

Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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Another Round: TiVo Files Another Patent Complaint Against Comcast

The battle between **Comcast** and **Rovi**, a **TiVo**-owned company, flared up again Monday with the latter bringing a patent infringement complaint against Comcast's cloud and multi-room DVR features. The complaint, filed in the US District Court for the Central District of California, covers the features offered by DVR and non-DVR set-top boxes as well as broadband gateways. "Litigation is always a last resort but we will continue to take every necessary legal action to ensure that Comcast fairly compensates Rovi for its use of our patented innovations," Rovi evp/chief intellectual property officer *Arvin Patel* said in a statement. "We have a responsibility to our stakeholders, licensees and customers to protect our intellectual property." Rovi also said that it was optimistic that Comcast would pay the "appropriate licensing fees to ensure their customers receive the best home entertainment services and features available." Rovi didn't reveal the patent numbers in question. Said Comcast in a statement: "Rovi has in recent years deployed its increasingly obsolete patent portfolio in an unsuccessful litigation campaign seeking to charge Comcast and our customers for technology that Rovi did not invent." Comcast also said that while it hasn't had an opportunity to review Rovi's latest claims, "we will continue to defend ourselves against allegations we determine to be meritless." TiVo hasn't been shy in discussing the ongoing litigation. It all began when Comcast stopped paying licensing fees to TiVo in 2016. Since then, Rovi has asserted infringement of 15 patents in an effort to convince Comcast to reach a new licensing agreement. According to Comcast, 14 of those have been held to invalid and/or not infringed by Comcast, or have been withdrawn by Rovi. At the same time, prior rulings have prompted Comcast to remove features such as DVR scheduling through its smartphone app. Comcast has also been subject to an exclusion order after the ITC found it had infringed Rovi's IP. "TiVo is fully committed to protecting its intellectual property from unauthorized use and we expect Comcast will ultimately pay a license for our innovations, just as its Pay TV peer companies do and Comcast did in the past," *Raghu Rau*, interim pres/CEO said on the company's 3Q18 earnings call.

Save the Earth: Happy Earth Day! Programmers and operators alike are celebrating Mother Earth, through programming and company initiatives. **Smithsonian Channel** made available a line-up of its nature programming featuring naturalist *David Attenborough*. Consumers can stream five programs hosted by Attenborough on the Smithsonian

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Channel app and website. Additionally, the net is offering an Earth Day promo. The service starts at \$4.99 a month, but new subs can get two months free through May 31. **Nat Geo** plans to premiere its jungle episode of “Hostile Planet” Monday night at 9pm. The fourth episode of the six-part docuseries dives into the wildlife of the tropical forests. Over at **Hallmark**, the net’s lifetime series “Home & Family” had an Earth-Day themed episode with segments including eco-friendly alternatives to everyday cleaning products, DIY instructions for making reusable snack bags, and a lesson on Composting 101. **Danny Seo** from “Naturally, Danny Seo” stopped by to discuss how to reduce food waste. On the SVOD side, **CuriosityStream** has a whole slate of programming going on. The streamer launched a new Earth Day collection, featuring programs like “Bag It,” a film that examines the impact of plastic, “Big Picture Earth,” a 4K feature diving into twenty of the world’s most beautiful locations, and “The Age of Big Cats,” a program exploring the seven big cats. Other titles include “Tales of Nature,” “Cities of the Sea,” “Wild Chile” and “Norwegian Fjords.” **Discovery** also got in the action, on **Facebook** streaming a live sunrise from the top of Mont Tremblant in Canada’s Laurentian Mountains. Over 73K people tuned in to watch the sun rise on Earth Day. On **Instagram**, the net is doing a T-shirt giveaway to celebrate those doing great things for the planet. In a post, the company asked users to tag their “Earth Day Hero” with the hashtag #EarthDaySweepstakes. Discovery also partnered with **The Nature Conservancy** for all of Earth Month on a #WinForEarth campaign. To participate, consumers snap a photo or video showing how they’re saving the planet and then post it with the #WinForEarth hashtag on Instagram or Facebook. The grand prize is a TNC Insider Experience in Mexico’s Yucatan Peninsula for the winner, plus+one and a Discovery prize pack. On the operator side, **Cox** is staying quite busy promoting its strategies and goals throughout the month, including a month-long Chairman’s challenge encouraging employees to submit ideas to help get to zero waste. So far, 189 ideas have been submitted, 1,194 individuals voted and 2,494 votes have been cast. Cox is also promoting a post and video featuring three questions to ask this Earth Day, with the goal to encourage people to help make an impact. Internally, Cox regions are incorporating environmental volunteer activities as part of its combined Volunteer Month/Earth Month through activities such as river/school/park cleanups, electronics/paint recycling and old logo’d uniform recycling.

