

Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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Smart Home: A Conversation with DISH's OnTech Smart Services GM

DISH kicked off Monday with the surprise news that it was launching a direct-to-consumer brand to provide professional installation of smart home devices, such as thermostats, doorbells and home WiFi networks. It's not totally new territory, with **DISH Smart Home Services** launching in 2011, initially to provide TV mounting and surround sound, but evolving as consumers' electronic needs grew. In fact, DISH ranked highest in the latest **J.D. Power** telecommunications in-home service technician study with a score of 889 compared to **Charter Spectrum's** 867 and **AT&T/DirectTV's** 865. DISH Smart Home Services will continue to exist and provide a fully branded installation offering to DISH customers, but OnTech is open to anyone in the 11 markets it's launching in. Most services, including smart thermostat installations and home audio installation, start at \$99.99. We caught up with Jeremy McCarty, vp, gm of OnTech Smart Services. McCarty has an extensive background in home installation, working with DISH for 9 years, but before that **Circuit City** and nationwide installation firm **Install It Today**. An excerpted interview follows. **How do you go beyond the DISH customer?** We're letting the world know we're doing this thing. There will be a whole host of ways we'll go to reach customers, including traditional marketing, non-traditional marketing and certainly working very closely with our partners. Your partners would be the companies you're working with on some of the products, like Nest? Correct. Google, Nest, Ring, Linksys, Polk, Klipsch and some others. **So, if you were to go through Linksys to buy something, it might offer installation through OnTech?** Not talking specifically about Linksys, but just in general, that is the concept. You could come directly to us as a consumer. And then there are companies that we think make a lot of sense to partner with OnTech that are looking for a J.D. Power-award winning technician in your home... whether you buy it from them directly or they send customers to us. **How did you pick these 11 markets?** It's a pretty significant investment on our end when we go into a market. It's not just about launching some paid search, and getting the word out of there. It's also about the investment you make in the vehicles, the tools and training for the technicians. We wanted to pick markets where we thought we'd be really successful in and also because they have a really high concentration of broadband. **Is there a timeline for expanding?** Our goal is to refine the process and service and make sure it's great, and as we go forward we'll look at other markets that make a lot of sense from an investor perspective. We'll go on a market-by-market basis. **Does DISH's construction of its own IoT-**

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focused network eventually come in to play here? You can sort of see a world where all these things come together, but today, I don't have a great story to give you on how these pieces come together in three years or two years or six months from now, whatever it might be. **It's interesting you mention broadband for these markets. Some cable providers, like Comcast, are doing some of this. DISH doesn't really have a broadband product.** There are some distinct advantages we have here. You don't have to be a subscriber to take advantage of these things. It's a flat rate, available to anyone. And when you look at the historical footprint of DISH—granted, we're starting in 11 markets, but at the end of the day, we're covering much larger areas than your traditional cable footprint would. We also know that same and next day service is really important, and we're committed to providing it. We're also not tied to a brick & mortar store. Lots of organizations provide service within a certain radius of a brick & mortar store, that's not really our model. **Are there any trends in the smart home space to watch?** I think there's a lot of power in controlling your home with your voice.

From Public to Private: Altice founder *Patrick Drahi* is stretching his entrepreneurial muscles yet again with **Sotheby's** announcing Monday that it has signed a merger agreement to be acquired by Drahi's **BidFair USA**. The deal, which was approved by Sotheby's board, will see shareholders receive \$57 in cash per share of Sotheby's common stock with the total cash transaction being valued at \$3.7bn. The deal will also see Sotheby's return to private ownership following 31 years as a publicly-traded company. The transaction is expected to close in 4Q19 following shareholder approval. There is no capital link with Altice Europe or Altice USA.

WarnerMedia Innovates: The **WarnerMedia** Innovation Lab is leaning into future tech, continuing to develop new technology and consumer facing products, services and experiences. The physical space in NYC will now be powered by **AT&T's** 5G network, making it one of AT&T's first permanent 5G experience centers. The Innovation Lab will be a new construction of 20K sq-ft in the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan, with an immersive zone for showcasing experiences, dedicated R&D environments and indoor and outdoor event spaces. The Lab will open its door to WarnerMedia cross-business unit teams and strategic partners in early 2020, and it will be also be backed by consumer insights and technology from **Xandr**. The Lab plans to unveil a new balance in the relationship between advertising, technology and content. The innovations will include MR/VR applications, 5G uses that enhance new advertising capabilities, and better UI/UX experiences to Make Advertising Matter. Architectural design firm **Design Republic** will begin working on the Lab's physical space in NYC this summer.

