

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## He Said, She Said: Newsmax, Midco Spar Over Carriage

**Newsmax** is calling on its viewers to let South Dakota-based **Midco** know that it is more than ready to strike a deal.

“President Donald Trump was just on Newsmax TV for two special interviews and soon he will be doing rallies all across the U.S. — Newsmax will carry these Trump rallies live and millions of Americans like you can watch — EXCEPT for Midco subscribers,” Newsmax said in a message to customers last week. Midco serves about 400,000 customers in five states.

The news net also said it isn’t in any active negotiations with Midco, and told **CFX** that it will continue to inform the operator’s customer base of the decision to blackout the network.

“For several years Midco has given its customers a song and dance about not being able to carry Newsmax. Midco’s expanded basic package includes several dozen channels that have significantly less viewership than Newsmax, according to **Nielsen** ratings. Newsmax is the fourth-highest-rated cable news channel in the United States, but Midco offers in its basic cable package 11 news and information channels that are liberal leaning but won’t include Newsmax,” the network said. “Midco has every right to choose the channels it wants, and Midco customers have every right to cancel their service, which many are doing.”

No word from Midco on if its seeing any cancellations from Newsmax’s decision to put it on blast. In its communications

with customers, the operator seems to be leaving the door open for the possibility of an eventual deal to carry Newsmax. Midco told CFX that it has been in carriage discussions with Newsmax for some time. “We refrain from commenting on private business discussions publicly, so we don’t have any further comment,” a spokesperson said.

Messages on Midco’s **Twitter** profile also indicate that it hasn’t ruled out carrying the net, but perhaps not as part of its cable television package. “We know that some customers would like access to Newsmax, but there are a few factors we have to consider when adding channels to our cable TV lineups, the biggest being bandwidth,” it said in response to a customer question. The operator tweeted multiple times that it is exploring a deal that would see Newsmax added to the lineup of MidcoTV, its all-streaming video option.

Newsmax is available in more than 100 million homes, with carriage deals in place with **Charter, Comcast, DISH, Mediacom** and others. It also is available for free on all major OTT platforms, including **Roku, Pluto, YouTube, Apple TV**, most smart TVs like **Samsung** and **LG**, as well as social media platforms like Facebook Live and **Twitter**.

### BIDEN BROADBAND PLAN BECOMING MORE SOLID

Every day brings more clarity on the bipartisan negotiations surrounding *President Biden’s* infrastructure package, and Biden has now confirmed that the \$65 billion included in the bipartisan agreement will not be addressed again in any reconciliation package. **New Street Research** said that while



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the path forward still remains unclear—the bipartisan effort could come to a screeching halt or everything that’s been already discussed could fall apart—there is some comfort in knowing that should the effort pass, it will very likely be the last chunk of change Congress will spend on broadband deployment for the foreseeable future. The firm has been arguing for some time that reducing the allocated amount for broadband down from \$100 billion to \$65 billion would make overbuilding from federal funds very unlikely. **AT&T** also commented on the ongoing discussions, expressing its appreciation for all broadband infrastructure considerations. “While more work needs to be done to ensure funds are spent in a way that is efficient and effective in making broadband more accessible and affordable—including flexibility in allocating dollars to state, local and tribal governments where resources can be targeted to their highest impact—the bipartisan infrastructure framework is a positive development and we commend Members of Congress and the Administration for their resolve to close the digital divide for all Americans,” CEO *John Stankey* said in a statement.

**FTC HONES IN ON BIG TECH**

New **FTC** chair *Lina Khan* wasted no time sharpening the agency’s focus on big tech and mergers. The Commission voted Thursday to approve a series of resolutions that direct staff to use compulsory process, such as subpoenas, to investigate enforcement priorities. Priority targets include tech companies, digital platforms and healthcare businesses. The FTC said it also will prioritize enforcement against “illegal mergers, both proposed and consummated.” The resolutions provide for compulsory process authorization in these areas for 10 years, unless rescinded by the Commission at an earlier point. The FTC approved the omnibus resolutions in a 3-2 vote along party lines. In another 3-2 vote, the Commission voted to rescind a 2015 antitrust policy statement that prevented the agency from challenging “unfair methods of competition” that don’t violate existing antitrust laws.

