

# Cablefax Daily™

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What the Industry Reads First

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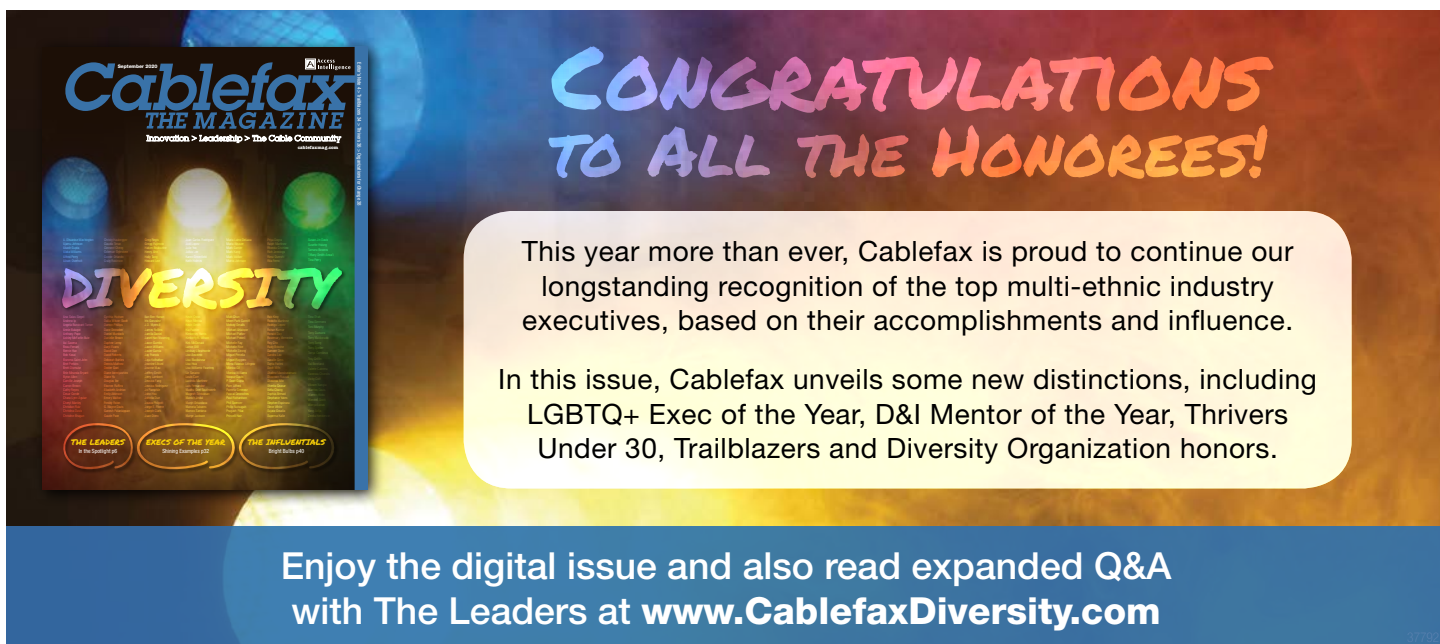
## On Deck: Preparing for Network Needs Post-COVID

Network operators have done well to manage the initial surges in traffic and changes in consumer trends tied to the COVID-19 pandemic, but it would be a mistake to expect everything to return to business as usual when a vaccine is developed. “This is a wake-up and we should take this opportunity to really say where do we go from here and how do we really make things better,” **CommScope** engineering fellow *John Ulm* said during a Wednesday **SCTE-ISBE** Cable-Tec Expo session. “This bandwidth surge has really changed how people behaved, so we don’t think we’re going to go back to the way we were pre-COVID. We’re going to have a new normal.”

