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WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

DOCSIS 4.0 Ahead: Comcast Begins Multi-Gig Rollout

Things are about to get much faster at **Comcast**, which announced Thursday that it has begun a nationwide rollout of multi-gig internet speeds. The operator will begin offering 10G-enabled multi-gig symmetrical services in the second half of 2023, with multi-gig speeds expected to reach more than 50 million homes and businesses before the end of 2025.

“The new news today is second half of 2023, we’re going to be in the market with DOCSIS 4.0 and rolling out different geographies, and that is the technology that’s going to allow us to have multi-gig symmetric in the market, which can effectively compete against anything,” Deputy CFO *Jason Armstrong* said at a *Bank of America* conference Thursday.

Given the investor crowd in attendance, Armstrong clarified that DOCSIS 4.0 shouldn’t be viewed as some huge, expensive investment cycle. “We’ve been splitting nodes for a long period of time, we’ve been upgrading DOCSIS cycles for a long period of time. This is just the next iteration of that,” he said.

Charter CFO *Jessica Fischer* sang a similar DOCSIS 4.0 tune at the conference earlier in the week. “Right now, the equipment isn’t available at scale yet. I think that we will have to spend some time sort of working through that process, so I don’t think I can commit to a timeline or necessarily to how much capex—though I would say... the advantage that we have always had is that [DOCSIS is] capital efficient,” she said. “We expect DOCSIS 4.0 also to be capital efficient by

the time that we get there. I think that it’ll be reasonable and I think that it’ll deliver the kind of impactful changes in what we can offer to customers using the existing DOCSIS network.”

Under the multi-gig initiative, Comcast will immediately roll out download speeds up to 2 Gbps, combined with up to 5x-to-10x faster upload speeds in 34 cities and towns before the end of 2022. Initial 2 Gbps rollouts are already underway in Colorado Springs, Colorado; Augusta, Georgia; and Panama City Beach, Florida. To gear up for multi-gigabit symmetrical Wi-Fi, Comcast launched its Wi-Fi 6E Gateway earlier this year.

Comcast’s launch of multi-gig comes as cable operators face growing competitive pressure from fiber-to-the-home providers, with **AT&T**, **Metronet** and a slew of new entrants providing multi-gig via fiber. Last quarter marked the first ever that Comcast lost broadband customers. Armstrong attributed the loss to suppressed move activity and a competitive environment that includes fiber and fixed wireless. Both Charter and Comcast downplayed the pressure from fiber during their remarks. “We’ve been competing against fiber for two decades and fiber has gone from 0% to 40% across our footprint in a fairly linear fashion. And in that time frame, we’ve become America’s number one broadband provider, 32 million subs,” Armstrong said. “In the last couple of years through the pandemic, we added 3 million subscribers in an environment where fiber was actually picking up in terms of the presence in the markets.”

Charter’s footprint also is overlapped by fiber by about 40%.

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- **MICHAEL K. POWELL** – President & CEO, NCTA-The Internet & Television Association; Former Chairman of the FCC

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Fischer said that the fiber overbuild pace was “slightly higher” in 2Q22 than in previous quarters, but she was quick to add that Charter has a long history of competing against fiber overbuilders and she didn’t see the uptick having a big impact on 2Q results. “The thing that gives me confidence that we’ll continue to be able to compete with those fiber providers, first off, is the differentiated product experience,” which includes converged mobile and broadband connectivity, video service and a fully provisioned gigabit speed network across the entire footprint, she said. “We have consistency across markets that they don’t have because they’ve done fiber upgrades across targeted, smaller portions of their footprint that don’t necessarily cover entire markets. Our ability to deliver that converged connectivity product and to do it consistently across our entire footprint, I think is really important to our ability to compete with them and long term.”

As for fixed wireless, Armstrong described it as having “a moment right now” for customers willing to tolerate lower speeds, higher latency and spotty household coverage. Cable’s prevailing thought is that ultimately those shortcomings will bring those customers back to them.

