

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Unsung Hero: Comcast Sees Wireless Soar Amid Broadband Slowdown

Comcast's broadband business slowed as 2021 came to a close, but the provider still managed to bring in 212,000 broadband net additions for 4Q21.

For the full year, the company recorded 1.3 million broadband net additions, a number in line with a forecast offered by **Comcast Cable** CEO *Dave Watson* at an investor conference in December. On the company's earnings call Thursday, he attributed the slowdown to the ongoing pandemic era trends we've heard voiced by executives across the industry. Seasonality is still not matching its usual patterns and move activity across the board remains low. The good news for Comcast is that churn continues to hit record lows, although the provider didn't offer up specific churn figures during the call. And while competition remains strong across Comcast's footprint, there haven't been any significant changes to the landscape that have the company's leadership concerned.

"It's been almost three years since we competed against those early launches of fixed wireless. So our game plan is to anticipate where and how competition happens. We have a constantly evolving playbook, and the key point is we're growing penetration where we compete against both fiber and non-fiber," Watson said. "Our goal and the game plan is to focus on our ubiquitous network advantage that we have, not looking at our competitors who so often at a very local level have to make trade offs on their network

decisions."

Xfinity Mobile continues to grow into an even brighter light in Comcast's product portfolio. The company recorded 312,000 line net additions in the quarter, the highest mark recorded since the service's launch in 2017.

Packaging mobile in with broadband to lower churn and increase customer stickiness has been a priority of Comcast's since Xfinity Mobile's launch, and Watson said this year will be all about streamlining sales channels to ensure it is as easy as possible for customers to sign up for the product bundle that's right for them.

"We're simplifying and converging mobile offers just to make sure every single sales channel is optimized to deliver on these offer constructs," he said. "There'll be a mobile component to everything that we do. This is just a really big opportunity over time and if you look at it from an operational standpoint, one bill, one app, converged features in and out leveraging WiFi. There's a lot of opportunities for us and mobile."

Revenue for 4Q21 clocked in at \$30.3 billion, up 9.5% YOY. In the Cable Communications segment, revenue increased 4.5% to \$16.4 billion thanks to the increases across broadband, wireless and business services. That was partially offset by drops in advertising, video and voice revenue. Comcast lost 373,000 video customers while overall customer relationships increased by 169,000.

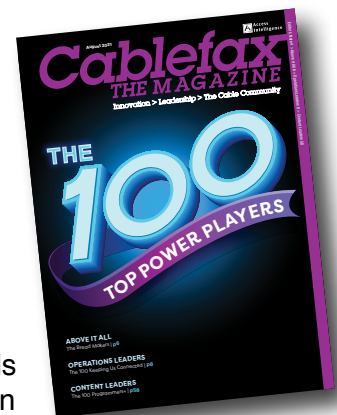
In 2022, product innovation will continue to be a key focus



Who Deserves to Rank Among Cablefax's Annual Top Power Players?

The Cablefax 100 salutes the most influential executives whose leadership continues to take the industry to new heights. We will rank the top professionals in the media, cable & broadband industry and publish the list in the June edition of Cablefax:The Magazine.

It's free to enter — but you must submit your entries by Jan. 28!



Nominate at www.Cablefax100.com | Questions: Mary-Lou French at mfrench@accessintel.com

for the entire Comcast NBCU executive team. That means continuing the momentum the company has seen from the recent launches of its first WiFi 6E gateway, a milestone on the way to the deployment of DOCSIS 4.0, and the October launches of its XClass TVs and the Sky Glass platform. Comcast didn't offer deep insights into what it has seen since diving headfirst into the smart TV ecosystem, but Comcast Chairman/CEO *Brian Roberts* said early learnings from the products have been spectacular. **Sky** CEO *Dana Strong* echoed his sentiments, saying that this product serves as a continuous source of innovation opportunities to drive retention among customers or launch additional revenue streams using the platform.

"We see people connecting to our network in a variety of ways in the future, and different generations of customers have different needs," Roberts said. "When you play with Sky Glass or a connected television, you see the potential opening up. It also creates a potential for partnerships with companies that want to use that platform and want to extend their own products in different ways. It creates relevancy for us with consumers."