**Comcast** vp, capacity engineering, next generation access network *Bruce Barker* said the MSO is already starting to see signs that higher levels of network traffic and potential for congestion are here to stay. “We have seen a resurgence in mostly upstream traffic recently, and for an obvious reason. School returned,” Barker said. “Fortunately, we’re nowhere near, in terms of utilization levels, where we were in April. We’ve built in a lot of capacity over the last 6 months, and it’s really holding pretty well.”

But that doesn’t mean operators should rest on their laurels. If they weren’t already doing it, all operators should begin crafting and integrating proactive capacity plans to ensure they’re ready for potential surges, according to Barker. “We normally do this anyway for long-term capacity growth, but it did work out in this case,” he said. “When we have a specific event like COVID-19, we’re able to absorb those increases in traffic that we saw fairly well in most of our sites.” Comcast’s proactive capacity plans account for predictive traffic forecasting, utilization thresholds, RF spectrum capabilities and site level capacity planning.

It’s hard to know what the new normal could look like when the world is only six months into it, but Comcast vp, network architecture *Robert Howald* shared his ideas on what’s to come in a later Expo session. His first take: a greater percentage of employees working-from-home is here to stay, especially as companies take another look at their often pricey leases for office space. “I don’t think anyone knows where that settles out, but I think there is a high likelihood that there will be a more acceptable work-from-home environment across the board in places where the job can do that,” he suggested.



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In this issue, Cablefax unveils some new distinctions, including LGBTQ+ Exec of the Year, D&I Mentor of the Year, Thrivers Under 30, Trailblazers and Diversity Organization honors.

Enjoy the digital issue and also read expanded Q&A with The Leaders at [www.CablefaxDiversity.com](http://www.CablefaxDiversity.com)

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In a similar vein, Howald also expects a lot of attention to be paid to improving the experiences of videoconferencing with providers introducing new options to create immersive work- and learn-from-home environments. “All of these tools have been really valuable obviously, but I think with a higher importance of them, you’ll see a lot of richness added to them, a lot of features added to them, which will transfer to networks and bandwidth, jitter and latency requirements,” Howald said.

He also suggested keeping an eye on the many non-essential businesses that rely on personnel in factories, warehouses and logistics centers. A large number of those industries are expected to invest in increased digitalization and automation of operations to limit the potential financial damage interruption of operations can cause. That reliance on IOT will place different sets of requirements on networks. “You wonder about what the pandemic will do about where businesses will spend their money to keep factories... and other facilities that they have not totally shut down and from taking such a financial hit,” Howald said.

**Peacock Top New Streamer in Q3:** NBCU’s streaming service **Peacock** added more new subs than any other VOD service in 3Q, according to research from **Kantar**. Peacock added 17.2% of total new subs in Q3 (its first full quarter after launch), compared to the 4.9% in its soft launch phase in Q2. **MoffettNathanson** maintained a “Buy” on Peacock-owner **Comcast**. No 2 in Q3 was **Amazon Prime Video**, adding 16%. **HBO Max** came in third with 11.3% of new subs (a gain from its prior 9.7%), then **Hulu** with 9.5%, followed by **Disney+** with 9.1%. **Netflix** had 8.3%, and **Apple TV+** 4.9%. As streaming increases, (MoffettNathanson said penetration has now hit 75% of US households), Kantar also found more evidence of “subscription switching,” meaning consumers add one service and cancel another. That number hit 10% of new subscription adds. MoffettNathanson stayed “Neutral” on Netflix and Disney, and maintains a “Sell” on HBO Max parent **AT&T**.

**Amazon Nabs NFL Playoff Game:** **Amazon** and the **NFL** struck a deal to stream a playoff game this season, first reported by the *WSJ*. The tech giant already has 11 Thursday Night Football games, and will now simulcast one of the new Wildcard round games on Jan 10. **CBS** and **NBC** already each got an extra playoff game in the expanded playoffs this year, and will share the broadcast with CBS (and **CBS All Access**) and a separately-produced broadcast by **Nickelodeon**.