Comcast didn’t pre-announce 3Q22 broadband sub numbers, but Armstrong did give some color. During 2Q22’s earnings call, Comcast said it had lost 30,000 subs in July, but expected the back-to-school season to be a tailwind in August and September. “As I sit here right now, the outlook that we gave is kind of exactly what’s played out. We had a little bit of a headwind, obviously, that we were working against in July, and we made some progress in August and September,” he said.

WBD SPENDING ON CONTENT

It’s show business, not the show friends business. That’s a line Warner Bros. Discovery President/CEO David Zaslav uses as the newly merged company embarks on its early journey/ But as 150 days have passed, WBD has spent lots of time fine-tuning the groundwork once its executive team settled in. While that includes making decisions such as axing CNN+ and canceling films like “Batgirl,” the company has also unveiled plans to combine discovery+ and HBO Max into one service to be released next summer. CFO Gunnar Wiedenfels said at the Bank of America Conference on Thursday that WBD knows it has one chance at a successful launch. However, it’s opting to join the two services instead of bundling, going against what other companies have been doing. Wiedenfels said it comes down to two factors: financial profile and user experience. “One central thesis here is the ability to combine these two content portfolios, create something that attracts viewers sort of for the lighthouse type of content that HBO Max offers on the one hand, but then also the Discovery content, which drives daily engagement, that daily viewership and that long daily viewership,” Wiedenfels said. He added for subscribers to efficiently scale the platform from a financial perspective, it needs to be on one integrated platform. WBD revealed plans to release a FAST service as well, but the priority is to get the SVOD service out the door. As renewals for sports broadcasting deals come up for the NBA, WBD is thinking globally when it comes to the value it brings, but it wants to avoid chasing deals that could ultimately backfire without proper investment. “It’s very easy in sports not to be disciplined and to chase the trophy assets,”

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Wiedenfels said. “We’ll be careful, we’ll be perfectly rational when evaluating these opportunities, but I do think what makes a difference is that we have that ability to partner with leagues by bringing to the table our full global footprint here.”

REMEMBERING QUEEN ELIZABETH II

Given that it has been 70 years since a British monarch died, cable news networks are in uncharted waters. They quickly jumped in with nonstop coverage Thursday as word came of *Queen Elizabeth II*’s passing at age 96. **Fox News’ Martha MacCallum** will helm the network’s coverage live from London Friday. MacCallum also voiced the network’s obituary of the world’s longest-living monarch, with *Trace Gallagher* to anchor special programming overnight from 12-4amET. **CNN**’s special live coverage will also continue tonight and overnight into Friday. At 10pm ET tonight, it will air “CNN Special Report: A Queen for the Ages: Elizabeth II.” While the news nets are centerstage right now, given the queen’s huge cultural influence, look for entertainment networks to pay tribute and to welcome *King Charles III*.

AMC NETS CENTRALIZES AD SALES, DISTRIBUTION

AMC Networks is centralizing its commercial revenue and distribution functions with *Josh Reader*, President of Distribution and Development, leaving to pursue a new venture in the content creation/blockchain space. The new integrated team will be led by *Kim Kelleher*, who was elevated to President of Commercial Revenue from President, Commercial Revenue and Partnerships. She reports to CEO *Christina Spade*. Reader, who joined the company in 2011, will remain with the company through early next year. Under the new structure, *Roy Cho*, who has been promoted to EVP, Distribution; *Mike Pears*, EVP, Distribution and Content Sales; and *Amy Leasca*, SVP, Partner Management, report to Kelleher.

CARRIAGE

Shopping network **HSN** is now available on **YouTube TV**, joining **QVC** as the platform’s only two retail networks. Owned by **Qurate Retail**, HSN’s counts fashion programming as its most-watched content. Top programs “Gotta See G by Giuliana Rancic” and “Fashion Fridays with Amy,” both are viewed by more than 270,000 homes per hour across the U.S. according to **Comscore**. – **Spectrum News’** connected TV app has launched on **Apple TV** and **Roku** devices. The app allows customers to view Spectrum News’ more than 30 local linear networks and original content. It comes with a free 30-day trial for anyone before being available to authenticated Spectrum subscribers at no added cost.

