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What the Industry Reads First

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Happy Anniversary: 10G's Opportunity with 5G in 2020

Cable debuted the concept of 10G at CES 2019 and just one year later, it has made huge strides towards becoming a viable technology. In the last 12 months, DOCSIS 3.1 adoption has allowed operators to offer 1Gbps speeds to 80% of US households. New cable modems from vendors like **Arris** and **Cisco** have been certified as being capable of 5Gbps capacity and the DOCSIS 4.0 specification is set to be completed in early 2020. Operators have been investigating ways to lower latency as well as raise speeds for their customers. **CableLabs** svp/chief research and development officer **Mariam Sorond** told **CFX** that low-latency DOCSIS, a key aspect of DOCSIS 3.1, will continue to play an important role in DOCSIS 4.0. Also important to delivering the 10G vision will be its support for complementary technologies like Extended Spectrum DOCSIS and Full Duplex DOCSIS. "It gives the ability to have a common platform along with the optionality of picking one over the other," Sorond said. "It allows the market to diverge." The speed at which the cable industry has been able to develop 10G into a tangible platform has been a pleasant surprise for Sorond, who joined CableLabs in August after serving as chief wireless architect/vp, technology development for **DISH**. "I think just coming from an industry where it was very competitive... when you announce the concept... from the time to where it would be realized would be a much longer time," she said. Sorond is using her background in wireless to explore technologies outside of 10G that could also benefit CableLabs's operator partners. "Our role will also be, for example, looking at the mobile technologies and thinking about how do we make convergence happen between 10G and other technologies such as 5G," Sorond said. "I really do think that cable operators could play a significant role in the future of connectivity, not just DOCSIS or fiber or HFC networks. They have the assets to play a significant role into anything that even 5G has envisioned." That's partially because 5G was never designed to just be a mobile technology. It was envisioned to spark an overall paradigm shift in connectivity where you leverage anything and everything to meet latency, reliability and speed needs. "When this vision was created, I think it took a very broad brush against the future of connectivity. What it needs is a revolution in the connection," Sorond said, adding that speed concerns are driving wireless providers to grab for more spectrum wherever they can find it. "None of them have the architectures that actually enable a low-latency network or a high reliability network or a massive connectivity network that meets that 5G vision." She did acknowledge that DISH, which could become a wireless



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THE FINAL SEASON



TONIGHT 9/8c



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competitor should the merger between Sprint and T-Mobile be approved, could fill that gap, but it doesn't yet have any of the tools that cable operators do. "That doesn't preclude the cable operators from stepping into the paradigm shift and leveraging their HFC networks and their WiFi networks and the available spectrum that's out there to play a role in that paradigm shift." Much of the work on 10G and that convergence will be behind-the-scenes this year, so there's no need to be alarmed at its lack of a presence at this year's CES. Folks can expect an update at 4Front, Cablelabs's cross-industry conference making its debut this June. Sorond's focus there is on establishing connections between cable's best and the innovators that are paving the way forward in other industries. "I think cable is set up for disruption," Sorond said. "A lot of 2020 will be spent having these dialogues, bringing all of this together and doing a lot of work... understanding what the cable industry's needs are with respect to that and putting solutions in front of them to expand their market opportunity."

Retrans Round-Up: This past weekend was one of **NFL** playoff games, retrans blackouts and renewals. At 7pm ET Friday, **AT&T/DirecTV** lost **Hearst's** 34 stations in 26 markets, including Baltimore, Boston, Pittsburgh and Cincinnati. Around noon Sunday, the Hearst stations returned with a new multi-year deal signed. AT&T may not be out of the retrans woods yet. **Morgan Murphy Media** began messaging to **U-verse** customers in Wisconsin during Saturday's NFL playoffs. The deal for **WISC-CBS** in Madison expires at 8pm, Tuesday (Jan 7). "We are simply asking for a fair fee, just as we have with the agreements we have with all other cable and satellite systems," the broadcaster said. AT&T said it hopes to avoid any suspension. "We remain on the side of consumer choice and value, whereas Morgan Murphy is known to often withhold its stations to try to increase its fees for free broadcast TV." Meanwhile, **DISH** lost **Mission Broadcasting** stations in 18 markets at 7pm Friday. They remained dark on the satcaster's lineup at our deadline Monday. "DISH gave us no warning when it removed our stations," Mission Broadcasting pres *Dennis Thatcher* said in a statement. "We offered an extension, and DISH refused, even though the NFL Playoffs began on Saturday." DISH said it offered to extend the contract during negotiations and was refused—this has been the latest trend with negotiations, squabbling over who refused an extension. "Mission is using its own viewers as leverage as it demands higher monthly rates, interrupting programming as we head into the first weekend of NFL playoffs," DISH programming sap *Andy LeCuyer* said. **Verizon's** blackout with **Apollo-owned Cox Media Group** ended Saturday evening. The stations, which included **Fox** affils in Syracuse and Boston, went dark on Verizon Jan 1. Meanwhile, **Cox Media Group's Pittsburgh Cable News Channel (WPXI)** was removed from Comcast's lineup on Jan 1 and it doesn't sound like it plans to bring it back.

