

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## New Normal: Elder Believes Broadband Usage Numbers Will Stick

It's no secret that operators have seen broadband demand skyrocket in 2020, and it's still difficult to determine whether that growth trend was a long time coming or if it can all be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We are learning as we go right now," **WOW!** CEO *Teresa Elder* said at an investor conference Tuesday. "We're starting to see people move houses, which seemed delayed compared to previous years. Things are just happening on a different cycle from what we're used to."

Elder believes **WOW!**'s primary sub growth opportunities continue to be edge-outs and products like its Whole-Home WiFi. Since **WOW!** started the edge-out strategy four years ago, it has added just under 200K in new homes passed. **WOW!** has made a conscious effort this year to continue penetrating edge-out markets into which it has already built.

A major focus for CFO *John Rego* is to bring penetration numbers in those edge-out markets up to the average of the entire footprint and use that strategy to continue to de-lever the company. He gained more faith in that plan after news broke earlier this month that private equity firm **Stonepeak Infrastructure Partners** was to acquire **Astound Broadband** for \$8.1bln. "A big component of Astound was **RCN**, which is an overbuilder just like us. For that thing to go off at 12.5 times makes us take a serious look at maybe disparate markets within our network to say maybe there's an opportunity

to de-lever quicker, sooner, faster if there's an opportunity to do something like that," Rego said.

Looking at potential competitive threats across the marketplace, Elder said she's not particularly concerned about more fixed wireless providers like **Verizon** and **T-Mobile** entering the market. "The demand for bandwidth is greater than it's ever been, and I don't know that that's ever going to go back to pre-pandemic levels... that's where I feel that we're well positioned versus the wireless carriers," Elder, who spent half of her career in the wireless industry, said. "We have a network that is built out and able to meet this demand and also expand easily if we need to, whereas the other networks are just in the stages of being built out."

Turning to video, **WOW!** is still dedicated to offering services like its IP-based **WOW! tv+**, but it's also not offended if a customer wants to stick purely to streaming services. "When they call in and want their broadband connection, we talk to them and consult with them about their video choices. That may be matching them with the best streaming services that get the programming that they like the most or it could be our traditional, curated video service," Elder said. "We're okay with providing that."

And while SVOD and AVOD services like **Peacock** and **CBS All Access** could be seen as competitive to **WOW!**'s video offering, Elder said they do give the operator something of an opportunity when they enter into programming rate discussions.

"These mini streaming services really give us some bit of lever-



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\* STB measurement per a major MVPD across 70 markets, all day parts, for the two-week period of 10/26/20 through 11/08/20, excludes broadcasters.

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age against the extremely high programming costs. They're just going through the roof and we continue to do all we can to negotiate for the traditional programming services that we provide," she said. "They're still being as aggressive as ever. That's just the nature of programming costs, that they'll continue to go up."

#### NBCU CONTENT REORG

As part of ongoing changes at **NBCUniversal**, **Bill McGoldrick** is exiting as pres, original content, NBCU Entertainment Networks and DTC. In an internal memo to staff, McGoldrick wrote: "As we all know, the industry is changing rapidly and our company is transforming in ways that will undoubtedly allow it to continue to thrive, grow and succeed. That said, it has become clear that there simply isn't an appropriate role for me in the new structure." Chmn of entertainment content **Susan Rovner** announced her new senior leadership team Tuesday, with **Lisa Katz** upped to pres, scripted content. On the unscripted side, Rovner is breaking the team into two areas. **Rod Aissa** has been named evp, unscripted content, overseeing all unscripted lifestyle and doc programming. **Jenny Groom** was named evp, unscripted content, overseeing reality competition, talent competition and game shows across the portfolio. **Tracie Wilson** will continue to run NBCU's syndication programming as evp, syndication studios, and **Katie Hockmeyer** serves as evp, late night. **Jen Neal** is expanding her role to evp, live events, specials and **E! News**.

