *Scott M. Gimple* for The Walking Dead universe, including original films starring Lincoln as Grimes. The first film will begin production as early as next year, along with additional content including specials, series and digital content.

Ratings: **Freeform's** decision to expand its Halloween programming through the entire month of October proved successful as the net experienced its most-watched October in 3 years with 744K total viewers. It was the No 1 cable network during the month with W18-34 (134K) and F12-34 (162K), moving up from No 2 and No 4, respectively, last year.

People: *Holly Tang* was boosted to CFO, **Bravo, Oxygen, Universal Kids** and head of production operations, Lifestyle Networks (Bravo, Oxygen, Universal Kids and **E!**). Tang first joined Bravo eight years ago after serving as director of finance at **Comedy Central**. She's also held production and operations roles at **VH1** and **Nickelodeon Digital**.

Obituary: Former **DISH** CEO *Joe Clayton* passed away on Saturday after a brief illness. He was 69. His professional life was full of success, as he helped launch **DirecTV** in 1994. After serving as CEO of **Sirius Satellite Radio** from 2001-04 and as chmn from 2004-08, Joe came to DISH in June of 2011. He served as pres/CEO until his retirement in March 2015. Clayton headed the company as it launched **Sling TV** as well as the Hopper DVR. "Joe was a man of passion and vision whose influence on our industry is remarkable in its breadth and depth. As a master marketer, his brands, including **RCA**, DirecTV, Sirius Satellite Radio and DISH, were welcomed into tens of millions of American homes," DISH founder/chmn *Charlie Ergen* said in a statement. "As importantly, he mentored and influenced generations of leaders across our industry, including me. I am grateful for Joe's leadership, his friendship and his generosity."



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