

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Exercise Caution: Comcast Broadband Subs Slow Thanks to Lower Churn

Comcast CFO *Mike Cavanagh* warned investors last month that the company's 3Q21 broadband subscriber numbers were tracking behind, so it wasn't a surprise when the company reported only 300,000 broadband net adds during its earnings report Thursday.

Comcast Cable President & CEO *Dave Watson* acknowledged the slowdown in connects across the operator's footprint, attributing some of it to a lag in moving activity and a drop in the activity typically attributed to the start of the fall semester at colleges and universities. "There's just a little bit less switching activity overall, I think. You look at other operators, everyone's churn is down," he said.

Watson also said Comcast is seeing less growth overall from the lower income segment, something **New Street Research** wasn't surprised to hear. "We are exiting a period of incredible federal support for broadband; we don't expect it to go away, but we don't think it can continue to drive the penetration it has," the firm said in a note Thursday. "We are most curious about lower competitive switching. We suspect this is at least partly due to new fiber deployments—ILECs are relinquishing fewer subs as they convert DSL subs to fiber."

Management didn't offer guidance or insight into whether or not they expect the slowdown to continue into 2022, but the company did reiterate that it expects growth for the full year to

be in line with 2019 levels. That would suggest 4Q21 will be slower still than this quarter. Overall, 3Q21 revenues increased 18.7% YOY to \$30.3 billion, and broadband revenues grew 11.6% thanks to an increase in both the number of residential customers and a rise in average rates.

Comcast Chairman & CEO *Brian Roberts* has expressed his excitement about his company's opportunity with smart TVs on previous earnings calls, and his enthusiasm was palpable as he spoke about the recent launches of Sky Glass in the UK and XClass TVs in the U.S. The former eliminates the need for a satellite dish or set-top box, integrating **Sky**'s platform directly into a TV, while the XClass TVs allow Comcast to take its X1 platform out of its footprint. Across the board, he sees the platforms as something of a new frontier for the operator.

"Mostly it's an embodiment of what we do well, which is aggregation and that we're going to find a way for consumers to get to what they want faster, personalize it and have fun along the way," Roberts said. "And then it's a platform for innovation on a go-forward basis for where we think television may evolve, and whether it's gaming, whether it's fitness, healthcare, education... and so having that be part of your relationship with our company, I think it is novel territory for us to do R&D off of."

Wireless continues to be a growing opportunity for the Comcast family. **Xfinity Mobile** added 285,000 lines, marking this as its best quarter since the launch of the business in 2017. The segment now has 3.7 million mobile lines, and



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TOP 10 MUST-HAVES

for a high performance eCommerce platform.



MARK MIHALEVICH

As competition in the fiber and cable industry heats up, and more customers move online for shopping, a high performance eCommerce solution is increasingly critical to sales growth and operational efficiency. The challenge is that not all solutions are the same and many claim to offer eCommerce, but lack key performance capabilities. The following Atlas CORE list of 10 “must haves” for success is based on our proven experience in delivering transformational eCommerce growth for some of the biggest operators in the county.

1: CONVERSION OPTIMIZED BUYFLOW

The most fundamental key for sales growth is an eCommerce solution that optimizes buyflow conversion. Optimization is a continual process based on measurement, learning and adaptation and requires well-developed analytics and testing tools.

2: SUPPORT FOR AUTOMATED AND NON-AUTOMATED SALES FLOWS

Support for customer orders through both automated and non-automated sales flows is critical. While automated sales are efficient, a non-automated sales flow provides more flexibility. It allows for use cases not easily supported through automated processes and enables more customers to place orders.

3: PRESALE LEAD CAPTURE AND MARKETING AUTOMATION SUPPORT

The ability to capture and retarget leads through relevant tactics is a must have capability for any eCommerce solution. Digital remarketing, pre-sale lead capture and cart abandonment retargeting should all be supported by any solution.

