

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## DID YOU KNOW?

“He is wrong, dead wrong. We have the most transparent privacy policies in the industry. The idea that we make the product to be addictive—do we make great television? Yes, guilty. Do we make it artificially addictive? Absolutely not.”

- Netflix co-CEO Ted Sarandos on Texas AG Ken Paxton's [lawsuit](#) against the streamer during Fox Business Network's "Mornings With Maria"

## GAIIA'S AI POWERS WELO, DIGITAL-FIRST ISPS

Canadian operator **Cogeco** raised eyebrows in February when it introduced **Welo**, a digital-first, budget-friendly provider in Columbus and Cleveland, Ohio, markets already served by its **Breezeline** business. **CFX** covered [the why](#) behind the Welo launch, but we were still very curious about the how.

Helping Welo deploy in under 150 days was **Gaiia**, an AI-driven OSS/BSS platform specialized in supporting telecom operations. The deployment was helped by the fact that the Gaiia-Cogeco connection runs deep. Gaiia's founders originally started Canadian ISP **Oxio**, selling it to Cogeco for \$100 million in 2023 and spinning off the software business in the process. Since then, Gaiia has not only remained an important backbone for Cogeco's operations but also helped modernize the systems of many other providers. The platform is designed to be an all-in-one solution for billing, CRM, field services and more, many of those processes automated. Beyond Cogeco, Gaiia's other clients include **IQ Fiber**, **Greenlight Networks**, **Vistabeam** and **Direct Communications**, which it recently helped launch mobile service.

Things are going well. On Tuesday, Gaiia announced it raised \$40 million in Series B funding led by **JMI Equity**, with participation from **Inovia Capital**, bringing the company's total funding to \$66 million. Gaiia Head of Growth *Shawn McIntyre* told **CFX** that the funding puts the company in a “unique position.”

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“All we care about is growth and onboarding customers and making them happy, and not like profit or squeezing our professional services dollars,” McIntyre said, pointing out that Gaiia doesn’t charge for implementation. “We don’t start charging our customers until they’re live,” he added. On average, McIntyre said, migrating an ISP’s workflows and systems to Gaiia’s platform takes six to eight months.

For Welo, it automated more than 20 workflows for launch, spanning the full subscriber lifecycle from activation to cancellation. Gaiia supports a fully digital customer experience, from address qualification and online checkout to self-install and account management. Plume integration into the platform also allows for fully automated device activation. The platform also powers Welo’s referral code program, where the referrer and the referee receive a \$100 credit for internet service after a successful activation. At an investor conference in March, Cogeco President/CEO *Frédéric Perron* said this word-of-mouth approach helped reduce marketing costs for the ISP.

According to McIntyre, the referral program goes back to the Oxio days. “Oxio’s largest growth lever when we were there was our referral system,” he explained. Back then, both the customer doing the referring and the new sign-up received a free month of internet. “We had people who had years of free internet because every single time Oxio came up on a Facebook comment or Reddit forum, [customers] were like, ‘Oxio is amazing, here’s my referral code.’ We had people making websites for Oxio referral codes. At peak, we were onboarding around 3,000 customers a month and half of them were referred customers.”

While that particular Gaiia feature is drawing the attention of its clients, McIntyre said that he’s not yet seen many ISPs “really replicate that to that volume and scale, and it’s an opportunity.” A quick scroll through Reddit did reveal a few Welo users posting their referral codes on threads about the ISP.

McIntyre said that, while the Welo launch was “kind of unique” because of the Breeze-line element, Gaiia is seeing other companies coming to them because they’re exploring a digital-first model. “We have talked to other similar-sized companies who are experimenting with it because they maybe just feel like their brand is a little older or they want to be able to do a new brand, but they don’t want to offer cheaper plans on their current brand,” he said. “It’s not tons, but I feel there’s a little bit of a trend to it.”

Appealing to younger digital natives who prefer a self-serve customer experience is also a concern for ISPs looking to modernize systems. McIntyre explained that Gaiia provides an “Uber-like” experience in which customers can choose their appointment time and track their technician’s location on a map. The platform also enables customers to manage their internet speed from an online portal.

Dated software is a huge barrier to providing a great customer experience, according to McIntyre, who believes Gaiia’s modern interface helps it stand out. Fortunately, more ISPs are looking to modernize their systems these days, thanks to AI, which McIntyre called a kind of catalyst for companies to explore other solutions.