#### STEPHENS RETIRING FROM AT&T

**AT&T** CFO **John Stephens** plans to retire in March after 28 years with the company. He's served as CFO since 2011. **WarnerMedia** CFO **Pascal Desroches** will take on the role after Stephens' departure. During the transition period, Desroches

will serve as AT&T's senior evp of finance.

#### FCC MAKES LIFELINE CHANGES

The **FCC's** Wireline Competition Bureau ordered Monday that the minimum service standards for Lifeline recipients will increase from 3Gbps/month to 4.5Gbps/month on Dec 1. "We find that failing to provide low-income consumers a moderate increase in the mobile broadband usage minimum service standard at a time when broadband usage is growing more essential by the day risks inhibiting their participation in today's society and leaving them further behind," Wireline Competition Bureau chief **Kris Monteith** said in the order. Additionally, the Bureau extended waivers for certain Lifeline program rules through Feb 28 due to the ongoing pandemic. The waivers apply to rules governing documentation requirements for subscribers residing in rural areas on Tribal lands, recertification, reverification, general de-enrollment, subscriber usage and income documentation. **Public Knowledge** senior counsel **Jenna Leventoff** said the decisions send mixed messages to consumers. "Lifeline providers have already indicated they will charge Lifeline recipients an additional copay in order to offer 4.5 GB a month... By signing off on the increase to 4.5 GB per month without additional study, the Commission has completely disregarded the needs of these consumers," she said. "At the same time, the FCC also extended vital waivers to program rules, to help keep people connected during the pandemic. These two actions are inconsistent."

#### HOUSE REPUBLICANS HOLD LEADERSHIP ELECTIONS

House Republicans held leadership elections for the 117th Congress Tuesday, re-electing **Kevin McCarthy** (R-CA) as the party's

## CFX Cablefax PROGRAM AWARDS

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Final Deadline: Dec. 11 (late fees apply)

### Shorts Animals/Nature

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Music/Musical Live Event Coverage Food Trailers Lifestyle  
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leader. Steve Scalise (R-LA) will continue to serve as Republican whip. Liz Cheney (R-WY) will stay on as conference chair, Tom Emmer (R-MN) will serve as NRCC chair and Gary Palmer (R-AL) will act as policy chair. Mike Johnson (R-LA) was elected vice-chair and Rich Hudson (R-NC) will serve as secretary.

#### DISH REVAMPS TING PLANS, MANAGEMENT

**DISH's Ting Mobile** introduced new Flex, Set 5 and Unlimited nationwide postpaid plans. New and existing Ting Mobile customers are now eligible for unlimited talk, text and data with prices starting at \$45/month. The Flex plan offers unlimited talk and text for \$10/month plus pay-per-use data at \$5 per shared GB. The Set 5 plan also includes unlimited talk and text as well as 5GB of data for \$25/month. Existing Ting customers may choose to maintain their current rates or upgrade to the new plans with compatible devices. Additionally, DISH tapped **Robert Currie** to serve as svp, Ting Mobile. He will lead Ting Mobile and DISH's MVNO platform strategy and operations. Currie, a wireless veteran, will report directly to DISH COO/group pres, retail wireless **John Swieringa**.

#### VIZIO TAPS NIELSEN FOR ADVANCED MEASUREMENT

**Vizio** Ads will use **Nielsen's** tech to provide Digital Ad Ratings for ads on Vizio's SmartCast connected TV platform. With the deal, advertisers buying CTV ads from Vizio will get audience age and gender breakdowns for those campaigns. The news comes shortly after the recent announcement that Nielsen will measure addressable campaigns on Vizio that utilize the open addressable standard developed by Project OAR.

#### WEEKLY RATINGS

For the week of Nov 9-15, **Fox News** was the most-watched net in primetime, while **CNN** was tops in total day. In prime, Fox News pulled in 3.463m viewers, followed by CNN with 2.38m and **MSNBC** with 2.218m. In total day, CNN saw 1.629m, followed by Fox News with 1.605m and MSNBC with 1.494m.