**FCC, USAID Collaborate on 5G:** The **FCC** and the **US Agency for International Development** signed a memorandum of understanding to promote secure and open 5G networks in the developing world. The FCC and USAID will promote open, intolerable, reliable and secure internet and digital infrastructure and advance interagency coordi-

RESCHEDULED TO APRIL 29, 2021



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nation on network security in developing countries

**CuriosityStream to Trade on NASDAQ:** CuriosityStream is about to become the most distributed “pure play” video streaming service to be publicly listed, behind Netflix. CuriosityStream and **Software Acquisition Group** (a special purpose acquisition company) announced a closing of their business combination which will allow for CuriosityStream common stock to trade on the NASDAQ exchange, beginning Thursday, under the ticker symbol CURI. *John Hendricks* will remain chmn of the streamer, and it will continue to operate under the management of pres/CEO *Clint Stinchcomb*.

**Vendor Deals:** Comcast selected **CommScope**'s E6000r High Density Remote PHY Shelf for its efforts to build a more virtualized network leveraging distributed access architecture. CommScope accelerated the development of the HD Shelf to match Comcast's deployment schedule. -- **Midco** became the first **Cisco** customer to sign a cable software service provider network agreement (SPNA). The enterprise agreement will allow Midco's to scale higher connection speeds and deploy new services with greater velocity. It will also allow the company to accelerate the transition from legacy CMTS platforms to distributed access architecture and next-gen cloud technologies.

**iPhone 12 and 5G Arrive:** The next iteration of the iPhone has been announced, and providers are ready. **Charter's** Spectrum Mobile now has nationwide 5G coverage, available by the gig for \$15/gig or Unlimited for \$45/month for 20 GB or \$55/month for 30 GB. Spectrum is also offering the new iPhone 12 lineup, and customers that switch to Spectrum Mobile will get an extra \$100 when they trade-in a qualifying device and purchase the iPhone 12. **Comcast's** Xfinity Mobile also expanded its 5G coverage nationwide and is now available on all Xfinity Mobile data options, and can be accessed by all 5G-enabled devices. Customers can choose to pay for unlimited or by-the-gig data options (\$15/gig or \$45 unlimited). Comcast is offering the new lineup, with new customers getting \$250 off when they purchase an Apple device, and existing Xfinity customers can get a \$250 pre-paid card if they upgrade their Apple device.

**Vote or Die:** REVOLT relaunched *Sean Combs'* “VOTE or DIE!” initiative ahead of the general election on Nov 3. To jumpstart the campaign, the net hosted a town hall titled “State of Emergency: Election Day and Black America.” REVOLT is launching a campaign profiling artists, athletes and cultural leaders wearing the symbolic T-shirts, and will host weeks of content on its platform. On Thursday, there will be a special episode of REVOLT Black News that covers the “Our Black Party” town hall, and this year's REVOLT summit will include a workshop that equips the audience with tools needed to vote in this year's election. On Nov 1, there will be a virtual political pep rally and music festival taking place on **YouTube**.

**On the (Virtual) Circuit:** CTAM is launching a new virtual communications strategies series designed to inform, challenge and inspire mid-level communications professionals. The first session, titled “Transparency & Managing Crisis,” is free to CTAM members and kicks off on Oct 28 at 3pm.

**Ratings:** **Fox News** topped Day 2 of the Supreme Court confirmation hearings. On Tuesday from 9-5pm, Fox News saw 2.985mln viewers. **MSNBC** followed with 1.221mln, and **CNN** with 1.113mln.

