

Cablefax Daily

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WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Future of Work: Enterprise Connect

Speakers Say Hybrid is Here to Stay

This week's Enterprise Connect conference in Orlando proved interesting on a couple different levels for cable execs in attendance. On one hand, cable and broadband operators are looking at how to best support enterprise business clients as they embrace a hybrid working environment. But secondly, their own organizations, which often span multiple states and can employ tens of thousands, could also benefit from some of EC22's takeaways.

"We need to relearn the skills we lost two years ago, and we need to unlearn skills that don't work in a hybrid workplace," **Zoom** Global CIO Gary Sorrentino said in a Wednesday keynote. His message was the employees want choice and flexibility in this stage of the pandemic, but regardless of where they physically are, they want to be included and connected. "Analysts tell us a huge number of conference rooms are not video enabled. There are a huge percentage of companies who have done zero changes and are waiting for the hybrid workforce to come back," Sorrentino said.

Much of his pitch was spent positioning Zoom as more than that "Hollywood Squares" grid that became so ubiquitous during COVID-19. The company showed off a virtual receptionist, where the actual receptionist can be on a different floor, building or even in her home. The keynote also included a look at Zoom's "smart gallery," which features those calling in to a traditional Zoom call as well as employees in an in-office conference room. Instead of

one Zoom panel dedicated to a long shot of a conference table and those around it, there were three video streams from the room, providing close-up images of in-person participants.

"If the pandemic was the great disrupter, hybrid has now become the great pivot," **RingCentral** CMO Jaya Kumar said during another EC22 session. "The general conclusion is the world is unlikely to go the way we were working pre-pandemic all the time."

Nine out of 10 people in RingCentral's global survey of 9,000 customers said they do not expect to work in office more than three days a week. "It's almost a precondition that that's a systemic change the world anticipates for a long time to come," Kumar said. He said workers are finding that they love the devices, user interfaces and consumer experience they've had while working at home, and now as they return to the office, they realize, "Oh my God, this really looks outdated."

Best known for the RingCentral Office flagship product, the company has been looking at how it can provide "radical mobility" in everything it does. Chief Innovation Officer Kira Makagon showed off some of the company's new products, including "advanced meeting insights." "We've leveraged our deep AI capabilities to generate meeting summaries with keywords, highlights and transcripts so that it's easy for you to catch up on what you've missed," she said. "It's like the **ESPN** Sports highlights, same idea. Just read through the highlights. If you want to, you can jump from one topic to another topic."

With business travel heating up again, it's worth noting that EC22 had a pretty bustling show floor. Exhibitors included **Spec-**

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FREE TO ENTER!

**trum Enterprise, Verizon Business, Slack, Twilio and Blue-
Jeans** by Verizon. News coming out of the conference includes Charter's Spectrum Enterprise Network Edge, designed to simplify the management and migration of complex, larger-scale networks with a cloud-based portal, advanced security and SD-WAN capabilities. Verizon Business unveiled new capabilities for BlueJeans Mobile for Android and iOS, such as a collaboration board for up to 25 remote meeting attendees.

"Going back is going to be messy... Companies, we're not going to get it right the first time," advised Zoom's Sorrentino. "Listen to employees and customers. What they told us six months ago is completely different now. From everyone at Zoom, we have just begun."

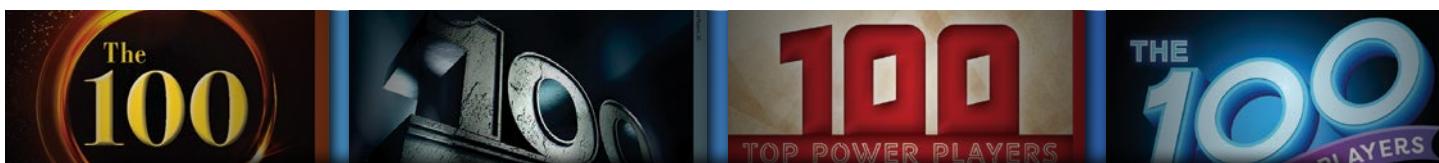
TROUBLE LOOMING FOR RIP AND REPLACE

Former **FCC** Commissioner Michael O'Reilly is pushing Congress to address a major gap in how much the federal government has appropriated for the Commission's Rip and Replace program and its actual needs. In a blog posted to his consulting firm's website, O'Reilly explained that the program, which aims to reimburse operators for removing network equipment that poses national security risks and replacing it with alternative products, is expected to receive more than \$5.6 billion in applications, but only \$1.895 billion has been set aside. "Even though the statute prioritizes funding for very small providers (i.e., those with 2 million or fewer customers), this will not resolve the needs of these providers, necessitating prorated reimbursements at significantly reduced rates. That means, smaller providers would be faced with untenable options, including the possibility of going out of business," O'Reilly said. The Rip and Replace program could face additional

challenges due to supply chain issues that have arisen out of the global semiconductor shortage. **Senate Commerce** Chair Maria Cantwell (D-WA) voiced her own concerns during a hearing on the semiconductor shortage Wednesday, claiming the wait times for some networking equipment is now at 50 weeks. "The cost of some networking equipment has risen 12% and price gougers are selling chips for 100 times their regular price," she said. "That is no way to build out the access to our broadband." Ranking Member Roger Wicker (R-MS) pointed out there is a chance the semiconductor shortage could get even worse if China follows Russia's lead when it comes to warring with neighboring nations. "Taiwan now accounts for 92% of the world's most advanced semiconductor manufacturing capacity. Think of the consequences if China were to invade our Taiwanese partner," he said.