BEAD funding is also pushing smaller ISPs to explore an upgrade. A provider that, with government support, can now build out new passings may want to modernize its platform to support that larger footprint. “I think [BEAD] has been positive in terms of people looking internally at themselves and their systems,” he said.

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## FCC OKS ECHOSTAR SPECTRUM SALES

**EchoStar** got the OK from the FCC's Wireless Telecommunications Bureau and Space Bureau to sell approximately 65 MHz of spectrum to **SpaceX** and an additional 50 MHz to **AT&T** for around \$40 billion, but there's a condition. EchoStar must establish a \$2.4 billion escrow account that can be drawn upon for qualifying claims, which it doesn't seem to like. "The FCC has continuously applauded EchoStar's spectrum sales to AT&T and SpaceX as pro-competitive transactions that serve the public interest, and we appreciate that the FCC approved them today. However, these approvals come with an unprecedented involuntary escrow condition. We are analyzing this requirement and evaluating next steps," the company said in a statement. Several entities, including **Crown Castle**, **American Towers** and **Comcast Business**, have filed litigation, claiming a lack of payment from **Dish Wireless**. EchoStar has argued it is in the clear "because of the FCC forcing us and certain of our affiliates to sell the spectrum on which our 5G Network was based, which constituted, among other legal remedies, a force majeure event." Just last week, a multifamily residential building, **South Orange Towers of New Jersey**, filed a complaint about a lack of payment with the FCC and asked the agency to withhold EchoStar's spectrum sales until funds are escrowed to cover unpaid debt to private landlords. Dish leases rooftop space for wireless equipment. The FCC wasn't specific on how the escrow would be used, simply saying: "This encourages the resolution of outstanding claims while leaving the merits of any dispute to the parties or outside fora." The FCC said the approvals mean SpaceX gains access to exclusive-use, contiguous spectrum nationwide for a **Starlink** D2D service and other offerings for the first time. The FCC said SpaceX can use its new spectrum flexibly for terrestrial, space-based and hybrid network architectures, but that flexibility is "subject to first-of-its-kind performance obligations designed to be technologically neutral." It said SpaceX must meet "demanding standards" and provide "meaningful, reliable connectivity to the public" within years. AT&T received special authority to light up EchoStar's 3.45 GHz spectrum immediately after announcing the sale, with spectrum deployed within weeks across 23,000 sites and most of the buildout there complete. It's also acquiring 20 MHz of nationwide 600 MHz low-band spectrum, with the FCC requiring AT&T to build its greenfield 600 MHz network years faster than what the company originally requested. As a reminder, **Boost Mobile** will continue with AT&T and EchoStar creating a hybrid Mobile Virtual Network Operator arrangement.

## DISH LOSES 366K PAY TV SUBS IN 1Q

**EchoStar** saw its pay TV subscribers decrease by approximately 366,000 in 1Q26, slightly better than the 381,000 decrease a year ago. **Dish TV** lost about 177,000 subs compared to 183,000 a year ago, while **Sling** sub losses totaled 189,000 vs. 198,000 in 1Q25. The company said the decrease in Sling subs was primarily related to higher subscriber activations, partially offset by higher subscriber disconnects in 2026. "We continue to experience increased competition, including competition from other subscription video on-demand and live-linear OTT service providers, many of which are providers of our content and offer football and other seasonal sports programming direct to subscribers on an a la carte basis. For example, in August 2025, **ESPN Unlimited** and **Fox One** sports packages were launched," EchoStar said. It closed the quarter with 6.63 million pay TV subscribers, including 4.84 million Dish TV subs and 1.79 million Sling TV subs. Pay TV revenue fell to \$2.29 billion from \$2.54 billion a year ago, while overall revenue totaled \$3.67 billion vs \$3.87 billion. EchoStar's streaming platform Sling TV is still fighting a lawsuit from Disney over its flexible, short-term streaming passes. As [CFX previously reported](#), **Dish Network** and **Warner Bros. Discovery** dismissed their claims against each other, without prejudice to refiling. EchoStar isn't hosting an analyst call to discuss 1Q26 financials. CEO *Charlie Ergen* announced the decision during the company's 4Q25 call, saying that, barring any material changes in the marketplace, it will likely be July or early August—after 2Q26 earnings—before execs jump on a call again. **MoffettNathanson** dropped coverage of EchoStar at the end of March, saying its ongoing operations are no longer of material importance to its stock performance. In November, the company announced the formation of **Echostar Capital** to invest the proceeds from its spectrum sales in **AT&T** and **SpaceX**.