**VERIZON COMMITS TO THREE YEARS OF LIFELINE**

**Verizon** plans to commit to participate in the Lifeline program for the next three years in any territory where **TracFone** provides those services today, should its purchase of TracFone be allowed to proceed. That’s according to an *WSJ* interview with Verizon Consumer Group CEO *Ronan Dunne*. The interview comes approximately one week after Dunne and others met with acting **FCC** chair *Jessica Rosenworcel*. In an ex-parte, the company said that within 6 months after the closing of the transaction, Verizon will make a service plan available to Lifeline and other prepaid customers through Tracfone that includes 5G service. “In addition, to help customers take ad-

vantage of the benefits of 5G, Verizon will increase the range of cost-effective 5G devices available to these consumers using commercially reasonable subsidy practices supported by regulatory flexibility,” the company said.

**B RILEY UPS WOW! PRICE TARGET**

**B Riley Securities** is raising its **WOW!** price target from \$28 to \$30 in the wake of its decision to sell a total of \$1.8 billion in assets to **Astound Broadband** and **Atlantic Broadband**. While it wasn’t surprised that the overbuilder landed on asset

**Cablefax Executive Round Up**

**What books are on your summer reading list?**



**Nomi Bergman**  
Senior Executive  
**Advance**

“A couple of recent ones, that I just read, or am reading: **‘Post Corona’** by Scott Galloway: This was an entertaining and illuminating book! Scott has a brilliant mixture of skepticism and rational optimism for the future. I especially loved reading the sections on Amazon and Higher Education. **‘Breath’** by James Nestor: Like so many others, during the pandemic, I took time to think about how I could improve my health and wellness. This was a surprisingly brisk book to read, and it was packed with actionable insights. **‘Cutting the Cord: The Cell Phone Has Transformed Humanity’** by Marty Cooper and **‘On the Road Less Traveled: An Unlikely Journey from the Orphanage to the Boardroom’** by Ed Hajim: These are inspiring 2020 auto-biographies, from two remarkable men I deeply admire.”



**Princell Hair**  
President & CEO  
**BNC**

“I’m currently reading **‘Measure What Matters’** by John Doerr, which was recommended by a friend as I had just finished **‘The Devil You Know’** by Charles Blow. **‘Measure What Matters’** speaks to using objectives and key results (OKRs) to drive change, make tough decisions and stay nimble. It was written with startups and emerging businesses in mind.”



**Brian Lamb**  
Founder, Director  
**C-SPAN** (Host of **Booknotes+ Podcast**)

- **“King Richard: Nixon and Watergate – An American Tragedy”** by Michael Dobbs
- **“Zero Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Secret Service”** by Carol D. Leonnig
- **“Inside U.S.A.”** by John Gunther

“The first two are brand new books. I’m reading them because I lived through them. The Gunther book is from 1947; 1000+ pages looking at the U.S. when there were 130 million residents. It is in the tradition of de Tocqueville.”

sales as a near-term catalyst for its stock, the overall size of the deal did come as a shock. “We expect WOW! to quickly transition from an over-leveraged to an under-leveraged balance sheet position, providing management with flexibility to re-build its subscriber base via strategic edge-outs and greenfield market expansions,” the firm said. “For an example of a broadband peer that has created significant long-term shareholder value through strategic execution combined with regular capital returns, we would encourage investors to look at **Charter Communications** (CHTR) over the last decade as a model for how WOW! might look to compound its market value over time.”

#### TECHNICOLOR DOUBLES DOWN ON HANDS-FREE

**Technicolor Connected Home** has integrated **Google’s** far-field voice technology into its latest generation of set-top boxes. The development will allow users to search for content, change channels and more hands-free with Google Assistant. Previously, the far-field voice technology was only available on devices like soundbars and TVs. Technicolor’s overall goal with the integration of Google Assistant is to allow its set-top boxes to act as a hands-free intelligent hub for consumer’s digital services.