PEACOCK SPREADING ITS WINGS

NBCU's favorite bird is learning to fly. **Peacock** had 24.5 million monthly active accounts at the end of 2021, and more than nine million of those are paid accounts approaching \$10 in paid ARPU. Another seven million are bundled subscribers that receive access to Peacock Premium through an Xfinity subscription or another distribution partner. "We expect strong conversion of this group to paid subscribers over time," **Comcast** Chairman/CEO *Brian Roberts* said on the company's earnings call. "We've accomplished all this despite our movies and NBC content still premiering on other streaming services through the end of 2021, including **HBO** and **Hulu**." That user data pushed NBCU to up its content spend on Peacock to more than \$3 billion in 2022 with the goal of ramping domestic content spend up to \$5 billion in the next couple years. A portion of that will be incremental, and a portion of that will be reallocation from linear programming investments. Revenue growth is expected to continue for the foreseeable future, but the increase in marketing and content investment is likely going to push back the break even point for the streamer from NBCU's original expectations. NBCU CEO *Jeff Shell* said he's a strong believer in windowing content across movies and television and using those windows to build larger audiences across all of the company's platforms. "It's not really a science. It's more of an art where we think content can work," he said. "We'll really look at it for each piece of content, whether we think it can drive Peacock subscriptions, which will start on Peacock,

or whether we think it can drive reach and we'll start on NBC or some of our linear platforms."

SOHN FCC VOTE NEXT WEEK

Senate Commerce announced late Wednesday that **FCC** nominee *Gigi Sohn* is on its agenda of nominations to consider during a Feb. 2 executive session. More than a dozen nominations are to be voted on that day, including *Alvaro Bedoya* as a Commissioner for the **FTC**. If the two are approved, it would end 2-2 party splits at both commissions. Both nominees have faced criticism by some Republicans. Even if the Committee votes down party lines, it would be a 14-14 tie, which would still send the nominations on to the full Senate for a vote. FCC chair *Jessica Rosenworcel* punted a question Thursday on how confident she is that Sohn will sail through the process, simply saying, "I'm very much looking forward to a day when the FCC has a full complement of commissioners on the dais."

Cablefax Executive Round Up

We asked executives in our industry about sports betting as it becomes legal and integrated into more programming. How can the industry help ensure responsible gambling and that wagering doesn't impact the integrity of sports? Here's what they had to say.



Scott Butera

President

Fubo Gaming

"As sports betting continues to expand and further integrate into programming, it's critical for all parties to work collaboratively to promote a safe and responsible gaming environment, which leads to a better fan experience. At the operator level, we educate our users about the importance of responsible gaming and provide safety tools like self-exclusion and limits, while also training our staff to recognize gambling problems. In conjunction, steps must continue to be taken at the regulator and state levels to ensure a responsible gaming environment overall."



Cait DeBaun

VP, Strategic Communications & Responsibility

American Gaming Association

"The gaming industry has long been committed to responsible gaming—investing hundreds of millions of dollars annually in research, tools and employee training. This commitment extends to sports betting. And it's critical that the broader sports betting industry—including broadcasters, teams, leagues, and media companies—ensures responsibility grows in tandem with legal sports betting. The American Gaming Association launched our 'Have A Game Plan. Bet Responsibly' public service announcement campaign to do just that. Our partners from across the sports betting ecosystem are using their channels on broadcast, out of home, and digital to educate fans on responsible wagering and the legal market. Protections for the integrity of wagers and competitions only exist in the regulated market and it's essential we continue to drive fans to legal options."

NO SCHEDULE FOR MTE ORDER

FCC Chair *Jessica Rosenworcel* didn't offer a timeframe for a vote on her proposed order that would tighten rules around how broadband providers offer service to those living in apartments and other multi-tenant environments. "I hope that they will be able to vote on it in short order, but I also want to respect they want to take a little time to look at it and understand the conclusions we've reached," Rosenworcel said during a call with reporters Thursday. The item circulated late last week would prohibit broadband providers from entering into graduated revenue sharing agreements or exclusive revenue sharing agreements with building owners and clarify that FCC rules prohibit sale-and-leaseback arrangements for inside wiring, which critics say essentially block access for alternative providers.