STARLINK PRICES HEAD SKY HIGH

Starlink is increasing its rates across the board with the price of a starter kit rising immediately from \$499 to \$599. Those that have already placed a deposit on their Starlink service will pay an increased cost of \$549. Starlink monthly service price will also rise from \$99 to \$110, effective May 9. The sole reason cited for the upped costs was the rise in inflation. "Since launching our public beta service in October 2020, the Starlink team has tripled the number of satellites in orbit, quadrupled the number of ground stations and made continuous improvements to our network," Starlink said in an email to customers. "Going forward, users can expect Starlink to maintain its cadence of continuous network improvements as well as new feature additions." Users of the Starlink **Reddit** page lamented



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the announcement and argued that it contradicted previous statements from company leadership promising price drops, not increases, as the service got off the ground. Just under one year ago, SpaceX President/COO Gwynne Shotwell said she expected the price of terminals to [drop](#) for consumers from the \$499 upfront cost to just a few hundred dollars within two years.

ANOTHER ECF WINDOW COMING

The **FCC** will open a third and likely final application filing window to award more than \$1 billion in Emergency Connectivity Fund support on April 28. Until May 13, eligible schools and libraries will be able to submit requests for funding to purchase eligible equipment and services between July 1, 2022, and Dec 31, 2023. The Commission believes this round will likely exhaust the last of the funds appropriated for the ECF. To date, the program has funded more than 10 million connected devices and 5 million broadband connections.

COMCAST RELEASES NEW OPEN-SOURCE SOFTWARE

Comcast is making **xGitGuard**, a tool used by its technologists to ensure authentication secrets don't leak onto open-source repositories, is now available as an open-source software. The tool was first deployed in 2020 and uses artificial intelligence with natural language processing and has two separate models: one for detecting credentials and another for catching API tokens and keys. Comcast has found it particularly helpful in spotting leaks in communities like GitHub, where its development teams are publishing code, collaborating on software development or pulling open-source code from GitHub for use in new products and solutions.

METROLOGICAL DEBUTS LIGHTNING PROGRAM

Metrological revealed its new **Lightning Partner Program** that provides TV operators and content providers a network of resources to help bring Lightning-based TV apps and UXs to market faster and cost efficiently. The Lightning Program has two tracks: the Lightning Partner Program, launched first with Amdocs and TV2Z, and Lightning Developer Program for individual developers. More companies are expected to be added to the partner program in the coming months, and all those that receive invitations must have successfully deployed Lightning-based apps in the Metrological App Library. Using the Metrological Application Platform, TV operators can then choose content from the app library to deploy within their systems.

TELEMUNDO NAMED SPANISH PARTNER FOR USF

The U.S. Soccer Foundation named **Telemundo** as its first official Spanish-language media partner. The foundation will team up with Telemundo to host a series of "Soccer for Success" events in cities across the U.S. ahead of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar.

CHARTER UPS STARTING SPEEDS

Charter Communications' Spectrum Internet now has starting speeds of 200 Mbps in all markets. This doubles the starting speed in 33 markets comprising of almost 3 million homes. The company will automatically increase speeds for current customers with Spectrum Internet packages in the coming weeks.

605 MAKES ADVANCED AUDIENCES AVAILABLE

605 is making its **Advanced Audiences** available through 605 Exchange, allowing advertisers to decipher TV audiences with more precision using first- or third-party data. Advanced Audiences will be available to customers using **Xandr**'s sell-side and buy-side advanced TV platforms. Brands will be able to create granular audiences and execute buys against customer segments instead of using traditional age and gender-based demographic ratings.

WARNER BROS. PREPS FOR CENTENNIAL

Warner Bros. released its centennial logo ahead of the studio's 100th anniversary on April 4. The logo incorporates the Warner Bros. water tower inside the number 100, putting together the "100 years of storytelling" motto. Beginning at the end of this year and into 2023, Warner Bros. will launch a campaign across every division of the studio and its network sister companies, including **HBO Max**, **TNT**, **TBS** and **TruTV**.

