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WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

8K Ahead?: A Look at Cable's Stance on High Resolution TV

Optimism abounded at **CES** last January that 2021 would be the year that 8K started to take off. So, did 8K services start to blossom?

"No, not really," said *Chris Chinnock*, Executive Director for the **8K Association**. "There's been a whole bunch of factors. It's the pandemic. It's been the lack of trade shows to promote them. It's been supply chain issues."

As 2021 came to a close, 4K and 8K services and apps are still largely treading water. "There was a big uptick in sales of TVs when the pandemic started," Chinnock told *CFX*. "That happened for about six, nine months or so. Then as supply chain issues started to kick in the supply of panels became hard to get and the prices shot through the roof. Prices are starting to come back down."

One of the limiting factors for 8K and 4K adoption is the lack of content. The good news, according to Chinnock, is there has been recent progress on the 8K content front. "Both **Samsung** and **TCL** now have apps on their TVs that will allow streaming content from a company called **The Explorers**, which is putting up some native 8K content," he said. "All the 8K TVs can get stuff off of **YouTube** or **Vimeo** and there's actually quite a bit there. In Eastern Europe, we just reported on a streaming service provider called **Megogo** that's got a whole bunch of 8K content now on their own 8K channel as well."

Expect to see a number of 4K and 8K demos at CES this

week. What happens from there remains to be seen. Chinnock said he hasn't seen cable operators embrace 8K to date as they need to decide if they want to have a set-top box solution or an app that's integrated into a TV, the latter of which would require working with TV manufacturers on the interfaces. There have been some 4K inroads in the U.S., however. Last month, **Comcast** launched **Insight TV 4K** across X1, Xfinity Flex and its new XClass TVs. It marks the first UHD HDR standalone service available to Comcast customers.

While 4K and 8K streams are bandwidth hogs, most of the large cable operators are well positioned to provision the services due to the continued upgrades of their broadband networks. Chinnock said live 8K streaming requires 50 Mbps to 80 Mbps, while on-demand 8K can get by with 30 Mbps to 50 Mbps because there's more time to encode the streams. According to data from **NCTA**, more than 80% of U.S. homes across the nation are passed by at least 1-Gig downstream speeds.

"While 8K TVs are becoming increasingly available, we have yet to see a significant volume of 8K content across our network," *Charter's Dave Rodrian*, Group VP of Internet Products, told *CFX*. "We recognize that 8K content is different from a resolution, frame rate and encoding perspective, but the effect that has on bitrate remains to be seen. Regardless of the impact, we remain confident in our ability to support 8K video."

With cable's DOCSIS 4.0, distributed access architecture (DAA), fiber-to-the-home and 10G initiatives, most cable opera-



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tors have plenty of headroom for 4K and 8K streams. “I think [cable operators] are prepared for it, certainly as it begins to roll out next year in the form of new TV sets that can handle 8K,” said **Dell’Oro Group’s** Jeff Heynen, VP of Broadband Access and Home Networking. “In talking with cable operators as they are preparing their networks for DOCSIS 4.0, 8K is part of the equation.”

There’s also a lack of content for 4K. To fuel 4K and 8K adoption, service providers need to package them with other OTT-based content—such as **Netflix, YouTube** and **Hulu**—in order to provide subscribers an entire 4K ecosystem to choose from. For 4K and 8K to flourish, the consensus is that networks such as Fox or ESPN need to have full-time offerings.