4: INTELLIGENT ADDRESS MATCHING

Address matching failures can account for 50%+ of lost sales opportunities. To make sure customers get through the “front door” of your online store requires technology to maximize address match rates and can intelligently use a variety of different serviceability data sources.

5: INDUSTRY SPECIFIC PRODUCT CATALOG

The product catalog is the “brain” and determines what offers and options get presented to who, when, and where. The catalog should be designed to support the unique product and offer requirements of the industry, including everything from the ability to control offer presentation, to supporting bundle discounts, equipment configurations, and campaign-specific promo codes.

6: FRICTIONLESS RISK SCORING

Risk scoring that relies on a customer SSN is one of the most common sales failure points (10-15% abandon rate). Eliminate fallout by scoring customer risk through a “frictionless” process that only requires account fields such as name, address, phone, and email.

7: FLEXIBLE SCHEDULING

Installation scheduling should include market-configurable options for scheduling based on days out, days of weeks, and time of day. It should also support self-install, follow-up scheduling for pre-sale orders, and the ability to capture leads that do not complete scheduling.

8: ORDER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (OMS)

This contains the online order information and guides order flow through the sales process. An OMS should integrate to your back-end systems, marketing/sales tools and extend to inbound phone sales, direct sales (door to door) and retail.

9: DATA, ANALYTICS AND REPORTING

To see what channels are growing, and which ones are not, requires visibility into marketing campaigns, customer behavior, as well as operational and product performance. These analytics provide you with key business metrics that lead to sales success.

10: TECHNICAL PERFORMANCE

Any eCommerce solution provider should commit to uptime reliability, escalation procedures, ongoing maintenance and bug fixes, and compliance with standard security practices.

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revenue grew 51% YOY. Watson said Comcast is more focused than ever on leveraging its mobile product to support the core broadband business and lower overall churn.

Unsurprisingly, Comcast's traditional video business continues to bleed subscribers. In 3Q21, it lost video subs to the tune of 408,000. Video revenues still managed to rise 1.4% thanks to rising average plan rates.

IS PEACOCK LOSING ALTITUDE?

NBCU had one of its brightest quarters in recent memory, but listening to **Comcast's** 3Q21 earnings call, you wouldn't have thought **Peacock** played a major role in that success. It didn't earn a mention in Comcast Chairman & CEO *Brian Robert's* opening remarks and no subscriber or viewership growth metrics were offered by management. But when asked directly about the streamer, NBCU CEO *Jeff Shell* sang a positive tune. He seemed optimistic about Peacock's future, saying it is way ahead of where he expected it to be at this point. "Peacock is doing really well right now without most of its programming strength," he said. "We're going to start to see a ramp up in originals on Peacock, which is very necessary to continue to grow, to have successful and robust original programming and we're excited about a lot of the things that we're making for the service." **MoffettNathanson** believes NBCU will need to put even more firepower behind Peacock if it wants the service to soar, and it needs to do it soon. "Peacock has certainly gained subscribers. Peacock is, by any reasonable standard, a disappointment. They will have to spend more," the firm said in a note. NBCU revenues grew 58% to \$10 billion thanks to boosts in advertising and \$1.8 billion associated with the Tokyo Olympics. Distribution revenue also increased more than 12%, reflecting higher rates tied to several carriage renewals that occurred at the end of 2020.

LOCAST TO PAY BROADCASTERS \$32M

Shuttered broadcast streaming app **Locast** will pay \$32 million to the Big 4 broadcasters to settle their copyright infringement claims against the service. That's according to a filing Thursday from the US District Court for NY's Southern District. (An aside: *Biden FCC* nominee *Gigi Sohn* was named to Locast's board last year.) Locast ceased all operations last month after a federal judge ruled the service was not protected by an exception to US Copyright Law reserved for non-profits and government organizations. *David Goodfriend* and the **Sports Fans Coalition of New York** founded Locast in January 2018. In July 2019, **ABC, CBS, FOX** and **NBC** filed the copyright infringement suit, claiming the app takes their signals and rebroadcasts them without their permission. They also challenged Locast's claim that

it's a free service since it repeatedly interrupts programming asking for a \$5 donation from users.

