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WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

New Ecosystem: AMCN Preaches Upside of Bundled MVPD Deals

AMC Networks saw 1Q25 revenue fall 7% from a year ago to \$486 million, with its number of streaming subscribers staying relatively stable—10.2 million at the end of March vs 10.4 million at the end of 2024.

This quarter, the company updated its streaming subscriber definition to only include subscribers who register on an a la carte basis and from whom it receives a fee, either directly or through a streaming platform arrangement. The change excludes subscribers who receive access to streaming services from distributors through a video package that also included access to AMCN programming networks. At the end of March, **AMC+** became available to **Charter's** Spectrum TV Select customers at no added cost.

"We're already seeing an excellent response to AMC+ from Charter subscribers as we did when we launched an integrated version of AMC+ on **Philo** last year," CEO *Kristin Dolan* said on Friday's earnings call. She didn't give any numbers, saying "Charter has a good sense of what they anticipate for the take rates... We're tracking exactly where we wanted to be."

AMCN said it expects to provide further updates over time regarding the trending of these customers to ensure a "holistic picture" of its distribution. Execs brushed aside any concerns of cannibalization through the bundled MVPD offering. "We think this is going to create a much healthier ecosystem. You could go so far as to say we're sort of kind of charter mem-

bers of Charter's vision for an improved video ecosystem," CFO *Patrick O'Connell* said. "We actually think that over time, this is going to present additional revenue opportunities for the company in the form of upselling customers from an ad-supported product to a premium product. We think it will generate additional viewership and engagement of which we can drive additional advertising revenue. And we think it will also, again, in sort of success and healthier ecosystem and slightly reduced cord cutting, will create a more solid foundation of sort of affiliate revenue going forward as well."

Exploring new distribution is important. Case in point, advertising revenues decreased 15% to \$119 million primarily due to linear ratings declines and affiliate revenues declined 12% to \$156 million primarily due to basic subscriber declines. The affiliate drop is also partly due to contractual rate decreases in connection with renewals. "We acknowledge that a lot has changed in the few short months since we issued our 2025 outlook. It's still early in the year and the geography of certain revenue and expense items may shift as the year progresses. From where we sit, we haven't seen anything suggesting any meaningful impacts to our business but we remain vigilant," O'Connell said.

Notably, the company implemented a \$2 rate increase at SVOD **Shudder** in April and will implement a \$1 increase at both **Acorn** and **HiDive** in the second and third quarters, respectively. Recall that AMCN's upfront announcement included news of an upcoming FAST channel for Acorn, which it hopes will drive viewership to the subscription service.

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THE NAME'S ESPN, JUST ESPN

Forget **ESPN** Flagship, ESPN All Access or ESPN DTC. The name for ESPN's forthcoming direct-to-consumer offering of its flagship channel is expected to just be called "ESPN." Sources [told CNBC](#) that execs decided to go with the simple name to avoid a confusing streaming landscape filled with different product names. When the ESPN streaming offering makes its debut this fall, it's expected to include access to the linear networks as well as **ESPN+**, which will continue to exist alongside the DTC product. Look for pricing details to be announced next week. The "just ESPN" name helps put in perspective Disney CEO *Bob Iger's* comments this week that pay TV customers who watch ESPN on linear won't get all the bells and whistles of the ESPN OTT offering, which is included with many linear subscriptions.

WARY EYES ON 6 GHZ BAND

As the spectrum wars play out, there's growing concern about what might happen with the 6 GHz band that the **FCC** opened up for unlicensed WiFi in 2020. That was a monumental move, opening up the entire band for deployment of WiFi 6E and new wireless technologies from cable and others. No proposal has specifically mentioned the band, but there are worries that if the budget reconciliation package that Congress is working on calls for the auctioning of a certain amount of spectrum, it could become a target. A new [report](#) by **WifiForward** found that limiting WiFi to just the lower 500 MHz of the 6 GHz band could forfeit over \$1.74 trillion in U.S. economic value over the next two years alone. The study, conducted by Telecom Advisory Services and building on 2024 projections, also found that under a reduction of the band, enterprise speed and latency benefits contract by more than 60%, free WiFi consumer savings fall by roughly the same proportion and rural broadband gains are halved as WISPs must deploy additional access points to maintain coverage. WifiForward is an ad hoc, broad-based group of companies, organizations and public sector institutions, including **Best Buy, Charter, Comcast, Google, NCTA** and **WISPA**.

SLING LOSES MORE SUBS THAN DISH IN 1Q25

Anyone hoping **Echostar's** 1Q25 earnings call would shed some light on its video leadership were out of luck. Once again, wireless and spectrum dominated talk during the financial call. And there was no mention of the vacancies left by *Gary Schanman*, EVP and Group President of Video Services, and *Ajinkya "Jinx" Joglekar*, SVP, Acquisition Marketing for DISH and Sling TV, exiting the company last month. The DISH satellite TV business lost

183,000 subs in the quarter, better than the 213,000 loss a year ago. It was an even bigger loss for virtual MVPD offering Sling TV, with it shedding 135,000 subs. "After a large loss in Q1, the Sling TV business is now smaller than it was seven years ago. Recall that Sling TV, like all of its vMVPD peers, is now a rather seasonal business, reflecting the ease with which customers can disconnect the service seasonally after the end of the football season," **MoffettNathanson** told clients, noting that the combined video subscriber base is now shrinking at a 9.6% rate. The video biz delivered \$2.5 billion in revenue for the quarter, down 6.9% from a year ago. On the Boost Mobile side of the house, wireless net additions totaled 150,000, up from 90,000 in the previous quarter and a loss of 81,000 in the year ago period.