“From our intel, we expect 4K to continue to grow and our customers will expect to have a seamless experience and easily access content on IP-enabled devices to embrace this technology on their own terms,” said **RCN’s** Jason Nealis, SVP of Engineering and Operations. “Though 4K has already outpaced the short-lived 3D trend, once programmers fully embrace the technology and package it with 4K content through OTT packages, we expect to see 4K truly take off.” – *Mike Robuck*

FOX NEWS OFFICIALLY TAKES 2021 RATINGS CROWN

Now that 2021 is over, we can make it official. **Fox News** was the most-watched basic cable network for the sixth consecutive year for total viewers across total day and primetime. Fox News averaged 2.348 million viewers in prime and 1.327 million in total day, according to **Nielsen**. The net actually had its second-highest share of cable new audience in its 25-year history in 4Q21 with the 25-54 and 18-49 demo in total day. Weekday talk

show “The Five” goes down as the first non-primetime program to rank #1 in total viewers in all of cable news for an entire quarter, averaging 3.296m in 4Q, eeking past “Tucker Carlson” (3.920m). **ESPN** took second place for total viewers in prime for 2021 with 1.66m, followed by **MSNBC** (1.533m), **HGTV** (1.08m) and **CNN** (1.078). MSNBC was runner-up in total day among cable nets with 905,000 total viewers for the year. It was followed by CNN (773K), ESPN (648K) and **HGTV** (609K).

CABLELABS RECOVERING FROM MARSHALL FIRE

The holiday season wasn’t full of cheer for all. The Marshall Fire, a fire near Boulder, Colorado, caused by power lines damaged in a windstorm, swept across local communities as 2021 came to a close. **CableLabs** was one of the organizations impacted by the natural disaster. CEO *Phil McKinney* shared [images](#) and videos of the fire captured at CableLabs HQ to his **Twitter** account as he and the rest of his team began assessing the damage. One CableLabs employee lost their home and many others are still without gas and potable water, staying with friends or at hotels. As for CableLabs HQ, the building was largely unaffected, sustaining some minor soot and smoke damage and losing some of the landscaping surrounding it. It has also been impacted by the gas and water situation in the area, but should be able to reopen next week should it all be straightened out.

CES READY FOR LAUNCH

Fox Business Network’s *Liz Claman* is anchoring “The Claman Countdown” live from **CES** this week (weekdays 3pm ET). On Tuesday’s episode, she sat down with CTA chief *Gary Shapiro*, who stressed that the show will go on despite Omicron. CES kicks off Wednesday. “I feel more comfortable going to CES—in

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the CES bubble with only vaccinated and masked people—than I do going to my local grocery store,” he said, noting that exhibitors have jumped in a few weeks from 1700 to more than 2300. “This is one place a lot of companies rely on each year to get their message out and they really didn’t have that in 2021.” But there are several big companies, such as **T-Mobile** and **Amazon**, who have pulled out of the show. Shapiro said CES has relied on medical experts in planning and is requiring vaccinations and masks. “Millions of people go to sporting events around the United States every week. They’re not required to be vaccinated. They’re not required to be masked. And they... certainly don’t test,” he said. “Having said that, look, it’s time to get back to normal. This is what we heard from President *Biden* in the last few weeks repeatedly. We’ve heard it from Republicans as well and other Democrats. We have a great showing of the Biden administration coming.” – **Cox’s** solutions are exclusively powering CES 2022, marking the eighth year in a row that it has supported the show. Cox is providing 2,800 WiFi access points at the in-person show across session venues and the exhibit hall, high-capacity broadband directly to the convention floor and dedicated, redundant fiber that will deliver 10 gigabit connections to the convention center. It’s also supporting the Las Vegas Convention Center’s newly-completed \$1 billion, 1.4 million square foot West Hall. That expansion alone features 700 access points, WiFi 6 and Cox Business redundant fiber.

COX’S KEVIN HART TO HEAD SEGRA

Longtime **Cox** executive *Kevin Hart* has been named CEO of fiber infrastructure provider **Segra**. He’ll replace outgoing Segra CEO *Timothy Biltz* and assume his responsibilities immediately. The news comes three months after Cox completed its acquisition of Segra’s commercial services segment. It operates as a standalone business within the Cox family of companies. Hart has more than 30 years of telecom experience, serving as Cox’s EVP/Chief Product and Technology Officer for the last 11 years. Stay tuned for how Cox will handle replacing Hart’s role.