VIACOMCBS NABS SPANISH LANGUAGE STUDIOS

ViacomCBS Networks International has entered into a definitive agreement to acquire a majority stake in **Fox TeleColombia & Estudios TeleMexico** from the company's founding family and the **Walt Disney Company**. When the

Cablefax Executive Round Up

There were plenty of reactions to Biden's nominations this week of Jessica Rosenworcel as FCC Chair and Gigi Sohn as FCC Commissioner. Here's a look at some of the comments:



Catherine Bohigian
EVP, Government Affairs
Charter

"Through two decades of public service, Acting Chairwoman Rosenworcel has demonstrated a commitment to consumers, particularly through efforts to eliminate the homework gap, close the digital divide, and improve our country's public safety communications. We also congratulate Gigi Sohn on her nomination to serve as Commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission. Through her roles at the FCC and in civil society organizations, Ms. Sohn is an accomplished consumer advocate, championing policies to increase competition and help close the digital divide."



Tom Reid
Chief Legal Officer
Comcast

"Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel has ... continued to be a leader on important communications issues, such as closing the Homework Gap, enhancing public safety, and promoting a balanced spectrum policy. Rosenworcel has already successfully managed the Commission's implementation of the Emergency Broadband Benefit and Emergency Connectivity Fund on an accelerated schedule with millions of Americans receiving benefits in just the first several months. Gigi Sohn has been an advocate for consumers for many years and would bring her tireless advocacy on the critical issue of connecting all Americans to broadband back to the FCC. We have long shared that commitment."



Tim Winter
President
The Parents Television and Media Council

"Today we acclaim the nomination of Jessica Rosenworcel not only as the first female Chair of the FCC, but as the first FCC Chair who is also a mom. I've had the pleasure to know and work with Jessica for many years, and her grasp of our nation's communications policies is extraordinary—second to none. She has been a powerful and positive force at the FCC for parents and families, and a framed copy of the Child Safe Viewing Act even adorns her office wall... The PTC also applauds the nomination of Gigi Sohn as an FCC Commissioner. Gigi has built a well-deserved reputation as one of the most knowledgeable, most respected, voices on communications issues in all of Washington DC."

transaction is complete, **ViacomCBS International Studios** will operate the Spanish language content producer as part of a collaborative partnership with the founding family. VCNI will gain access to studio operations in both Colombia and Mexico as well as Fox TeleColombia & Estudios TeleMexico's library of content, which will bolster the offerings on streamers like **Paramount+** and **Pluto TV**. Fox TeleColombia & Estudios TeleMexico Founder/CEO *Samuel Duque Rozo* will continue to support the business creatively and as a strategic advisor while President *Samuel Duque Duque* will continue to lead the business. Terms of the deal were not disclosed.

CABLE ONE GETS IN ON SPAC

Cable One continues its investment spree, this time popping up as a strategic investor in **Tristar Acquisition Corp**, a special purpose acquisition company focused on the telecom sector. Tristar announced its \$200 million IPO earlier this month, with 20 million units trading on the NYSE under the ticker symbol "TRIS.U." Cable One agreed to purchase 9.9% of the units in the offering, subject to allocation by the underwriters. The SPAC was formed for the purpose of effecting a merger, capital stock exchange, asset acquisition, stock purchase, reorganization, or similar business combination with one or more businesses. The company is led by **CTIA** board member *Billy Mounger*, former Chairman of **TeleCorp PCS** and ex-President of **Mercury Communications Company**. Expect more info on Cable One's investment during its Nov. 4 earnings call.

FAMILY MOVIES CLASSICS LAUNCHES

Family Entertainment Television launched a new linear channel, **FMC, Family Movie Classics**, on **DISH** Thursday. The 24/7 classic movie channel is now available to nearly 9 million DISH TV subscribers. It features older movies, including films featuring *Shirley Temple* and comedy duo *Laurel and Hardy*.