Carbon Cox: On the heels of being honored by **Cablefax** as the industry’s “Environmental Hero” in our inaugural Work Culture magazine, **Cox Enterprises** heavily reduced its carbon, water and waste footprint while investing \$124mln in clean technology in 2018. The company released its 2018 Corporate Social Responsibility report, which showed it offset over 9K tons of carbon, saved 22.5mln gallons of water and reduced waste to landfill by almost 40K tons. Cox aims to send zero waste to landfill by 2024 and become water and carbon neutral by 2044. The report also announced that

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Cox's 55K employees engaged in over 217K eco-friendly actions throughout the year, including saving at least to 2.8mln gallons of water annually. The company invested more than \$124mln in clean technology through initiatives such as sustainable agriculture through **BrightFarms**, a startup that produces locally grown, packaged salads using 90% less water than traditional agriculture with 10x more yield per acre. Cox and **The James M. Cox Foundation** gave more than \$123mln to their communities through cash, in-kind and public service announcement donations, and the company provided more than 400K low-income people to internet through broadband access at a reduced rate. The company's volunteer program also clocked more than 47K hours of community volunteer service throughout the year.

Price Alert: Philo is about to get a little more expensive for new subscribers. Starting May 6, the company will only offer its \$20 per month package for new subs. Existing subs and those who sign up before May 6 will still have the same price packages and options, including the \$16 package offering 45 channels. Philo had not raised its prices since its launch 18 months ago. CEO *Andrew McCollum* said in a statement that costs of operating Philo have increased over time and consolidating into a single \$20 package was the best way for the streamer to maintain its same offerings without raising prices for all consumers.

E! Expands: E! is expanding its signature entertainment news and commentary with three additional hours of original content every weekday, beginning early 2020. The net named *Tammy Filler* as evp, editor-in-chief, E! News, to lead creative development, production for current franchises and new formats under the umbrella across all platforms. She spent 16 years at **NBC's** "Today," most recently serving as ep for the fourth hour and oversaw all program content and staff management. Filler will partner with *John Najarian*, who will serve as evp and publisher for the news and digital divisions.

Digital Puerto Rico: Univision is expanding its content offerings with the launch of "Edición Digital - Puerto Rico." The programming premiered Monday afternoon, and will offer hyper-local news, sports and weather to residents of Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans living in the US. The content will air 4pm-10pm on **Univision Puerto Rico, Univision WOLE, UnivisionPR.com** as well as Univision PR's **Facebook** and **YouTube** channels. The newscast will also air on Univision and **Univision UniMás** stations in cities across the country.

Cinelatino/DISH: DISH and publicly traded pure-play **Hemisphere Media Group** reached a multi-year carriage renewal agreement for **Cinelatino**. The Spanish-language movie channel contains the largest selection of Spanish-language hits and titles from Mexico, Latin America, Spain and the Caribbean. The channel is available on **DishLATINO** and **Sling TV's** "Best of Spanish TV" service in the US and Puerto Rico.

Jump Ball: CBS Sports and the **WNBA** signed a multi-year agreement, with the net televising 40 live games per season beginning May 25 when the **Minnesota Lynx** take on **Chicago Sky**. The games will be broadcast in prime-time and on weekends, and **ESPN, NBA TV** and **Twitter** will also continue to air the games.

On the Circuit: The Consumer Technology Association awarded *Reps Greg Walden* (R-OR) and *Stephanie Murphy* (D-FL) with 2019 Digital Patriots Awards. The annual awards go to elected officials who champion policies vital to innovation in consumer technology. As former chmn of the Energy and Commerce Committee, Walden helped ensure a transition to digital television and fought for the passage of the Permanent Internet Tax Freedom Act. Murphy is the leader of the **Blue Dog Coalition**, chair of **Future Forum** and a member of the **Problem Solvers Caucus**.