**Programming:** **Showtime** is bringing everyone's favorite morally ambiguous serial killer back. “Dexter” will return in a 10-episode limited series bringing back together series star *Michael C. Hall* and showrunner *Clyde Phillips*. Production will begin early 2021 with a tentative fall 2021 premiere date.” -- **Amazon** ordered a YA horror series based on the 1997 film “I Know What You Did Last Summer.” -- **HBO** will debut documentary “The Soul of America” on Oct 27 at 9pm. The doc follows writer, journalist, historian and presidential biographer *Jon Meacham*. -- **HBO Max** picked up its creative competition series “Crafttopia” for a new season. The eight-episode second season will be called “Crafttopia: Holiday Showdown” and debut in 2021. -- **INSP** will kick off its holiday season programming with a double-feature of holiday specials “The Waltons: The Thanksgiving Story” and “The Waltons: The Homecoming: A Christmas Story” at 3 and 5pm on Nov 26, Thanksgiving Day.

**People:** **OZY Media** named Chris Rantamaki to the newly created position of head of TV. He most recently oversaw series at digital interactive content startup **Eko**, and held the role as svp, development & production at **Discovery**.

**Editor's Note:** With **SCTE-ISBE's** Cable-Tec Expo coming to a close today, our regular evening delivery of **Cablefax Daily** will resume tonight.

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## Think about that for a minute...

### The Clancy Swamp

Commentary by Steve Effros

Do you like Tom Clancy convoluted thrillers? Are you not yet sinking in the unbelievable swamp that Washington has become? Well, hang on for the ride. This one gets harder to stomach almost by the hour. It's difficult to summarize all the plot twists. If you're lucky enough to subscribe to Craig Moffett's material over at MoffettNathanson, be sure to check out the full story he just laid out. It makes Clancy sound uncreative.



The subject: a concerted effort, seemingly led or aided by a group including Brad Parscale, formerly the Trump Campaign Chairman, Karl Rove, Newt Gingrich and the reported involvement of Steve Bannon to promote a Department of Defense "owned" nationwide 5G network. The idea would be that the DOD would use "its" frequencies to create a wholesale network operated by an outside company which would manage the bandwidth use of, presumably, companies like AT&T, Verizon, etc.

This is a proposal to essentially nationalize an industry. The underlying premise for some is that it would be more efficient, and thereby help compete with the growing network being built by the Chinese. For others, it's an obvious way to make money without having to purchase the spectrum to build it. To me, this almost sounds like a repeat of the broadcast industry, which was allowed to use public spectrum which somehow morphed into that spectrum being "theirs."

A few simple facts; DOD does not "own" the government spectrum that is currently allocated to it. That spectrum, in theory at least, is under the supervision of the NTIA. Government spectrum cannot be used by private entities. The "public" spectrum is under the supervision of the FCC. The FCC has gone through all sorts of proceedings on the way to auctioning off spectrum to build 5G networks (in this

case some of the same spectrum that DOD plans to use for its "national" system) to private parties. The bottom line here is that two parts of this administration's government are in an incredible battle, with political heavy-hitters in the background having both financial interests in the outcome, and the apparent intention to circumvent the authority of the FCC to assign spectrum for public use.

The nationalization idea has been floating around for several years. It even shows up in the Republican party platform. The White House has both seemed to support the idea and oppose it, depending on the day, or maybe who talked to the administration last. There are strong supporters and opponents on both sides of the aisle on Capitol Hill.

We're in crazy season right now in Washington. Some would argue that it's always crazy season here, but at the end of a Congressional session, or potentially a change in administrations, things get really wild as "last minute" rush agendas take precedence. Unfortunately, that's usually the case with telecommunications issues. They always fester until the "last minute."

And so it is that you'll be reading a lot about DOD suddenly coming out with a "Request for Information," and then, we hear, a "Request for Proposal" within weeks of each other to build a nationalized 5G system with "their" spectrum as an end run around the FCC public spectrum auction plans which they've been working on for years! The full story, as I said, is far more sordid than I can summarize here, but you should watch this one closely. If successful, this DOD nationalization move could significantly change the way we think about all telecommunications infrastructure in this country in the future.

*Steve*

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*(Steve Effros was President of CATA for 23 years and is now an advisor and consultant to the cable industry. His views do not necessarily reflect the views of Cablefax.)*

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