BLOCKCHAIN COMES TO SXSW

Blockchain Creative Labs, Fox Entertainment and **Bento Box Entertainment's** NFT business, was named the first-ever Blockchain Sponsor for **SXSW** (March 11-20 in Austin, Texas). It'll partner for a number of on-site and virtual activations and decentralized content and experiences powered by the blockchain. NFTs created by Blockchain Creative Labs will be sold via a blockchain hosted by Eluvio within the SXSW GO mobile app, which also will be interoperable to Ethereum and other third-party crypto wallets. The sponsorship also allows Blockchain Creative Labs to deploy additional activations during SXSW to support other Fox Entertainment properties, including **Tubi** and Fox series.

PROGRAMMING

A+E Studios inked a first-look deal with actor, writer and activist *Alyssa Milano*. The agreement follows A+E's acquisition of Milano's pilot script, "Things I'm Seeing Without You," which she adapted from *Peter Bognanni's* young adult novel. – **Ovation TV** snagged the non-exclusive U.S. linear

and AVOD rights to classic mystery series "Hart to Hart" from Sony Pictures Entertainment. The network will begin airing all five seasons on Nov. 17 at 7pm. – **Disney Junior** ordered new animated comedy-adventure series "Firebuds," which follows children of first responders and their talking vehicle sidekicks. It's set to debut next year. – **discovery+** is launching a Holiday Central hub on Nov. 1 to serve as the home of all **Food Network** holiday programming, and there's a lot of it. More than 100 hours of holiday programming will arrive on Food Network this year. That includes the return of "Holiday Baking Championship" on Nov. 1 at 8pm and the season premiere of "Holiday Wars" on Nov. 7 at 9pm. *Duff Goldman* will host a special edition of "Kids Baking Championship: Light Up the Holidays" on Nov. 21 at 8pm. He'll also once again take on rival *Buddy Valastro* in "Buddy vs. Duff: Holiday" on Nov. 28 at 8pm.

ON THE CIRCUIT

NATPE Miami is back with an in-person gathering scheduled for Jan. 18-20. Speakers and an event schedule will be announced soon. Safety protocols include mandatory proof of vaccination for all attendees, outdoor tents for select sessions and meetings and designated NATPE Safe zones fully controlled by the event production team. "We are thrilled to see our exhibitors, sponsors coming back to Miami and to be welcoming new partners as we are ready to be the new year's first major platform for the business of content as the industry continue to evolve globally," NATPE President & CEO *JP Bommel* said.

PEOPLE

With *Ed Carroll* exiting at COO of **AMC Networks** this year, original programming head *Dan McDermott* is taking on additional responsibilities. In addition to overseeing original productions for the linear and streaming services and AMC Studios, he'll now also directly manage the company's business affairs, acquisitions and scheduling and consumer PR functions, which includes talent relations and awards. McDermott will directly manage several senior execs, including Business Affairs Head *Rafael Gomez*; EVP, Content and Inventory Strategy *David Epstein* and EVP PR *Marnie Black*. – **Nexstar Media** promoted *Dana Zimmer* to President of Distribution, effective immediately. Following the Tribune acquisition in 2019, Zimmer has served as the company's Chief Distribution and Strategy Officer, negotiating retransmission consent deals with MVPDs as well as content negotiations with the company's network partners (**FOX, CBS, NBC, ABC** and **CW**). Nexstar's portfolio includes 199 local stations as well as cable network NewsNation. – **AccuWeather** promoted *Rhonda Seaton* to VP, Corporate Communications. She joined the network back in 2017 as an Executive Communicator/Speech Writer.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Cablefax Daily will not publish on Friday, Oct. 29. We'll keep you abreast of breaking news, including **Charter's** 3Q21 earnings results, at **Cablefax.com**.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

Back on the 'Highway to Heaven'