FCC SEEKS INPUT ON BROADBAND LABELS

The **FCC** voted unanimously Thursday to seek comment on establishing rules that would mandate broadband providers display so-called "nutrition labels" with easy-to-understand info to help consumers comparison shop for internet service. Republican FCC Commissioner *Brendan Carr* said he supports more transparency, but believes the real "black box" is in Big Tech. "Big Tech companies provide less transparency than broadband providers regarding their practices and commercial terms," he said, suggesting that this label approach would be a good place to start in bringing more sunlight to Big Tech practices. Thursday's proposal follows a mandate from Congress as part of the infrastructure bill to have providers create consumer-friendly labels with broadband service info. It follows a previously approved 2016 FCC item that created voluntary labels for broadband providers. The FCC wants to know whether those 2016 labels need to be updated, and it's seeking to better understand how consumers evaluate broadband service plans. The Infrastructure Act requires the FCC to adopt regulations within a year of its passage and to conduct a series of public hearings to help inform the labeling requirements.

NBCU OFFER WINTER GAMES IN 4K

NBC Sports will provide live coverage of **NBC's** Olympics primetime and Prime Plus shows in certain markets in 4K UHD with HDR and ATMOS sound—a first. NBC's coverage of the Opening and Closing Ceremonies also will be presented in 4K HDR. NBCU will distribute the 4K HDR content to US distribution partners, which will individually choose how to make the content available to their customers.

CARRIAGE

Streaming service **Fox News International** will launch on **Roku** Monday, giving it increased reach across Chile, Costa Rica, Germany, Ireland, Mexico and the U.K. The service, available in 37 countries worldwide for \$6.99/month, features live streams of **Fox News** and **Fox Business** along with a catalog of on demand programs. – The **AccuWeather NOW** streaming service launched on **LG Channels**, the TV maker's service combining premium and digital internet channels with broadcast and cable lineups.

LGBTQ+ EQUALITY CHAMPS

The Human Rights Campaign recognized 842 businesses for meeting all the criteria to earn a 100% rating on its Corporate

Equality Index and the designation of being a 2022 "Best Place to Work for LGBTQ+ Equality." Familiar industry names on the list include **Altice USA, Amazon, Apple, AT&T, Comcast NBCU, Cox Enterprises, Fox Corp., Google, Lions Gate, Nielsen, TEGNA, Univision, Verizon, ViacomCBS** and **The Walt Disney Co.** Companies earned top marks for taking steps to establish policies, benefits and practices to ensure greater equity for LGBTQ+ workers.

BLACK CONTENT'S GLOBAL RISE

Black content and representation have reached new heights in mainstream media and that doesn't just apply to the U.S. "Content is now being developed for an international audience... The consumption of Black content in the Asian market is tremendous," **NAACP** President *Derrick Johnson* said during a recorded **Starz** "Transparency Talks" panel on Wednesday. The programmer launched the monthly, table-talk series in April as part of its #TakeTheLead initiative, which seeks to amplify diverse voices. A significant factor in pushing global demand for Black content is the number of streaming platforms available, offering new avenues for producers. "If you can pick up a phone, you can make content. [We] don't need a studio telling us what we can and cannot do," said *Deon Taylor*, CEO of *Hidden Empire Film Group*. Taylor and Johnson were joined during the discussion by Rep *Barbara Lee* (D-CA), who is the subject of the documentary "Speaking Truth to Power" which premieres on Starz and its streaming platform on Feb. 1. Nominated for an NAACP Image Award, the film details the highest-ranking Black woman in Congress' career and activism in civil rights. "The content going global... is so important because it is empowering. It brings people together," Lee said.

DOING GOOD

Charter is doubling its investment in the Spectrum Scholars program and making the scholarship and internship program annual as opposed to biannual. Beginning with the 2022-2023 academic year, Charter will award scholarships to a new class of 20 rising college juniors annually, for a \$400,000 total yearly commitment. Applicants must be rising college juniors with financial need and identify as Asian/Pacific Islander, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino and/or Native American. Each Scholar is assigned a Charter mentor and given the opportunity to pursue an internship at one of Charter's corporate offices.

ON THE (PARTY) CIRCUIT

AT&T may have spun off **DirectTV**, but that doesn't mean the party's over. The satellite and streaming provider has a history of throwing must-attend Super Bowl soirees. This year is no different, with DirecTV serving as presenting sponsor for the invite-only Chairman's Party Feb. 10. The event, complete with a DirecTV Blue carpet, will feature eight-time Grammy winner *Usher* on the **BET Network** stage at SoFi Stadium.

