

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Decency Police: PTC Goes After Streamers' Parental Controls

For years, the Parents Television Council slammed broadcast and cable networks for content it deemed inappropriate for children. These days its increasingly turning its watchdogging to streaming services, even updating its name to the **Parents Television and Media Council** to better reflect its mission.

On Tuesday, the Council released a new report aimed at the streamers, declaring **Hulu** as the streamer with the worst parental controls and **Netflix** with the best, chiefly because it allows the blocking of specific programs. PTC's report deemed **Paramount+**, **Peacock** and Hulu the most cost-effective streamers, but said those same services do not provide robust parental controls or enough distinction between age-appropriate programming. The group unveiled the findings at a virtual townhall that all of the major streaming players were invited to. None showed up. Nor did any respond to **Cablefax's** requests for comment.

That could be a sign of how ineffective the streamers believe PTC has become, but for its part, the organization is pledging to push Congress and the **FCC** to enact industry reforms. It wants Congress to update the Family Movie Act of 2005, which authorized technology providers to engineer and bring to market DVD players that could be set to "skip past" explicit content contained in mainstream motion pictures. The 9th Circuit ruled in 2017 that the law doesn't apply to streaming filtering services, such as **VidAngel**. PTC also is calling on

the **FCC** to revisit its commitments under the 2008 Child Safe Viewing Act, which requires the agency to collect data on the most advanced methods for blocking video content and parental controls. Lastly, it wants the industry to produce a best practices guideline that all streaming platforms would commit to adopting. It says those guardrails should include a reliable gating and blocking technology measure along with an accurate, consistent and transparent age-based rating system.

PTC president *Tim Winter* declined to single out any specific supporters on the Hill, but said he's had two dozen or so meetings with Dems and Republicans over the last 18 months and has seen bipartisan support in both chambers. "My experience now in 18+ years is that Congress will move on an important issue like this when they feel a cattle prod touching their side," he said.

Winter believes that hot poke is coming, pointing to what PTC has seen during the pandemic. "Our membership engagement, our membership growth, just over the past several months has been extraordinary. It's been the biggest spike in growth and PTC membership since *Janet Jackson* [Super Bowl half time show in 2004], and we believe it's due to the pandemic and parents and grandparents actually sitting and being influenced in front of the streaming media services and becoming more aware and actually saying, 'holy cow, PTC was right,'" he said. "The global pandemic spawned a screen time epidemic."

As for PTC's new report, author and PTC program director *Melissa Henson* said it appears many streaming services

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headed its call in its 2017 report for more uniformity in the application of age-based rating and most have adopted some variation of parental control. Hulu was dinged for not having a way to distinguish between younger children and older children when setting up kid profiles and for not adding pin restrictions or other barriers to prevent children from switching to a parent's profile to view adult content.

The report said parental controls available on Peacock, Paramount+ and **HBO Max** are similar enough to be virtually undistinguishable. **Disney** scored slightly higher because of the "kid-proof exit" feature, which requires users to answer a security question to switch profiles. **AppleTV+** also scored slightly higher because it provides parents with data about screen usage.

The PTC report also looked at the economics of streaming, warning that **Amazon Prime Video** has some "hidden costs," including additional channels and options to rent or buy that make Amazon's program inventory "appear deceptively large."

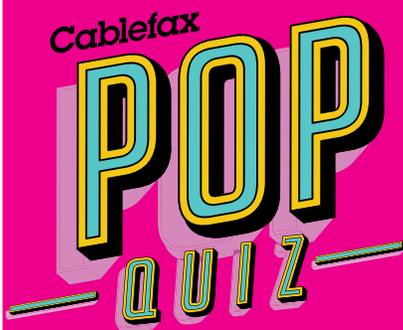
AMAZON SIDEWALK LAUNCHES

ISPs were silent on **Amazon's** launch Tuesday of "Amazon Sidewalk," which shares a piece of consumers' home WiFi network with their neighbors unless they opt out. "It's still early and we're keeping an eye on this and its potential impact to our network, but our focus will continue to be on creating a great broadband experience for our customers that supports a wide diversity of use cases," a **Cox** spokesperson said. Other operators declined comment, but also seem to be taking a wait-and-see approach. Meanwhile, the consumer press largely encouraged Amazon Echo and Ring users to disable Sidewalk, providing