If you were an '80s kid, it's a solid bet that you're at least familiar with **NBC's** long-running fantasy drama "Highway to Heaven." That angel is getting new wings thanks to a reimagined film adaptation of the series premiering on **Lifetime** (Nov 6, 8pm). EP *Jill Scott* stars as Angela, an angel searching for souls in need of guidance. For Scott, the opportunity to reexamine a classic series from creator/director/actor *Michael Landon* had her saying yes to the project before even reading the script. The heart of Landon's productions also struck a chord with *Barry Watson*, who plays a high school principal to whom Scott reveals her identity. "He always brought some sort of faith or message into it, especially with 'Little House on the Prairie' and Highway to Heaven," Watson said during a **TCA** tour appearance with Scott. "It's an honor to take this show and... if he's looking down on us as an angel, make it the way he'd want us to make it." Much like its predecessor, the film hopes to share a message of positivity and compassion for others. There are elements of faith incorporated throughout the script, but the script was intentionally written not to hyperfocus on one religion or type of worship. "It's for everybody who is looking for light in the dark or not an epiphany really, but a reminder that faith still exists and that the creator, my boss, your boss, our boss is still very much present," Scott said. She has a long history of working with Lifetime, counting films like the 2012 remake of "Steel Magnolias" among her credits. For her, the network is the perfect home for the reboot because of the stories and messages it offers to audiences. "Angela meets people who are in the middle of a crisis, typically. Whether they're facing it and holding it in, or just trying to struggle their way through... they're people who really need help. So it makes all the sense in the world to me that this is on Lifetime," Scott said. – *Sara Winegardner*

REVIEWS

After watching countless cable TV series, comparing those in a particular genre is like mother's milk to your reviewer. First up is **HBO's** "Succession," which was renewed this week for a fourth season. This family-based series about, yes, succession, is a hit and Emmy winner. As we said weeks ago, its current season doubles down on one of the series' best features: colorful and lewd put-downs. Spewing mostly from the mouths of media mogul Logan Roy (*Brian Cox*) and his youngest son, the ambitious Roman Roy (*Kieran Culkin*), they're Season 3's best feature. So, yes, it's a very talk-y season so far. The good news is things move quicker after the first few episodes. Overall, though, Season 3 hasn't matched the vitality of its initial outings. If you're longing for other family dramas, 2015's "Bloodline," (**Netflix**) about a family running a Florida inn, also deals with succession. *Sissy Spacek* dominates as the rarely dominating matriarch Sally Rayburn. *Ben Mendelsohn* is terrific as her eldest, a good-natured black sheep. Succession isn't the lifeblood (pun not intended) of **BBC's** "The Split" (**Hulu**). Here, marriage issues dominate plotlines. The heavy irony is that the main characters (a mother and two of her three daughters) are family law (read divorce) attorneys. Its two seasons have developed strong, unpredictable characters. A third is planned. – *Seth Arenstein*

BASIC CABLE		
P2+ PRIME RANKINGS*		
(10/18/21-10/24/21)		
MON-SUN	MC	MC
	US	US AA
	AA%	(000)
TBSC	1.076	3352
ESPN	0.995	3099
FNC	0.740	2306
FS1	0.682	2125
MSNBC	0.378	1178
HALL	0.360	1121
TNT	0.321	1000
HGTV	0.287	895
TLC	0.250	778
INSP	0.235	733
CNN	0.233	725
DISC	0.214	668
FOOD	0.214	666
USA	0.195	606
HIST	0.179	557
LIFE	0.171	533
ID	0.164	512
BRAVO	0.158	491
TVLAND	0.154	481
A&E	0.154	479
HMM	0.154	478
NFL	0.150	468
AMC	0.138	429
WETV	0.130	405
GSN	0.125	389
FRFM	0.119	369
FX	0.110	342
APL	0.106	329
BET	0.103	320
TRAVEL	0.101	314
SYFY	0.097	301
NATGEO	0.095	295
COM	0.095	295
PARA	0.087	272

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