The Eyes Have It: **Comcast** introduced an eye control feature designed to give people with physical disabilities the ability to navigate their television using only their eyes. The X1 eye control is a web-based remote for tablets and

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computers that works together with an eye gaze system to allow viewers to change the channel, set a recording, search for a show and more. The feature is free for all customers. To access the feature, customers must visit xfin.tv/ access and use their credentials to pair the web-based remote with their set-top box.

Hospitality Suite: Many are gathering in Minneapolis this week for **HiTec**, the world's largest hospitality technology show. **Ruckus Networks**, part of **CommScope**, used the showcase to announce it has expanded its portfolio to include fiber-to-the-room. It's also teaming with several IoT vendors, including **ASSA**, **ABLOY Global Solutions**, **AVSystem**, **Kontakt.io**, **Qubercomm**, **Telkonet** and **TraknProtect**, to help hoteliers with a unified network infrastructure for services such as connected entry, safety buttons, energy management and location-based advertising. **Charter's** commercial unit **Spectrum Enterprise** is also on the ground at HiTec this week, touting how TV for hospitality can improve the guest experience. Spectrum Enterprise Fibert Connect Plus with Moviebeam features more than 250 hours of exclusive free **Showtime** content, the latest pay movies, free movies and a variety of programming packages. Other features includes custom content and the ability for guests to cast from personal devices to the hotel TV. It's an important segment, with *Hospitality Technology's* 2019 Lodging Technology Study finding that 42% of hotels plan to increase their tech budgets this year to upgrade guest WiFi, while 41% plan to upgrade or add smart TVs/streaming capabilities. Monday's breakout sessions included a look at how tech can improve the front desk experience. One firm hoping to help there **Broadband Hospitality**, which recently merged with **Allin Interactive**. It's offering a live video concierge capability for the DigiHD ITV and DigiMobile app for guest devices.

Say My Name: Ad-supported streamer **IMDb Freedive** is getting a new name ahead of a major expansion. Now known as **IMDb TV**, the service is tripling its content selection in the coming months and launching in Europe later this year. That extra content, which includes TV series and movies, comes courtesy of new deals with studios including **Warner Bros**, **Sony Pictures Entertainment** and **MGM Studios**. IMDb TV is available in the US on the IMDb website and as a few channel within the **Amazon Prime Video** app.

Carriage Notes: **RCN** began warning customers in the DC area that its agreement to carry **MASN** and **MASN2** expires on June 30. The RSNs are the home of **MLB's Nationals** and **Orioles**, with the teams part owners of the channels (the Orioles have a controlling stake). RCN said it will no longer carry the nets as of July 1, declaring that MASN is demanding forced carriage to those who choose not to subscribe to its programming. "Many customers have opted not to purchase full Signature TV with its 300+ channels including MASN. Programmers like MASN continue to offer restrictive carriage terms that drive TV costs higher for everyone—whether you watch it or not. That means everyone ultimately ends up paying for MASN whether or not customer subscribe to or no matter how many customers subscribe whether or watch MASN," RCN said on its website. **Afrotainment** and **NCTC** signed a multi-year agreement with NCTC, allowing all of the co-op's members to distribute **AFRO**. The deal will allow the 24-hour polycultural black network possible distribution by more than 750 small and mid-sized cable and broadband operators via an opt-in carriage agreement. AFRO will be available as a linear channel along with optional VOD library, TV Everywhere and OTT.

Ratings: **Fox Sports** delivered 5.408mln viewers across its television and streaming sources Sunday, as the US defeated Chile 3-0 in the FIFA Women's World Cup Group Stage. **Fox** broadcast averaged 5.324mln viewers, making it the most-watched FIFA Women's World Cup Group Stage match ever in the US. It was also the second-most streamed FIFA Women's World Cup match ever, with an average-minute audience of more than 84K. Fox Sports social platforms delivered their second-best day of the tournament with 7.2mln views, up +1,812% over the daily Group Stage average in 2015. -- **TV Land's** Season 6 premiere of "Younger" hit its highest-rated premiere yet in P25-54 (601K total viewers), pulling in 1.3mln total viewers. The debut was up 23% among total viewers and up 29% P25-54.