#### VIACOMCBS CONSOLIDATES GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

**ViacomCBS** is unifying its U.S. and international businesses under a centralized global leadership structure. *Chris McCarthy* and *Brian Robbins* are both being promoted to president and CEO, with global oversight for **MTV Entertainment Group** and **Nickelodeon**, respectively. **CBS** president/CEO *George Cheeks* will expand his responsibilities to include global content strategy across ViacomCBS’s free to air networks worldwide. **ViacomCBS Global Distribution Group** president *Dan Cohen* will now be responsible for all ViacomCBS content licensing and distribution globally with the addition of **ViacomCBS International Studios** content to his group’s portfolio. *Barbara Zaneri’s* title is now chief program acquisitions officer, reflecting her role leading all acquisitions globally. All changes are effective immediately.

#### NEW SCRIPPS NETS LAUNCH

**Scripps** launched reality TV networks **Defy TV** and **TrueReal** Thursday via its recently acquired **ION** stations. They’ll also appear as secondary channels on select Scripps local stations and through some other broadcast groups’ stations, reaching 92% of the country. **Defy** targets men 25-54 with library programming such as “Swamp People” and “American Pickers.” **TrueReal** goes after women in that demo with past eps of series such as “Married at First Sight” and “Intervention.” Scripps is gearing up to launch **Newsy** as a free, over-the-air network on Oct 1.

#### VIZIO CERTIFIES SEVEN FOR ADDRESSABLE SPEC

**Vizio** said that **LTN**, **Beachfront**, **FreeWheel**, **INVIDI**, **Google**, **Adcuratio** and **Extreme Reach** have met the tech requirements of the Open Addressable Ready (OAR) specifications and are certified by it for enabling addressable campaigns. The certifications comes on the heels of Vizio surpassing 11.2

million addressable TVs in the US. Certification status enables technology partners to work more closely with OAR steering committee members including **Disney’s Media Networks**, **WarnerMedia**, **Comcast NBCU**, **ViacomCBS**, **Discovery**, **Hearst**, **AMC Networks**, **Fox Corp**, **Scripps** and **Univision**.

#### C SPIRE WRAPS UP HARBOR DEAL

Broadband provider **C Spire** announced it completed its acquisition and integration with Alabama broadband company **Harbor Communications**. The deal was first announced in December 2020 and was made to help the company accelerate its efforts to provide fiber-based broadband to several neighborhoods in Alabama’s Mobile and Baldwin counties. C Spire will provide broadband access initially to consumers and businesses in Fairhope, Foley, Orange Beach, Gulf Shores and unincorporated parts of the two counties in early 2022. Construction has already begun in parts of the unincorporated area of Mobile County and is underway in Baldwin County.

#### PROGRAMMING

**Discovery** will premiere “Gold Rush” spinoff “Gold Rush: Winter’s Fortune” July 30, with it available to stream on **discovery+** the same day. The series follows fan favorites as they begin their winter prospecting, purchasing and permitting to prepare for their season goals as they wait for the spring thaw. – **Nat Geo** is debuting six-part documentary series “9/11: One Day in America” over four consecutive nights starting Aug 29. Episodes will be available to stream next day on **Hulu**. – **Paramount Network’s** “Yellowstone” returns for Season 4 this fall. To catch up, fans can watch all three seasons during the “Yellowstone July 4th Every Episode Celebration Marathon” Saturday, which runs from noon until Monday.

#### PEOPLE

*Zaina Sesay* joined entertainment company **Kin** as director, talent and development. Sesay joins from **ViacomCBS** brands **MTV** and **VH1**. – **Comscore** appointed *Brian McLoughlin* to lead the company’s commercial relationship with French multinational advertising and public relations agency **Publicis Groupe**. McLoughlin, a 20-year media veteran, most recently served as evp, sales and client relations at TV audio software company **Tunity**.

#### HONORS

**EPB Chattanooga** and its community partners were honored with the **American Public Power Association’s** Sue Kelly Community Service Award for its HCS EdConnect program. The program is a partnership with the city of Chattanooga, Hamilton County Schools and others that looks to provide fiber optic internet services to every economically disadvantaged K-12 student in the Hamilton County School system at no charge. The program launched in July 2020, and more than 14,000 students have been connected thus far.

#### EDITOR’S NOTE

Your next issue of **Cablefax Daily** will arrive Tuesday, July 6 because of Independence Day. Have a safe and joyous Fourth of July!



# PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

## Nat Geo's 'SharkFest' Takes Its Biggest Bite Yet

Summer is in full swing, and what better way to celebrate than with **National Geographic's** biggest "SharkFest" yet? Kicking off on July 5, this year's event includes six weeks of programming across Nat Geo, **Nat Geo Wild**, **Nat Geo Mundo**, **Disney XD** and **Disney+**. "It's really embracing our family members, which was an amazing opportunity that we didn't have in the years before," National Geographic svp, program development and production *Janet Han Vissering* told **CFX**. "We are embracing all the beauty and the extra pluses that they can share with us. And for us, as a producing unit, we need to make sure that our shows are better, have diverse abilities to speak to the Disney XD viewers, to Disney+, to Nat Geo, to Nat Geo Wild—it's got to be multifaceted so that we can play for all these platforms." This year's Sharkfest contributors are just as diverse as the platforms that the content is landing on. There's plenty of star power thanks to names like *Chris Hemsworth*, but there are also more females than ever before that are being featured as shark science contributors. That's something Nat Geo is looking to continue in the future, and it has signed on to a new partnership with **Minorities in Shark Science** to continue pushing diversity and inclusion efforts in the field. It's Hemsworth's show that will kick off this year's festivities. Airing July 5 at 9pm and streaming on Disney+ on July 9, "Shark Beach with Chris Hemsworth" dives into behaviors of sharks on Australia's eastern coastline after an increase in attacks. The collaboration partially came to be because the actor was stuck in lockdown in Sydney. "He's in the shark capital of the world," she said. "It is a slightly torn relationship that he has with that because he is a steward. He's an ambassador to the shores of Australia, and yet there are these apex predators out there that are also in peril. So it's like what side do you want to take?" – *Sara Winegardner*

### REVIEWS

"False Positive," streaming, **Hulu**. We love films that use production values to help make a statement. Such is the case with "False Positive," an ostensibly dark-ish story about fertility treatments, with an ample amount of camp. Again, though, it's some of the production values that increase the level of enjoyment. Visually, the settings are special, including the gorgeous NYC apartment that Lucy ("Broad City's" *Ilana Glazer*) and Adrian (*Justin Theroux*) inhabit. Then there's the Hindle clinic where the deified Dr. Hindle (a fabulously over-the-top *Pierce Brosnan*) works his magic without misplacing a hair of his white mane. Befitting Hindle's personality, his office is sterile and magisterial, filled with the latest medical gadgets and appointments. One of the best parts of his office is Gretchen Mol, perfect as Hindle's head nurse, outfitted with her ubiquitous ear piece, tight pink uniform and thousand-watt smile. Unfortunately, the sets, Brosnan and Mol can't quite carry the film to its somewhat disappointing end. On the other hand, the supporting characters will hook most viewers long enough to care about how the story ends. – "Martha Gets Down and Dirty," streaming, **discovery+**. She's not to everyone's taste, yet for those interested in useful outdoor tips, you could do much worse than *Martha Stewart*. And she comes by her knowledge honestly, working her 150-acre farm for some two decades. – *Seth Arenstein*

BASIC CABLE		
P2+ PRIME RANKINGS*		
(06/21/21-06/27/21)		
MON-SUN	MC	MC
	US	US AA
	AA%	(000)
ESPN	0.859	2,645
FNC	0.697	2,146
TNT	0.564	1,738
MSNBC	0.443	1,365
HGTV	0.368	1,134
NBCSN	0.286	882
DISC	0.285	879
CNN	0.278	856
TBSC	0.271	835
HIST	0.259	796
TLC	0.254	784
USA	0.252	776
HALL	0.252	775
FOOD	0.231	711
INSP	0.224	691
ID	0.187	576
BET	0.173	534
HMM	0.157	484
TVLAND	0.157	483
LIFE	0.153	472
GSN	0.144	442
FX	0.143	440
A&E	0.138	426
BRAVO	0.137	421
NAN	0.133	409
ADSM	0.120	369
AMC	0.118	364
WETV	0.116	356
NICK	0.102	313
APL	0.101	311
TRAVEL	0.096	296
DSJR	0.094	291
PARA	0.094	289
FRFM	0.092	282

\*P2+ L+SD rankers are based on national Nielsen numbers, not coverage.

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