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WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Value Play: Comcast and Charter See Wins in Bundling, Price Locks

A tried-and-true method of scoring positive customer satisfaction is to save that user money. It's why several providers, including **Comcast** and **Charter**, are prioritizing simplified pricing and locked-in rates for subscribers of their respective products. Both of the cable giants have seen positive results so far, and they're using the momentum to fuel ways to enhance other facets of their portfolios.

Charter is a year into its shift of emphasizing a lower price point for new broadband customers, so long as they bundle it with video and mobile. President/CEO *Chris Winfrey* said that works "really well" in acquisition, but the company recently began a meticulous process of going to its existing base and offering pricing and packaging at a new, lower retail rate so that it can add value to customer relationships "at the same or even slightly higher ARPU."

"It's not just for acquisition, but really, in the past month or so, we started to go out and put together what we call 'loyalty offers' to go address the existing base. That solves a lot of the customer perception, pricing, packaging, am I getting value," Winfrey said at the **Goldman Sachs Communacopia + Technology Conference** on Tuesday.

The other piece is service, to which Winfrey mentioned the customer commitments Charter offers or else it'll provide a credit. However, it takes time for word of mouth to get around, so "it's a long-term trek" for the company.

Winfrey added that mobile is an additional broadband connection—"or in cable speak, it's an outlet." Those "broadband outlets" are provided largely by Spectrum's WiFi, he said, thus making it more important for the company to educate customers about the product or answer questions they may have so Charter can increase awareness around **Spectrum Mobile**.

Something else Charter hopes will catch more attention and add to ARPU is the streaming-related benefits the company is attaching to Spectrum TV plans. It's in the process of rolling out more marketing to highlight those perks to customers, and the programmers of said streaming services are starting to discover the advantages of Spectrum's video packaging as well.

"It's a wholesale relationship. There's no operating costs. There's no subscriber acquisition costs. The churn is lower. The overall revenue and the margin is higher than what they might get elsewhere," Winfrey said, still acknowledging the reality of the video ecosystem. "It doesn't mean that they're not trying to tap into other areas of the market, but they're getting behind us, and it's a pretty unique moment in time in terms of the quality of the relationships that we have with the programmers and how they've leaned in."

In Comcast's neck of the woods, it's had higher uptake in its five-year price lock than it expected. President *Mike Cavanagh* said at Goldman Sachs that he sees positive ripple effects in addressing ambiguous pricing and promotional offers, not-

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ing how it allows the company to then address other areas of frustration such as not reaching a live customer service representative quickly enough.

Although there's early momentum, Cavanagh maintained an expectation that the benefits won't show in excess for a while. "It is going to take us time to execute this," he said, mentioning Comcast's own imminent efforts to move across its existing base to promote bundling options with **Xfinity Mobile**.

Xfinity Mobile presents an enticing opportunity for Comcast, according to Cavanagh, both with its network and chance to improve satisfaction. "We are selling into a customer base we've already acquired," he said. "Our economics relative to wireless players, who are typically trying to market to acquire new customers, have a cost dynamic that is different than what we have. Another element is the fact that we can offload. With the power of our WiFi, with the ability to control the build of our own network, our Wi Fi hotspots, routers in-home and in neighborhoods, all that results in about 90% of offload."

WBD SUES DISH OVER SLING TV SHORT-TERM PASSES

When **Disney** sued **DISH Network** over **Sling TV**'s short-term passes, we [wondered](#) whether other programmers included in the Day, Week, and Weekend mini-plans would follow suit. We now have our answer: **Warner Bros. Discovery** filed a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York on Tuesday, saying in the complaint obtained by Variety that the passes "violate the limited license" that WBD granted DISH to distribute its networks because they're not monthly subscription plans and "disrupt the longstanding industry-standard model for linear programming subscriptions." **CNN**, **TNT**, **TBS**, **ID**, **Food Network**, **Travel Channel** and **HGTV** are all currently included in the short-term passes and are named in the lawsuit. WBD also said that DISH "never informed, consulted or briefed" it on the passes, challenging Sling TV SVP, Product & Operations **Seth Van Sickle's** [statement](#) in an interview with **Deadline** that programmers had been briefed ahead of time. The programmer argued that the passes "fundamentally harm" its standing in the marketplace, including "relationships with other distributors and downstream consumers," revealing that other MVPDs have told WBD that "they may seek the right to distribute the programming as part of similar short-term non-subscription offerings if DISH continues to do so." WBD wants the court to "preliminarily and permanently enjoin DISH from offering, marketing, advertising, selling, or distributing" its programming in any way

other than via a monthly or annual subscription.