ADVERTISERS SEE ADDRESSABLE BENEFITS

Nearly 67% of advertisers are incorporating addressable ads in media campaigns, **Go Addressable** research [found](#). In the second of a three-part series, Go Addressable found among those using addressable ads, 48% said it was because it provides better targeting and 46% claim it has the ability to measure and prove ROI. For those not using addressable, 39% attribute budget limitations and 23% don’t see the value match the cost.

AMG MAKES DTC ADVANCEMENT

Allen Media Group and **Quickplay** are joining forces for AMG’s DTC products to use the cloud-native OTT platform

and help accelerate its overall DTC strategy. The platform will increase engagement and monetization across AMG’s portfolio, which includes **Local Now**, **HBCU GO** and **The Weather Channel** streaming app, and allow it to quickly create new features to optimize viewer satisfaction and retention.

HAPPY 30TH NY1

Today marks the 30th anniversary of **NY1** (rechristened **Spectrum News NY1** following **Charter**’s purchase of **Time Warner Cable** in 2016) and it remains NYC’s only 24/7 news station. To celebrate, the net spent the day looking back at some of the notable stories covered over the past three decades (journalists *Cheryl Wills* and *Lewis Dodley* have been with NY1 since Day 1). It’s also airing special 30th anniversary vignettes all month long.

WICT NAMES WOMEN OF YEAR, WOMEN TO WATCH

The WICT Network unveiled this year’s Women of the Year and Women to Watch on Thursday. **Cox Communications** EVP/COO *Colleen Langner* will be honored as Woman of the Year—Operator and **Hallmark Media** President/CEO **Wonya Lucas** will receive the award’s Programmer category. Three women were picked as Women to Watch honorees: **Charter**’s Regional VP, Field Operations—West Division **Shannon Atkinson**, **Warner Bros. Discovery** SVP, Business & Legal Affairs *Lisa Williams-Fauntroy* and **CommScope** VP, Global Key Account Marketing *Urvi Shah*. The winners will be given their awards at the Touchstones Luncheon held Oct. 10 during The WICT Network Leadership conference.

PROGRAMMING

Lifetime is leaning in to *Ann Rule* books, greenlighting two movies inspired by the true crime writer’s books, “Desperate Hours” and “A Rose for Her Grave.” Both are set to premiere next year. – Three days ahead of the theatrical release of *Viola Davis’* “The Woman King,” **OWN** will debut “Oprah and Viola The Woman King,” with the two women discussing the role of *Nanisca*, a general of an all-female army in 19th Century Africa. (Sept. 13, 9pm).

OBITUARY

Bernard Shaw, **CNN**’s first chief anchor, passed away Wednesday at age 82. Shaw’s family said the cause was pneumonia unrelated to COVID-19. Shaw’s career, which spanned from June 1, 1980, to his retirement in February 2001, included covering the First Gulf War live from Baghdad and the student revolt in Tiananmen Square. “Even after he left CNN, Bernie remained a close member of our CNN family providing our viewers with context about historic events as recently as last year. The condolences of all of us at CNN go out to his wife Linda and his children,” CNN Chairman/CEO *Chris Licht* said in a statement.