detailed directions for doing so. "Amazon seems oblivious to many obvious consumer concerns with its increasingly invasive technology. So let me say it: Remotely activating our devices to build a closed Internet of Amazon is not okay," *Washington Post* tech columnist *Geoffrey Fowler* wrote Tuesday. He added: "Amazon founder and CEO *Jeff Bezos* owns *The Washington Post*, but I review all tech with the same critical eye." Amazon describes Sidewalk as a low-bandwidth network created with the help of Sidewalk Bridge devices, including select Echo and Ring devices. These Bridge devices share a small portion of user's internet bandwidth, which is pooled together to help Amazon devices, outdoor lights, motion sensors, and Tile trackers work better (and beyond the front door). Amazon said the maximum bandwidth of a Sidewalk Bridge to the Sidewalk server is 80Kbps, with total monthly data used by Sidewalk, per account, capped at 500MB.

WOW! NOT SEEING NEW CUSTOMERS FROM EBB

It's been approximately three weeks since the launch of the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, and **WOW!** has been trying to make it as easy as possible for customers to take advantage of the subsidy. A number of its existing subscribers have already enrolled, but **WOW!** is hoping the number of new customers taking the offer begins to increase. "I think as time goes on, it's more likely that maybe we'll see more new customers out of it, but so far, customers seem to really be taking advantage of this program in a good way, whether that means they're able to upgrade speeds a little bit to take advantage of that full \$50/month subsidy if they qualify or just subsidizing the speed they already have," CEO *Teresa Elder* said at an investor conference Tuesday. She added that while the



One winner will be selected each week for a Starbucks gift card

Last week's answer: Paul Rudd has been punking late night host Conan with "Mac and Me" clips for years. Kudos to last week's winner: Loren King, Sparklight/Fidelity

What was the first program to air on ESPN when it launched on Sept. 7, 1979?

[CLICK HERE TO ANSWER](#)

EBB program does incentivize some that don't have broadband to connect, WOW! hasn't stopped its regular marketing activities and has continued engaging in other partnerships that encourage sign-ups. "But I do think some of the additional programs to bring broadband to those areas where it doesn't exist today, we certainly are supportive of those programs. It's one of the things that's part of our mission as well, is to make sure we're connecting our communities and making sure that people have access to broadband," she said. "As an industry, it's a priority and it's just become so critical... through the pandemic, more than ever, we have seen how important broadband is to people's daily lives in so many ways."

FCC RETHINKS EBB REIMBURSEMENT RULES

The FCC's **Wireline Competition Bureau** released an order Tuesday waiving the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program's reimbursement rules requiring providers to file reimbursement claims by the 15th of the month after the uniform snapshot date. All EBB participating providers will now have until July 15 to submit their first reimbursement claim for service provided in May 2021. The waiver is limited to subscribers that were enrolled and received EBB-supported service in May. "In particular, while the details of the waiver requests vary in their requested relief, all petitions raise the concern that the 15-day deadline for the first reimbursement claims based on the Program's first snapshot could pose a substantial hardship to providers," the Bureau said in the order. It also said it doesn't feel that the change will affect the operations of the EBB program or impact the broadband service being provided to enrolled households.