FCC ENDS ECHOSTAR PROBE AFTER SPACEX, AT&T DEALS

The **FCC** ended its investigation into **EchoStar**'s spectrum licenses and compliance with 5G buildout obligations on Monday, the same day that saw the company [sell](#) its AWS-4 and H-block spectrum to **SpaceX** for \$17 billion, and two weeks after EchoStar sold 50 MHz of low-band and mid-band spectrum to **AT&T** for \$23 billion. EchoStar had said in a press release announcing the SpaceX deal that it anticipated these sales would resolve the FCC's inquiries, and FCC Chair **Brendan Carr** sounded happy in a Monday [letter](#) to EchoStar Chairman **Charlie Ergen**, writing that he appreciated the "responses, engagement and information provided" by the company since the probe was opened in May. On top of directing the Commission to conclude that EchoStar has satisfied its buildout obligations, Carr said that the agency would also confirm the company's "exclusive terrestrial and MSS rights over the AWS-4 spectrum to which it is currently licensed." Of course, these rights will soon be owned by SpaceX once its deal with EchoStar is approved. In an 8-K filing Tuesday, EchoStar said that "while this resolves the FCC inquiries commenced in the May 9 Letter, our previously announced transactions with AT&T and SpaceX continue to remain subject to FCC approval (and the other previously announced conditions to closing of those transactions)." **New Street Research's Blair Levin** wrote in a note that the end of the probe "clears the way for the announced and potential future spectrum transactions" and that "this ends any potential concern for a finding of liability that could diminish the compensation received by SATS or that could delay the transactions from being approved." Speaking at a **Goldman Sachs** conference Tuesday, AT&T Chairman/CEO **John Stankey** talked up how AT&T's deal with EchoStar would allow it to expand its fixed wireless offerings in areas where it doesn't yet have a fiber footprint. He also commented on the SpaceX-EchoStar transaction: "It wasn't a surprise to me that that particular portfolio spectrum went to SpaceX in the end and is going to be used for direct-to-device. I'd probably argue that that may be the highest and best use of that spectrum for a variety of reasons because it does harmonize very well globally."

TELEVISION-YOUTUBE TV STEP INTO CARRIAGE RING

It's been less than two weeks since **Google** and **Fox Corp.**

squashed their **YouTube TV** beef. Yet, the tech company already finds itself back in the ring, this time facing off against **TelevisaUnivision** in a looming carriage dispute that went very public Tuesday when the Spanish-language media company launched an [ad](#) campaign accusing Google of acting in a way that “looks evil.” At the center of the dispute is Google’s plan to move **Univision** programming from YouTube TV’s \$83/month basic plan to the \$15/month Spanish add-on bundle on Sept. 30. In the ad, TelevisaUnivision said the change would be akin to charging its viewers an “18% Hispanic tax” to access Univision content and urged the tech giant to “do the right thing, otherwise, this looks evil.” In a statement to **CFX**, a TelevisaUnivision spokesperson said that Google’s proposal is “discriminatory and an abuse of its market power,” adding that “Univision is of critical importance to millions of Hispanic Americans, something that has been recognized by every single major content distributor—except Google.” The shift to an add-on tier would be a blow to Univision’s reach on YouTube TV, which has amassed more than 8 million subs. The dispute is also notable because Univision is a major broadcaster that can be found in the core channel lineup of every other pay TV provider it has a distribution agreement with, including **DirectTV** and **Hulu + Live TV**, which it cut new deals with this year. A YouTube spokesperson said to CFX that “TelevisaUnivision’s demands aren’t supported by their performance on YouTube TV over the last four years. If we cannot reach a fair deal by September 30th, their programming will no longer be available on YouTube TV. Our carriage renewal decisions are based on viewer consumption and pricing, and any suggestion to the contrary is false.”

