

Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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Case Study: Meet Mediacom's Virtual Assistant Molli

You may have spoken with Alexa and chatted up Siri, but have you met Molli? **Mediacom** is hoping its recently launched virtual assistant will become a household name with its customer base. Molli (CSRs helped the company settle on her moniker) is currently available via SMS text, but headed to chat soon. And the MSO hopes that's just the beginning. "We're going to start to look at social channels and other channels" for Molli, said *Tapan Dandnaik*, Mediacom's svp, customer service & financial operations. Down the road, Molli could be integrated with **Facebook**, **Google Home**, **Amazon Alexa** etc. For example, a customer might ask Alexa why their Mediacom service was out, which would prompt Alexa to launch Molli. Molli could do a check of the home connection and set up a service visit if necessary. Mediacom is relying on **Twilio** to power the contact center platform. That's the same SMS communications engine used by ride-sharing service **Lyft**, **Airbnb** and many others. Right now, customers can text Molli for info such as their account balance, WiFi password and service outages. If she can't help, she will connect a customer to a service rep. Why start a virtual assistant off in SMS? It fits with Mediacom's mission to enable customers to self-assist (reducing call volume and truck rolls), while at the same time appealing to a large segment of the population. **Gallup Poll** has said sending and receiving texts is the most prevalent form of communication for adults under 50. "The biggest thing for a virtual assistant to work is it's got to be good at intent recognition," said *Jonathan Coscia*, Mediacom's group vp, customer service. "When someone messages Molli, they might ask a question a hundred different ways. Recognizing the intent has come a long way with messaging technology." Eventually, the team would like Molli to use machine learning to take on tasks such as automating a customer credit when the right criteria is matched. Could a customer someday ask Molli what channel **ESPN** is on or how to watch the Oscars? "Absolutely. The goal for us is if an agent can answer the question, can we get Molli to answer the question," Dandnaik said. To do all this, Mediacom had to overhaul its customer service layer. As customer service agents' jobs became more complicated over the years, they had to launch a host of different programs and systems to help a subscriber solve an issue. So Mediacom, with the help of **Adrenaline Technologies**, built a common interface so that all the different systems were housed in one place. "We integrated the service layer with the billing system, with the OS system, with the outage management

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system, with the provisioning system,” Coscia explained. And in the end, when the team looked at this new, comprehensive dashboard, they realized it shouldn’t just be at the agent’s fingertips. Instead, Mediacom decided to put the agent and the customer on the same side—giving them both access to the same account dashboard. One of the key components of the service layer overhaul has been that no matter how a customer interacts with the company—via the web, mobile app, text messaging—the system will provide the same answers, same capabilities. “The goal is to provide easy access to Mediacom,” Dandnaik said—and that started before Molli was even introduced, with 14 live agents replying to SMS messages. “We’re trying to be as dynamic and modern as the big tech guys.”

Fond Farewell: What a difference a day makes. Less than 24 hours after reports broke of **Turner** CEO *David Levy* leaving the company after 32 years, an internal memo has offered some clarity around the circumstances behind the move. “I have spent a considerable amount of time during the past few months discussing the future landscape and vision of the company with *John Stankey* and the senior leadership team,” Levy wrote. “I am ready for a professional change.” No specifics on where we’ll see Levy next or hints of what’s to come were included in the memo, although he’ll likely remain close to the world of sports. Instead, he used the memo to express gratitude and appreciation for everyone who had supported him since he arrived as a 24-year-old, sharing memories of *Ted Turner* joining in on sales calls. “To me, what makes Turner special are the people, past and present, who have shaped our culture,” Levy wrote. “It’s what sets this company apart.” Levy’s memo comes a day after **HBO** CEO *Richard Plepler* announced his resignation, and two days after **AT&T’s** merger with **Time Warner** cleared a major legal hurdle.

Out of Beta: **CNN** became the first media brand to move beyond the **Comscore** Campaign Ratings (CCR) beta program. CNN will now add the cross-platform video advertising solution to its measurement capabilities available to marketers. Comscore launched the CCR beta program in September 2018 in partnership with ten media brands.

Shentel Buys: **Shenandoah Telecommunications Company (Shentel)** closed a transaction to purchase the assets of **Big Sandy Broadband** in Eastern Kentucky, adding approximately 4.7K RGUs to Shentel’s cable segment.

Football Season: If there’s one thing the Raiders won’t have to worry about when they relocate to a new Las Vegas Stadium in 2020, it’ll be connectivity. **Cox Communications** will be a founding partner of Las Vegas Stadium for the **NFL** team, providing multiple gig-speed bandwidth to fans and stadium operations. Cox will also power interactive technology activations for fans during every home game and is an official video television provider of Las Vegas Stadium. As a founding partner, Cox will sponsor an annual program championing entrepreneurship and innovation as

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Questions:

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well as a media studio at the Raiders practice facility in Henderson, Nevada.

Altice Ads: Altice USA's advanced advertising business **a4** is launching a national, cross-screen OTT solution to help advertisers looking to reach highly targeted audiences in streaming environments and through connected TVs. This is the first addressable OTT/CTV ad product at a household level with national reach that is powered by fully authenticated household data.

Programming: ESPN is launching a weekday news show focused on sports wagering. "Daily Wager" will be hosted by ESPN sports betting analyst *Doug Kezirian* at 6pm and will stream live on the ESPN app. -- **Oxygen** is debuting a two-hour special "Uncovered: The Cult of Yahweh Ben Yahweh" on March 10 at 7pm. The doc examines how *Yahweh Ben Yahweh* manipulated thousands in Miami. -- "According to Jim" is premiering March 4 at 5pm on **Laff**. *Jim Belushi* stars as a suburban Chicago father. -- Adventurer *Josh Gates* returns to **Travel Channel** with the season premiere of "Legendary Locations" April 2 at 10pm.

Oops: In the item "Newsday Wednesday" (3/1), **MSNBC** should have been listed as the top cable news net for coverage of *Michael Cohen's* testimony on Wednesday, with its 2.87mln total viewer delivery for 10am-2:30pm topping **Fox News'** 2.29mln.

Cablefax Dashboard

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Jim Cantore showed up, the weather isn't changing just the excitement of the industry evolving #WEC19 thanks @NCTCtweets for a spectacular event.



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Research

- > In a survey of more than 100 global telecom operators, 88% are planning to deploy 5G in 2021-2022.
- > More than 90% believe 5G will result in higher energy costs and are looking into technologies to improve efficiency,
- > Vertiv has found that the move to 5G will likely increase total network energy consumption by 150-170% by 2026.
- > 47% of operators plan to deploy multi-access edge computing in the age of 5G.

(Source: [Vertiv](#))

Up Ahead

March 7-8: MFM CFO Summit; Fort Lauderdale

March 8-17: SXSW; Austin, TX

March 19-21: ACA Summit; DC

March 27: T. Howard Foundation Diversity Awards Dinner; NYC

April 3-4: CableLabs European Conference 2019; London

April 4-7: SkiTam Adaptive Spirit; Vail, Colorado

Quotable

"Our thinking going in is that we have an awful lot of content. Some of it will monetize best being on an advertising platform, others will monetize best being on a third-party platform. We're very much focused on not just, as others have said, going completely cold turkey and taking it off all these other platforms. I don't think that's our mindset at the moment. We like those relationships."

– **Comcast CEO Brian Roberts** talking the launch of NBCU's upcoming ad-supported streaming service at Morgan Stanley's Technology, Media & Telecom Conference.

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