Comcast Heads to CES: **Comcast** is launching its next-gen xFi Advanced Gateway, the company's first device capable of delivering multi-gigabit speeds, in the coming months. The WiFi 6 certified gateway is designed for high-per-

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formance users and delivers lower latency for uses like online gaming, 4K video streaming and VR/AR experiences. The gateway will be available to customers that subscribe to Xfinity Internet speed tiers of 300Mbps or faster. -- Comcast's xFi Advanced Security feature is now free for all customers who lease an xFi gateway. Advanced Security automatically protects devices from online threats, blocking remote access to smart devices from unknown sources and preventing visits to malicious sites. New customers will receive Advanced Security immediately upon activating an xFi gateway and will begin rolling out to the 18mln existing eligible xFi customers in the next few weeks.

Amazon, HBO, Hulu Lead Golden Globes: The streamers came out strong, but premium net **HBO** took home the most Golden Globes Sunday night, followed by **Amazon Prime** and **Hulu**. HBO beat out all cable nets and streaming services with four wins from its 15 noms: two wins for "Succession" and two for "Chernobyl." **Netflix** had the most nominations with 17, but only won one (*Olivia Colman* for best actress in a TV drama series for "The Crown"). Amazon and Hulu were the only others to bring home more than one award, each taking two. Amazon's "Flea-bag" earned two, and Hulu's "Ramy" and "The Act" each had one. Others in the TV categories taking home honors include **FX** and **Showtime**. Broadcast nets may have been shut out of the Globes this year, but **NBCU** took the opportunity to tease upcoming streaming service **Peacock** during the telecast on its broadcast net. **NBC** ran three 15-second teaser ads during the Globes, and its social presence went live Sunday at @peacocktv. Still no word on content included or official launch date, but expect learn more details during Peacock's investor day Jan 16.

Tremor Boosts Video Ads: **Tremor International**, a video advertising tech firm, reached an agreement with *Rupert Murdoch*-owned **News Corp** to acquire **Unruly**, the company's programmatic video marketplace. News Corp is not getting any cash, but will receive 6.91% of London-listed Tremor International stock (about a \$25mln value, as of Monday). The deal is the start of a three-year partnership with News Corp which grants Tremor the exclusive right to sell outstream video on more than 50 News Corp titles in the US, UK and Australia. CEO of News Corp's News UK unit *Rebekah Brooks* will join the Tremor board, as will *Norman Johnston*, CEO of Unruly. News Corp will be subject to a lock-up period of 18 months and both parties agreed to spending 30mln pounds/\$39.25mln in ads over three years.

Project OAR Rolls out Updates: **Project OAR** announced a series of updates that the consortium says puts it on track to "complete the first critical stages of its mission." The **VIZIO**-run group, backed by top TV networks and operators, has begun implementing technical integrations with TV's major ad delivery and enablement engines **FreeWheel**, **Google Ad Manager**, **Xandr** and **INVIDI**. VIZIO has started pushing software and firmware updates to a footprint of over 13mln smart TVs across the US that enable frame-accurate dynamic ad insertion. Project OAR's measurement subgroup completed the technical specifications for measurement of dynamic inventory. Project OAR will demo the new DAI tech at CES 2020 by appointment only.

ViacomCBS Changes: *Kelly Day* is out at **Viacom Digital Studios**, according to a [report](#) from *Variety*. Day is in conversations with **ViacomCBS** about taking on another senior role at the company, but nothing has yet been finalized, the Hollywood trade reports. Day has been president of VDS since its creation over two years ago. *Stefanie Schwartz* is taking over, holding the title of evp, gm of Viacom Digital Studios. Schwartz most recently served as evp, strategy and operations for Viacom Digital Studios and digital partnerships at Viacom Media Network. The changes were announced Monday in an internal memo to staff.

R. Kelly Doc Boosts Hotline Calls: **RAINN** (the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network) reported a 40% increase to its national sexual assault hotline after **Lifetime** premiered "Surviving R. Kelly Part II: The Reckoning" over the weekend. The docuseries featured the non-profit's hotline number and RAINN's "Wait" PSA.

College Football Rights Have NFL Implications: **CBS** won't carry SEC football games after the \$55mln per year contract expires in 2023, according to *Sports Business Journal*. **ESPN/ABC** (which also operate the **SEC Network**) is reportedly expected to pay north of \$300mln/year for the rights, which strengthens the company's already powerful college football portfolio. In combination with ABC, ESPN will share rights for the Big 10, Big 12 and Pac 12 with owning rights to the ACC as well as a number of championship games across conferences. "Walking away from SEC likely helps [ViacomCBS] preserve balance sheet capacity to better compete for NFL rights which are much more important and likely to be negotiated in the coming year," **Barclays** said in a research note. The firm also noted that for new digital entrants, sports rights are about driving engagement with dependence on advertising. "**Disney/ESPN** is in a great position as the natural bridge between the new and the old as it can provide reach using ABC and ESPN but can also parse the demand curve more finely using specialized networks such as the SEC Network and streaming services like **ESPN+**. This process is likely to position Disney particularly well in upcoming contract negotiations and could create further risk for the likes of CBS during the upcoming NFL negotiations."