CARRIAGE

Hulu+ is expanding its streaming news offerings, striking a multi-year agreement to carry **Newsmax** as part of its **Hulu+ Live TV** plan. According to Newsmax, the carriage deal will bring its programming to approximately 60 million U.S. households. The cable news channel is expected to launch on the service in July.

TRUMP WANTS TO NIX DIGITAL EQUITY GRANTS

President *Trump* threatened to end the Digital Equity Act, which unlocked \$2.75 billion in the form of grants to fund high-speed internet deployment to under-served communities with poor connectivity across all 56 States and Territories. The Act is designed to help several groups, including veterans, the elderly, individuals living with disabilities, people in rural areas and "members of racial or ethnic minority groups," per the **NTIA**. But Trump only focused on the latter group in his tirade on **Truth Social**, calling the Act "racist," "unconstitutional" and a "woke handout based on race." It isn't immediately clear what action, if any, Trump will take to cancel grants, including those that have already been disbursed to States. The White House would likely face challenges in the courts were the Trump administration to begin canceling funding. The Digital Equity Act is part of the much larger \$1 trillion infrastructure bill signed by President *Biden* in 2021.

BROADCASTERS DEREGULATION DREAMS RIDING HIGH

Nexstar and **Sinclair** both reported earnings this week and a clear theme running through both is the hope that the *Trump* administration will lighten their regulatory load. Nexstar Chairman/CEO *Perry Sook* remains optimistic that change is on its way, especially if **FCC**

Chairman *Brendan Carr* makes expected amendments to the 39% national audience cap on broadcast station owners. “In my 45-plus years in the industry, I continue to believe that the prospect of meaningful broadcast ownership reform has never been better than it is today,” Sook said during the broadcaster’s earnings call Thursday. Sook anticipates Carr will take action this summer once Republicans have the majority. This week, 22 Republican Senators sent a letter to the FCC urging it to modernize broadcast ownership rules. During Sinclair’s earnings report, President/CEO *Chris Ripley* said the industry also will be lobbying for other issues, including rules that would allow broadcasters to negotiate retransmission consent directly with virtual MVPDs like **YouTube TV** and a mandated transition from ATSC 1.0 to ATSC 3.0. Ripley called out an [op/ed](#) last week from FCC Commissioner *Nathan Simington* and his chief of staff that called for a 30% cap on the reverse retrans fees that affiliates pay networks. While some have cast doubt over whether the FCC could intervene, Ripley believes the agency has the ability to regulate the relationship between networks and af-

filates. “Our key takeaway from the Simington op/ed is that we’re seeing this groundswell of deregulatory support for the broadcast industry that we believe is long overdue,” he said.

RATINGS

Baseball may be America’s favorite pastime but **Monumental Sports Network’s** viewers are really loving hockey right now, too. The D.C. RSN, whose parent company owns the Washington Capitals, saw an uptick in viewership when compared to last season, likely boosted by the fact that the Caps are currently in Round 2 of the NHL playoffs as well as *Alex Ovechkin’s* quest for the all-time career goals record. Monumental reports a 37% increase YOY in in-game viewership in D.C. and Baltimore markets. The Caps’ first round matchup against the Montreal Canadiens delivered a 66% increase in average linear viewership when compared to last year’s playoff series. Streaming viewership was also up by 158% based on unique users.



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Social Media Hits



Quotable

“During the strike, the kind of idea that I think got overblown—and something I have no interest in—is that studios could use generative AI to replace writers and in some cases actors... But I know writers who are using AI to say, ‘give me five ideas for an opening scene.’ Now, they all may be bad ideas, but if the writers feel that is a useful tool to them, that’s fine. I think what most people are afraid of is generative AI, and I agree. I don’t see replacing humans in the creative process, mostly because all of AI is based on what’s come before. So it’s derivative.”

- Casey Bloys, Chairman and CEO, HBO and Max Content, at a [Milken Institute panel](#)



Up Ahead

MAY 15: [Media Institute Lunch, D.C.](#)

MAY 16: [Extended Deadline for 2025 FAXIES](#)

MAY 21: [NAMIC Webinar, Powering the Next Era of Wireless Innovation](#)

JUNE 1-4: [Fiber Connect 2025; Nashville](#)

JUNE 9-12: [CableLabs Interop-Labs DOCSIS® 4.0 & DAA Technology, Louisville, CO](#)

JUNE 11-13 : [StreamTV Show, Denver](#)

JUNE 23- : [Broadband Communities Summit,](#)