RATINGS

First round **NBA** playoff action made **TNT** the most-watched cable net in prime last week, averaging 2.436 million total viewers. It was followed by ratings stalwart **Fox News** (1.974m), **MSNBC** (1.261m), **HGTV** (1.251m) and **ESPN** (1.055m). Fox News was the most-watched cabler in total day, with 1.107m viewers. Rounding out the top five were TNT (802K), MSNBC (751K), HGTV (658K) and **CNN** (554K). The weekend saw two new launches on Fox News. "Unfiltered with Dan Bongino" delivered 1.8 million viewers for its Saturday 10pm debut, ahead of both CNN and MSNBC in the 10pm timeslot. "Sunday Night in America with Trey Gowdy" also outpaced the newsmers with 1.3 million viewers. – **Newsmax TV** is crowing that its coverage of former president *Donald Trump's* speech to the NC Republican Convention last Saturday drew more than 1.8 million viewers (Fox News didn't air the speech). The 8pm speech drew 1.1m viewers across its traditional cable platforms, according to **Nielsen**. Newsmax said it picked up an audience of more than 700K from OTT. Newsmax TV broadcasts free on all major OTT platforms, including **Roku**, **Xumo**, **Pluto**, **YouTube**, **Apple TV**, most smart TVs and Facebook Live, as well as the company's internal platforms like NewsmaxTV.com. – **Hallmark Channel** kicked off its "Summer Nights" programming event Saturday with original movie "You Had Me at Aloha," which averaged 1.9m total viewers. It was the #1 most-watched entertainment cable program of the day among Households, Women 18+, and Total Viewers.

TDS TEAMS WITH EVOLUTION DIGITAL

TDS Telecom has plans to deploy **Evolution Digital's** eSTREAM 4K set-top Android TV devices. TDS plans to use Evolution Digital's eDM SaaS cloud-based solution to support the full deployment of eSTREAM 4K, including its diagnostics and analytics tools. The provider will also be using Evolution Digital's software update capabilities to enable easy middleware-specific upgrades.

STREAM FATIGUE

The COVID-19 lockdown forced Americans to stay home and they responded by taking to streaming services. This year, fatigue is setting in. Customer satisfaction with video streaming dropped 2.6% to a 74 on a 0-100 scale in the latest **American Consumer Satisfaction Index** Telecommunications Study. Subscription TV and landline phone service were the only telecom industries covered in the annual report to post year-over-year satisfaction gains. ISPs, VOD service and video streaming all saw declines. **AT&T's U-verse TV** service emerged as the subscription television service with the highest level of customer satisfaction in the ACSI study, followed by fellow fiber-optic provider **Verizon Fios**. **DirectTV**, **DISH** and **Comcast** tied for third. Video streaming service **Disney+** kept its lead in customer satisfaction, followed by the **Microsoft Store** and **Amazon's Twitch**. **Netflix** dropped to fourth place with **HBO**, **HBO Max**, **Hulu** and **YouTube TV**. ISP Verizon Fios shares first place in customer satisfaction with AT&T Internet, followed by Comcast Xfinity, which leads tied **Cox** and **Charter**. AT&T U-verse TV tops VOD customer satisfaction, with Comcast and Verizon in second place. DISH and DirecTV tied for third. In-home WiFi equipment quality was led by **TP-Link**, followed closely by Verizon Fios and AT&T Internet.

CARRIAGE

Free streaming platform **Local Now** partnered with **OTTera** to offer its customers 12 additional channels. The service now counts more than 325 free streaming channels.

PROGRAMMING

The **MTV** Video Music Awards returns to NYC on Sept 12, airing live from the Barclays Center. MTV will collaborate with charitable organization 9/11 Day for a series of service-oriented activities in the week leading up to the awards in remembrance of the 20th anniversary of the attacks. – **HBO Max** will offer a self-guided interactive walking tour of NYC to celebrate the release of "In The Heights" June 10 in theaters and on the service. The tour will feature other series and films on HBO Max filmed in Manhattan and take place from June 11-13. It also features 20 branded installations, offering participants special access to a scene from the movie or program. Fans can get rewards from local businesses on a first-come, first-serve basis. In other news, the streaming service renewed comedy series "Hacks" for a second season.

PEOPLE

Andy Charalambous joined **OpenVault** as vp, sales for Europe, Middle East and Africa. He joins from tech and telecommunications consulting group **Prospect Theory**, where he served as managing director.