People: **Crown Media Family Networks** tapped *Liza Rodriguez Krontilik* as vp, ad sales marketing. She comes over from **Discovery**, where she served as director, ad sales marketing. -- The **XFL** named *Fred Harner* its svp, content and media. He will lead digital and social media initiatives for the league and work closely with broadcast partners **ESPN** and **Fox**. Harner comes over from **SportsNet New York**, where he served as vp/gm of digital media. -- *Johnita Due* has been named svp/chief diversity & inclusion officer for **WarnerMedia News & Sports**. Due served as **CNN's** chief diversity adviser from 2005-2013. In this new role, she'll work in partnership with CNN's vp, talent recruitment and development *Ramon Escobar* who has headed D&I efforts since 2017. -- *Elizabeth Asencio* has been named **Univision's** svp/head of distribution marketing. Asencio most recently served as head of content acquisition for **Atlantic Broadband** and previously spent 18 years at **NBCU**.

Editor's Note: Final **FAXIES** [deadline](#) is Friday, June 21. Make sure to enter your best people, shows and campaigns in PR, marketing and content. Winners will be celebrated at the FAXIES luncheon Oct 22 in NYC.

CFX TECH

21st Century Service

Customers aren't looking for the same-old, same-old in their service offerings anymore. With new technologies like VR and AR, service providers are working to find the best ways to offer their customers lower latency and access to these futuristic developments. With that area of opportunity, there's no better time than now to try and become one of the beloved tech vendors for providers big and small.

In comes **Broadband Success Partners**, a consultancy aiming to address the go-to-market needs of providers and their suppliers. Former **Cablevision** engineer *Jack Burton*, **Juniper Networks** veteran *David Strauss* and the most recent **Lightpath** svp, finance *Joe Caruso* work to bridge the gap between what a provider wants to deliver to its customers and the tech needed to power it all.

This trio is keeping a close watch on where operators are moving next, but one area that remains unclear is exactly how much MSOs are willing to invest to offer specialized services for high-power users. And while major players like **Cox** are piloting a gamer-specific option with promises of lower latency and faster speeds, it seems like the rest of the industry is taking a look-and-see approach before strengthening their tech teams.

"I haven't seen any kind of an increase in that space, at least as far as it comes to the staffing up of MSO tech forces or anything new from the vendors," Burton said.

"What Cox is doing may be an experiment that they're doing internally to see if a service like that may have some traction and then, of course, if it does, everyone else will jump on."

"When it comes to further segmentation and further targeting of particular sectors including gaming, as the MSOs mature in terms of their segmentation and targeting efforts, we're going to see more of that and customized offerings," Strauss added. "We're probably still in the beginning stages of that because if you look at the data, there's a long way to go to more fully penetrate the market overall."

CableLabs has been hard at work on low latency DOCSIS specs that could speed up investment in the space. "That's not out yet. Until it is, doing anything low-latency probably involves changing to a physical fiber-to-the-home or fiber-to-the-business architecture if you really want to reduce latency," Burton said. "I know that that's a priority at CableLabs because a low-latency DOCSIS spec is required to do 5G backhaul over DOCSIS."

And continuing with the subject of 5G, Burton reiterated that it is not a technology that is going to change the country so drastically that it could eliminate the need for in-home broadband. "On the 5G adaptations of what they're doing over current mobile frequencies, that's an evolutionary change that will provide some reduced latency, some increased speeds, but nothing revolutionary," Burton said. "They do have some building penetration... on the other hand, millimeter wave is a big change."

And while mmWave has been utilized in early deployments of 5G, perhaps its biggest barrier are barriers themselves. "They don't go through leaves, they don't go through walls, they barely go through windows. It's a very different type of technology. It can't be used for indoor coverage unless you put a 5G mmWave radio indoors. Not just indoors, but in the room you want coverage in," Burton explained. "But a 5G connection from a pole-mounted device to a home could be used to replace a cable drop and could deliver all of the same or even more and faster services than conventional cable today." That doesn't mean traditional service providers don't still have a place to benefit off the mmWave craze. Because mmWave goes such short distances, field-mounted radios will need to be everywhere in order for it to make a major impact. Those fiber radios need a fiber fronthaul, Burton said, and cable can offer that service if they have enough to do it. "Indications are that going to fiber-deep, cable operators could be building enough infrastructure to take care of that along the way," Burton said.

— Sara Winegardner

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