RATINGS

Fox News Channel topped competing cable news networks every hour for Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson's Supreme Court confirmation hearings, according to early data from **Nielsen Media Research**. Fox News came first in both total viewers and the 25-54 demographic for the second day of coverage. From 9am-5pm, Fox News had 1.4 million total viewers, while **MSNBC** had 858,000 and **CNN** had 711,000. On the first day of the hearings, Fox News garnered 1.72 million viewers in the 3pm hour where Judge Jackson gave her opening statement. – It was a record weekend for Formula 1's opening race in Bahrain. An average of 1.35 million people tuned into **ESPN**'s broadcast, making it the largest audience for an F1 race on any ESPN network since 2018 and the second most-viewed on both cable and ESPN on record. The race started around 11am and viewership peaked at 1.54 million between 12:30-12:45pm. It had an average of 656,000 viewers for P18-49 and the top U.S. metered TV markets were Richmond, Va. (1.9 rating) followed by Miami/Ft. Lauderdale (1.6) and Charlotte (1.5).

PROGRAMMING

TelevisaUnivision reached a deal with **Propagate Fuego** to produce Spanish-language, original scripted content for **VIX+**. TelevisaUnivision will have exclusive first-look rights to all content developed by Propagate Fuego. The deal includes a development fund for options, writers, formats and scripts as well. – The Premier Lacrosse League and **ESPN** reached a four-year media rights agreement that will span the network's broadcast, cable and streaming platforms. Games will air across **ABC**, **ESPN**, **ESPN2** and **ESPN+**, with all 47 games of the season also heading to **ESPN+**. – **Fox Nation** is launching "Duck Family Treasure," a 10-part series that'll be available in June. The show spotlights Jase and Jep Robertson as they search for treasure. – **YES Network** and **Jomboy Media** entered a content and marketing partnership, where Jomboy will produce original content for the YES App and the linear network.

PEOPLE

Comcast's Tony Werner has joined the team of cloud storage firm MinIO as a company advisor.

Think about that for a minute...

Podcasts

Commentary by Steve Effros

OK, a short jaunt down memory lane; who was, or is, your favorite radio talk show host? For me, it was Gene Shepherd. In my youth, I would listen late at night to Gene ramble on about just about any subject you could imagine. He was informative, well versed, and hilarious. One of the most successful for a very long time was "The Prairie Home Companion" with Garrison Keillor. I'm sure you can all think of others, with famous local personalities both providing information and humor on a local basis through the years. What would those programs be called today? Podcasts.

Yup, we've moved into the "podcast" era. It's actually just on demand radio with a fancy name derived from one of the first pieces of technology that made it easy to walk around and listen at the same time; the iPod. Naturally, with the advent of on-demand everything, and the ease with which digital audio, in particular, can be delivered via broadband, phone or whatever, "podcasts" have become ubiquitous.

A lot of the new podcasts are actually being produced by the old, established brands. The New York Times, the Washington Post, The Atlantic, CNN, Fox, MSNBC and the like. Everyone seems to be getting in the game, and that's both good and bad. I'm not sure what the business model is for these things in the long run. But I certainly understand the rush to create them.

It seems to me the journalism world is going through yet another cycle. The standard newspaper was overtaken by the USA Today style of short, snappy stories assuming that reading attention spans had reduced to the point that the only thing folks were interested in was the headline. But the "headline" business was then taken over by the Internet format of constant headlines delivered by just about everyone from Google to Microsoft to Apple to CNN. There's a whole column there about the "aggregation" of news headlines and the use of the work product of other copyrighted publications, but that's for another time.

Anyway, the 'short form' news distribution popularity induced the "old line" publications to switch gears and go for long, in-

depth writing and reporting. That's how we've gotten The New Yorker or The Atlantic or a whole host of other magazines and a lot of newspapers veering toward massive tomes about any given subject. Page upon page is devoted to proving how deep the research was that resulted in the product. The only problem, and I concede a lot of it is really good "reporting," is that I suspect very few folks wind up reading the entire piece! It's just too long, too detailed, and in many cases too poorly edited.

So what to do? Well, if you have a medium where folks can divide their time between driving or walking or jogging (or just napping) and listening to someone talk their way through any given subject, be it science or politics or storytelling or just random interviews with interesting people (thank you, Terry Gross) and then you package it in such a way that it's not just a linear "radio" feed but also an "on demand" offering, what you get is a "podcast!"

I'm all for them, but I'm also convinced that while they're very easy to technologically produce, and thus are wildly proliferating, they may have a very short half-life. The business model is just too fragile. Yes, some will be extremely successful on a subscription basis. Others will succeed with advertising. Many will have a combination of both (Spotify pays them and they also have ads... sort of like cable television!) But there are just too many of them popping up, and, as with video, it's becoming almost impossible to navigate and know which are worth the time. What's your "best" list?



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(Steve Effros was President of CATA for 23 years and is now an advisor and consultant to the cable industry. His views do not necessarily reflect the views of Cablefax.)

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