Programming: Smithsonian Channel is premiering "Private Lives of the Monarchs" on May 20 at 8pm. The five-part series dives into the history of some of the most iconic past rulers. -- Season 9 of "Cake Boss" kicks off on **Discovery** on May 18 at 9pm. *Buddy Valastro* and the gang will return with 30 new episodes. -- **Hallmark Movies & Mysteries** is bringing back the Hailey Dean franchise, with the premiere of three new installments of "Hailey Dean Mysteries." The films will premiere on consecutive Sunday nights beginning May 5 at 9pm. -- **A+E** will celebrate "Live PD's" 200th episode with 11 straight days of Live PD-themed programming. "The Ultimate Live PD Marathon" kicks off April 26 and will feature programming from the series and its spin-off "Live Rescue." The marathon runs through May 6, and the 200th episode premiered April 19. -- **HBO** officially ordered "Avenue 5" from "Veep" creator *Armando Iannucci*. The series is described as a futuristic space comedy set 40 years in the future. -- **Showtime** ordered a four-part docuseries diving into the history of the Los Angeles comedy club The Comedy Store, set for a 2020 premiere.

People: Facebook named *Jennifer Newstead* as the company's general counsel, overseeing its global legal functions. She takes over for *Colin Stretch*, who announced his departure in July 2018. He'll remain on throughout the summer to help with the transition. Newstead comes over from the US Department of State, where she serves as the legal adviser. The media company also tapped *John Pinette* as vp, global communications, taking over for *Caryn Marooney*. He most recently served as vp of marketing and communications, **Vulcan Inc**.

CFX TECH

Purpose First

Everyone wants to jump in on the latest technologies and trends, but sometimes it pays off to bide your time until you know exactly how to apply it to your business.

“Technology for technology’s sake doesn’t get you much,” **CSG** head of product management *Chad Dunavant* told **CFX**. “When you look at a technology, you have to apply it to something... blockchain is a cool technology and it has a lot of promise, but it wasn’t until we could tie it to a real business problem that we thought it would have market applicability.”

The company has just opened a technology lab dedicated to solving the industry’s challenges through the wider adoption of the blockchain. It’ll also explore new ways to leverage the technology and applying it to trading, routing, roaming, fraud and partner management.

“The reason we use labs is it helps kickstart a program,” Dunavant said. “We focus on new areas of development that may not be able to get done within the teams themselves.” CSG had heard from its customers for years that managing contracts using blockchain functionality could be a gamechanger, allowing for greater openness between the two parties.

Those customers include more than 300 operators and carriers worldwide, to which CSG offers end-to-end capabilities for wholesale carriers including buying, routing, pricing and deal management for bilateral and swap details. According to Dunavant, every one of CSG’s Tier I customers are looking at blockchain and investigating its capabilities.

“As we looked into it more, because it’s a distributive ledger, really open and allows folks to exchange information more freely... we looked at how that technology could have use cases that could be applied to specific product areas where we deliver value.”

CSG Interconnect focuses on how carriers manage and settle the intercarrier traffic that goes between their network. “What we see in the industry, specifically in that

Interconnect market, is a lot of complexity over the years because things are managed by people and not by technology,” Dunavant said.

With that growing complexity came the biggest problem for CSG’s customers: time. Discrepancies are more likely to be found on highly complicated contracts, especially when one CSG customer is potentially receiving invoices from 40 operators at the same time. Those discrepancies take extra time to iron out, and mean plenty more headaches for both sides.

“The blockchain takes away a lot of that discrepancy,” Dunavant said. “When we start to talk to customers about the power of blockchain when it’s tied to a specific problem or use case, there’s absolutely interest.”

The smart contract concept may not be as exciting as Bitcoin or some of the other places where blockchain technology has been implemented, but it’s one of the greatest areas of opportunity. The real estate industry has already adopted smart contracts, finding plenty of use cases in an area where not many are investing.

CSG is taking advantage of six different blockchains as part of its initial proof-of-concept in the lab to identify ways where it can streamline the settlement process. Each blockchain will be dedicated to a different part of the contract’s lifecycle. Should CSG find success with the blockchain, it’ll also look at applying it to other business areas such as payment.

It’s also looking beyond its customers, partnering with the **ITW** Global Leaders’ Forum as it examines how blockchain technology can be used across its constituents. With the findings from its lab, CSG is hoping to create standards for blockchain use across in the industry.

-- Sara Winegardner

[Editor’s Note: Blockchain is among topics we’ll tackle at the Cablefax Leaders Retreat next week in Key Largo, FL. For more info, go to www.cablefax.com/event/CLR19]

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