PEOPLE

Falcon V Systems, a global software solutions provider for MSOs, picked *Ulf Andersson* as CEO. He’ll live in the U.S. as the company looks to continue its growth and add more focus in North America. Former CEO *Bartosz Kajut* will remain with the company as President for a transitional period before continuing as the board appointee by **VECTOR Group**.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

Starz Shows Catherine de Medici's Other Side

If edgy, historical drama is your thing, **Starz** has you covered with “The Serpent Queen” (premiering Sunday at midnight on the Starz app, streaming and on demand platforms; linear debut 8pm in the U.S. and Canada). It’s the tale of *Catherine de Medici’s* ascent to the throne in France. It’s certainly not the first time Catherine’s life has made it to TV, with it figuring prominently in the **CW’s** Mary, Queen of Scots series “Reign” (2013-2017). Catherine’s fascinating life, rising from commoner to queen, makes her popular fodder. She’s often framed as the villain, but Starz’s new drama found a way to tell her story a bit differently. “I liked the idea of a villain from history who would kind of address us and say let me you tell why I did the things I did and you’ll judge me differently,” said creator/executive producer *Justin Haythe* during a Summer TCA session. “The idea of the show is you have to look at Catherine, both young Catherine and old Catherine... and really wonder if this is an evil person with shards of good or it’s a good person who’s capable of evil to survive.” Catherine is portrayed by *Samantha Morton* (“Minority Report,” “The Walking Dead”), with *Liv Hill* (“Jellyfish”) taking the role of young Catherine. Sharing a complex role like this could be daunting, but Morton and Hill play well off one another. “One of the best things for me when I briefly met Samantha is when she said to me, ‘I’m so glad that they chose you and I’m really excited,’ because it just gave me that, OK I don’t have to do an interpretation—an imitation of you. We can just trust each other, which was really lovely,” Hill said. Each actor manages to own the role, while sharing a connection. “I think that people do change as well, enormously from 14 to in your 30s and 40s,” said Morton. “People change enormously, but not so much in their spirit sometimes. And I think with Liv and I, I think there’s a real similarity.” – *Amy Maclean*

REVIEWS

“Departure,” Season 1, streaming on **Peacock, Apple TV+, Amazon Prime Video, Vudu**. There are so many things that viewers can enjoy about this Canadian series’ initial season, which bowed there in 2019. First, for fans of *Christopher Plummer*, his role as Howard Lawson, the well-respected head of a London-based agency responsible for investigating aviation mishaps, is one of the Canadian actor’s final TV appearances. It’s investigator Kendra Malley’s (*Archie Panjabi*) admiration for Lawson that brings her back to the agency. Lawson convinces her only she can uncover what happened to a commercial NY-London flight that apparently disappeared about 4 hours after takeoff. Almost immediately, and to the dismay of Malley and her team, a representative of MI5 (*Claire Forlani*) joins the investigation, pushing a terrorism angle. This wrinkle pits Malley against Forlani’s character, Janet Friel. In addition, there’s a political aspect to the story. Several countries have ordered the same aircraft as the one that disappeared. If the aircraft is found faulty, then the orders are off and a lot of trade delegations are upset. Similar to many *Hitchcock* films, not everything is what it seems. As such, there are a slew of plot turns and characters go from good to bad and back. Add a bunch of high-tech gadgets, a personal story or two and you have a dynamite who-dun-it. – *Seth Arenstein*

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P2+ PRIME RANKINGS*		
(08/29/22-09/04/22)		
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	US	US AA
	AA%	(000)
FNC	0.673	2098
MSNBC	0.416	1294
ESPN	0.387	1206
HGTV	0.279	870
ESPN2	0.279	869
INSP	0.251	780
HALL	0.236	735
TLC	0.235	733
TBSC	0.201	628
CNN	0.189	589
DISC	0.187	583
FOOD	0.176	548
USA	0.170	529
TVLAND	0.164	512
HIST	0.158	494
ID	0.147	458
PRMNT	0.146	455
BRAVO	0.136	423
HMM	0.130	406
A&E	0.130	405
REELZ	0.126	393
LIFE	0.122	380
WETV	0.121	376
TNT	0.120	373
GSN	0.115	357
SYFY	0.112	350
FX	0.104	324
APL	0.098	305
OXY	0.096	300
NATGEO	0.093	289
TRAVEL	0.089	278
FS1	0.088	276
NAN	0.087	270
COM	0.084	263
HBO	0.084	260

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