VERIZON-TEGNA UPDATE

Verizon and **TEGNA** reached a short extension that kept the broadcaster’s stations on Fios as of 6pm ET Tuesday. That was when their retransmission consent contract was set to expire. No word on how long the extension will last or how close the two are to a deal.

VERIZON, AT&T ACTUALLY AGREE TO C-BAND DELAY

The situation keeps changing. After initially rebuking a request from the **FAA** to delay C-band spectrum deployments further, **Verizon** and **AT&T** have agreed to hold off on their plans until Jan. 19. While some like *President Biden* and **FCC** Chair *Jessica Rosenworcel* applauded the aviation industry, government agencies and wireless providers for coming to another agreement, not all were happy with the turn of events. FCC Commissioner *Brendan Carr*, a longtime 5G advocate, sent a letter to Transportation Secretary *Pete Buttigieg* criticizing the latter’s delay request to the providers, calling it “highly irregular” and a deviation from the statutory process specified by Congress. “Anything short

of the wireless carriers lighting up their C-Band operations on January 5 pursuant to the FCC’s regulatory regime would mark an unacceptable setback for U.S. leadership in 5G,” Carr wrote.

ACCENTURE HIGHLIGHTS STREAMING PAIN POINTS

Streaming has come a long way, but that doesn’t mean the journey is over. An **Accenture** survey of 6,000 consumers in North America, South America, Europe, South Africa and Asia Pacific found there is plenty of room for improvement. The survey found that 60% of consumers globally consider the process of navigating among these different streaming services “a little” to “very” frustrating, and 44% spend more than six minutes trying to find something they want to watch. Pricing is also an issue with 33% of consumers globally reporting they will “somewhat” or “greatly” decrease spending on media and entertainment across subscriptions and one-time purchases in the next 12 months. And despite the algorithms, personalization isn’t perfect. A majority (56%) said they’d like to be able to take their profile from one service to another to better personalize content, and 51% said they’d be happy to let a video-on-demand service know more about them to make recommendations more relevant to them. Accenture’s conclusion is that for streaming to continue to grow, the ecosystem needs a “smart aggregator” that sits across multiple platforms and could play a role in eliminating these three main issues. Sounds like a job for cable operators...

COMCAST TO CROWN CITY’S BEST GAMERS

Comcast teamed up with esports community platform **Mission Control** to hold a series of esports competitions across the Northeast U.S. Gamers in Baltimore, Boston, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and D.C. can register for monthly events in each of the cities where they’ll compete in matches of games like “Fortnite,” “Rocket League” and “Super Smash Bros. Ultimate.” Some \$50,000 in prizes will be up for grabs, including PlayStation 5 consoles and OLED models of the Nintendo Switch.

PROGRAMMING

Season 4 of “Just Eats With Chef JJ” returns to **CLEO TV** Jan. 12 at 9pm ET. This season, the James Beard Award-winning chef will cook global cuisine with *Bevy Smith*, *LeA Robinson*, *DJ Cool V* and other guests. – **Tennis Channel** reached a multiyear deal with the Women’s Tennis Association to make the company’s regional channels the home to the women’s professional tour in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. It will also host most matches shown in the Netherlands. Tennis Channel will feature approximately 800 matches each year on its subscription service and live matches on its FAST channel on Samsung TV Plus.

PEOPLE

Tonia O’Connor joined **Xperi**’s board on Dec. 30. She most recently served as the CEO of **Chopra Global** and spent time at **Univision** as President/Chief Revenue Officer. – **Surf Broadband**, a fiber provider serving the Great Lakes region, added *Deborah Crawford* to its leadership team as COO. *Lana Frank* also joined as CMO. Crawford last served as EVP/COO of **NTS Communications** and Frank was VP, Growth Marketing for **WOW!**. Frank has more than 25 years of experience with the likes of **DISH**, **CSG** and **Comcast**.