PEOPLE

A+E Networks promoted CTO *Susan Tanamli* to EVP, Head of Global Technology and Media Operations, expanding her oversight to include Global Engineering and Broadcast Operations and Global Media and Production Operations.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

It's Not Easy Being A 'Single Black Female'

Life isn't always full of sunshine and happy days, and when the going gets rough, each of us find people and friends to lean on until we can stand back on our own two feet. In **Lifetime's** "Single Black Female," that devoted friend won't hesitate to stab you in the back when given the right opportunity. Premiering Feb 5 at 8pm, the film is a spin on the 1992 cult classic "Single White Female." The thriller focuses on Monica (*Raven Goodwin*), a television host recovering from a breakup and a family tragedy, and her new assistant, Simone (*Amber Riley*). It's not long before Simone has completely integrated herself into every aspect of Monica's life, and she is determined to do whatever it takes to make it her own. The strength of the film comes from the authenticity of both Riley and Goodwin's performances, something borne out of hardships each had experienced or were experiencing in their personal lives. The film begins with Goodwin's character losing her father, something Goodwin herself experienced just a few months before production began. "The grieving pieces where I connected with Monica are the moments where we had to bring back that piece of her life would never be the same," Goodwin said during a press junket. "It was kind of healing to go through that with Monica kind of at the same time and just kind of empathize and sympathize to what she was going through at that time." For Riley, becoming Simone meant tapping into insecurities that dated back to her childhood. Much like her character, she desperately wanted to be someone else. "Growing up, there weren't many people that looked like me, so when I found a singer or an actor... I wanted to model after that person," Riley added. "So that insecurity that Simone has of not feeling good enough and wanting to be Monica, I did tap into that little girl that was like I aspire to be someone else. I don't want to be me. I don't know who I am." – *Sara Winegardner*

REVIEWS

"Adults Adopting Adults," series premiere, 10pm, Monday, **A&E**. You decide: Your reviewer is naïve or the language describing this new docu-series is misleading? In a press release, A&E tells critics the show "spotlights the true and unbelievable stories of grown-ups seeking legal adoption." Later we read, it "explores the unique stories of grown adults who are pursuing the unusual route to the American family: adult adoption." The initial moments center on Danny and Christy, a 40s-50s married couple from OH. They've decided to adopt a 20-ish woman, who was an orphan. Sounds admirable. Then we learn the young woman has a small child. Still sounds good. Then Danny says the couple wasn't able to continue adopting a previous woman, aged 18, "because I actually started having feelings for her. She was a very beautiful young lady." (Cue the ominous music.) Christy then explains Danny has a history of infidelity. When an off-camera interviewer asks her, "What do your friends and family say to you when you tell them about" the adoption plans? Christy responds, "'Are you (expletive) crazy?'" Voyeurs will be delighted watching this series. – "Terry Bradshaw, Going Deep," 9pm, Tuesday, **HBO**. Footage of the former NFL great doing his stage show, singing country tunes (decently), telling stories and jokes, also not bad. It's little more than an escape, but it's enjoyable. – *Seth Arenstein*

BASIC CABLE		
P2+ PRIME RANKINGS*		
(01/17/22-01/23/22)		
MON-SUN	MC	MC
	US	US AA
	AA%	(000)
FNC	0.763	2378
ESPN	0.577	1799
MSNBC	0.381	1187
HGTV	0.361	1124
HALL	0.302	942
TLC	0.284	884
INSP	0.262	816
HIST	0.240	749
DISC	0.240	748
FOOD	0.234	729
LIFE	0.198	617
TBSC	0.185	577
ID	0.184	572
CNN	0.183	570
TVLAND	0.179	557
USA	0.164	510
TNT	0.157	488
A&E	0.152	474
HMM	0.146	455
BRAVO	0.133	413
GSN	0.129	401
WETV	0.127	396
SYFY	0.127	394
FX	0.123	382
BET	0.122	380
ESPN2	0.120	375
NATGEO	0.119	370
OXYGEN	0.103	322
NICK	0.102	316
AMC	0.097	301
MGNLIA	0.096	297
PARA	0.093	289
ADSM	0.092	287
NAN	0.091	284

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



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