TUBI’S NEW BRAND CAMPAIGN

Tubi is “Free Forever,” according to its new brand campaign, which includes a series of five TV spots airing now. Central to the campaign’s messaging is the value of the FAST service’s free library of movies and TV series amid economic uncertainty and “streamflation.” In other words, while other streamers have raised subscription prices, Tubi wants budget-conscious viewers to know it will continue to offer all of its content at no cost. The clever, fourth wall-breaking ads highlight the breadth of genres featured on the service and include a teen girl wrestling with the idea that she has to choose between two high school suitors for all time and a criminal wondering if he really needs to keep beating up a hostage forever. The campaign launch comes after Tubi crossed 100 million monthly active users and is streaming almost 1 billion hours per month, 95% of which come from on-demand streaming.

LACHLAN MURDOCH SECURES CONTROL OVER FOX, NEWS CORP.

The *Murdoch* “Succession” saga is over with the Murdoch Family Trust reaching a mutual resolution and terminating all litigation. New trusts will be established for the benefit of *Lachlan*

Murdoch, *Grace Murdoch* and *Chloe Murdoch* (the “Remaining Beneficiary Trusts”), and *Prudence MacLeod*, *Elisabeth Murdoch* and *James Murdoch* (the “Departing Beneficiaries”) will cease to be beneficiaries in any trust holding shares in **Fox** or **News Corporation**. New trusts for the benefit of the Departing Beneficiaries will receive cash consideration funded in part using proceeds from the public sale of approximately 16.9 million shares of FOX Class B common stock and approximately 14.2 million shares of News Corp. Class B common stock previously held by the MFT. The Departing Beneficiaries will be subject to a long-term standstill agreement preventing them, and their affiliates, from acquiring shares of Fox and News Corp. and taking certain other actions with respect to the companies.

FIBER FRENZY

Lumos is expanding the **T-Mobile** Fiber network to Charleston County, South Carolina. It will build more than 500 miles of fiber infrastructure to connect over 50,000 homes, small businesses and multifamily communities in Mount Pleasant and the surrounding area. Engineering work is underway, with construction set to start soon. Customers will be able to choose from high-speed internet plans starting at \$55/month for 500 Mbps.

PROGRAMMING

Disney+, **Hulu** and **ABC News Live** are set to stream “Grace for the World,” a live concert from Vatican City, on Saturday at 3pm. The lineup of artists performing at the event includes *Pharrell Williams*, *Andrea Bocelli*, *John Legend*, *Karol G* and *Jelly Roll*, with *Jennifer Hudson* and *BamBam* added to the lineup Monday. – **Telemundo** has given the adaptation rights to its “Miss Universe Latina: El Reality” format to free-to-air network **RCN** in Colombia. The Telemundo-developed reality show features participants training and competing for a spot in the next Miss Universe pageant. – **Scripps** is continuing to grow its women’s sports portfolio. Its latest move is **ION** becoming the domestic linear partner for Athlos NYC, a women-only track and field event scheduled for Oct. 10. ION signed a multi-year deal with Athlos NYC and will have a pre-show for this year’s event, before it officially kicks off at 7pm.

PEOPLE

NCTA made a few additions to its Legal and Government Relations units. *Mary Claire York* is joining as VP/Associate General Counsel, Legal and Regulatory Affairs, while *Ali Fulling Watson* will be VP, Government Relations. York was most recently an attorney advisor in **NTIA**’s Office of Chief Counsel, having provided legal review and strategic advice to IJIA grant programs and to the Office of Spectrum Management. She also held multiple roles at the **FCC**. Watson arrives from the **House of Representatives**’ Education and Workforce Committee, where she served as the Member Services and Coalitions Director.