#### THE HALO EFFECT

**Comcast Cable's** ad sales division **Effectv** teamed up with **VAB** for a report that analyzes TV's influence on business' ability to drive financial outcomes and growth by life stage. "The Halo Effect: TV as a Growth Engine" found that both DTC and non-DTC brands across all life stages see measurable results from TV advertising across the board. On the DTC side, the study looked at 140 brands in over 25 industry verticals, and found that brands who advertised on TV saw immediate results, regardless of life stage. The average brand saw an immediate double-digit increase in unique visitors to their digital platforms during their TV launch month. Another takeaway is that sustained presence on TV is key. This is truer for young brands, which saw the greatest lift from a sustained TV presence: the analysis found that average unique website visitors for the young brands during months with TV advertising were 50% higher than their pre-launch website visitor norms.

#### PAY-TV SUB UPDATE

The largest pay-TV providers in the US lost about 120K net video subs in 3Q20, compared with a pro forma net loss of

about 945K in 3Q19, according to **Leichtman Research**. Satellite subs lost about 775K subs, compared to 1.14m in a year ago. The top seven cable companies lost about 375K subs, a decrease from the 410K loss in 3Q19. **Comcast** reported the highest loss at 273K, followed by **Altice USA** with 86.4K. The firm estimated non-public **Cox's** loss at 60K. **Charter** and **Atlantic Broadband** both posted gains, with Charter adding 67K. For satellite services, **DirectTV** lost 690K and **DISH** lost 87K. The top vMVPD services all reported gains, except for **AT&T TV NOW**, which lost 37K. **Hulu + Live TV** added 700K, followed by **Sling TV** with 203K and **fuboTV** with 169K.

#### NEW STREAMING DEVICES

**Roku's** limited-edition Roku SE streaming player will be exclusively available at Walmart for \$17 during Black Friday, while supplies last. The company is also offering discounts on its other players, including \$20 off the Roku Streaming Stick+ (\$49.99), \$30 off the Roku Streambar (\$129.99) and \$15 off the Roku Premiere (\$39.99) at major retailers from Nov 20 through Nov 30. – **Verizon** announced the next generation of its Stream TV device. The second-gen is available for \$69.99, but customers who sign up for Fios Gigabit Connection can get it at no additional cost.

#### DISTRIBUTION

**Disney+** continued its global rollout, launching in Latin America and across the Caribbean on Tuesday. Disney reported 73.7m global subs for the streamer during its earnings call last week. – **ShortsTV** expanded its global distribution, launching on **Amazon Prime Video Channels** in the UK, the Netherlands, Italy and Spain. – **Pac-12 Networks'** new streaming service **Pac-12 Insider** is now available on Pluto TV.

#### PROGRAMMING

**TBS'** nightly talk show "CONAN" with **Conan O'Brien** is set to end after its 10th season in June 2021. He's not leaving **WarnerMedia**, however. The television host is heading over to **HBO Max** for a new, weekly variety series. – **TNT, TBS** and **truTV** announced the 2021 winter premiere dates for new and returning series. On TNT, "Snowpiercer" returns for Season 2 at 9pm on Jan 25. On TBS, "Go-Big Show" debuts Jan 7 at 9pm, and "The Misery Index" returns for Season 3 at 10:30pm on Jan 26. Over on truTV, "Practical Jokers" comes back for Season 9, Feb 4 at 10pm, and "Fast Foodies" premieres Feb 4 at 10:30pm. – **Fox Sports** and pro tournament fishing organization **Bassmaster** reached a multiyear agreement to air the complete nine-event Bassmaster Elite Series season, along with the Academy Sports + Outdoors Bassmaster Classic, across Fox Sports platforms beginning Feb 2021. Fox Sports will air 10 events per season. – **Law&Crime** acquired the rights to the viral show "Caught in Providence" and added it to its primetime true programming lineup, beginning on Monday.

#### OOPS!

In the Nov 11 issue, **Cablefax** failed to include **Media-Max Advisors'** **Paul Maxwell**, **Comcast's** **Kyle McSarrow** and **ARRIS's** **Bob Stanzione** as **Cable Center** Executive Committee members that have been re-elected to serve another one-year term.