## AOI SCORES MEDIACOM, CABLE WINS

Nice win for **AOI**, with **Mediacom** working with the smart amplifier provider to accelerate its network upgrade as it works toward its goal of offering multi-gig and symmetrical-speed services to one million households and businesses by the end of 2026. The operator will be using various AOI products, including its QuantumLink Remote

Management and Monitoring Software, Quantum18 MB 1.8 GHz Amplifier and Quantum1 BLE 1.8 GHz Line Extender. AOI posted strong earnings last week, with 1Q26 revenue of \$151.1 million—a 51% increase YOY. Cable is an important component, with 44% of revenue from cable products, while 54% comes from its datacenter business. The remaining 2% was from FTTH, telecom and other. Cable revenue totaled \$66.8 million, up 24% sequentially and at the high-end of AOI's \$61-\$67 million guidance. During the quarter, AOI said it shipped a significant quantity of 1.8 GHz amplifiers to its unidentified largest cable customer (we're guessing this is **Charter**) and it expects demand to be "somewhat higher" than initial projections. For 2Q26, it expects cable rev to be at \$75-80 million and it expects to generate over \$325 million annually to include growing software revenue.

## BYRON ALLEN BUYS BUZZFEED

Who would've taken *Byron Allen* as a *BuzzFeed* listicle reader? If he isn't, he's at least the pop culture outlet's new majority owner. BuzzFeed reached an agreement with **Allen Family Digital**, an affiliate of Allen's family office, to receive a majority investment for \$120 million, or 40 million shares at \$3 per share. Allen will replace BuzzFeed Founder/CEO *Jonah Peretti* and become the company's Chairman/CEO, while Peretti transitions to a newly created position of President, BuzzFeed AI and oversees the development of AI products and technology. Approximately \$20 million will be given at closing—which is expected to come at the end of this month, subject to customary conditions—and the remaining \$100 million will come through a promissory note due five years from closing and gains 5% interest annually. Once the transaction wraps up, Allen will own 52% of BuzzFeed, which also owns *HuffPost*. Allen appears to have lofty goals if the deal crosses the finish line, noting that he wants to expand BuzzFeed and *HuffPost* into free streaming video, audio and user-created content. "As of this moment, with the power of AI, BuzzFeed is officially chasing **YouTube** to become another premiere free video streaming service," he said. Timely enough, BuzzFeed revealed 1Q26 earnings Monday, reporting a 12.4% decline in total revenue, 19.8% YOY drop in ad revenue, 69.1% increase in content revenue and 32% slide in commerce and other revenue. Net loss came in at \$15.1 million, and time spent on owned-and-operated platforms totaled 60.6 million hours, a 10.7% dip YOY.

## TELEVISIUNIVISION ADDS SUPER BOWL RIGHTS

The upcoming **Super Bowl LXI** will be more accessible for Spanish-speaking audiences. **ESPN** struck a deal allowing **TelevisaUnivision** to produce its own telecast of the big game. That means two Spanish-language broadcasts will be available on TU and **ESPN Deportes**, while ESPN and **ABC** handle English-language programming duties. Scheduled for Feb. 14, 2027, it'll be the second consecutive year TU aired the Super Bowl after marking the first-ever national Spanish-language broadcast for Super Bowl LVIII. The game will be ESPN Deportes' fourth Super Bowl telecast.

## NFL SCHEDULE COMING SOON

While the full **NFL** 2026-27 schedule will be revealed Thursday, some matchups are being revealed a little early. What we already know: the season will begin down under with the Rams-49ers on Sept. 10 at 8:35pm, or 10:35am local time in Melbourne, Australia. Reports say it'll be a **Netflix** exclusive. It's the first of nine international games across seven countries and four continents. Meanwhile, **NBC** and **Peacock**'s "Sunday Night Football" takes flight with the Cowboys-Giants on Sept. 13 at 8:20pm, followed by the Broncos-Chiefs on "Monday Night Football" at 8:15pm on **ESPN**, **ABC** and **ESPN2**. **Prime Video**'s "Thursday Night Football" will start with the Lions-Bills come Sept. 17. Plus, the Eagles will travel to Dallas on Thanksgiving (Nov. 26 at 4:30pm) on **Fox**. Bengals-Falcons square off Nov. 8 in Madrid, with kickoff set for 9:30am on **NFL Network**.

## SESAME STREET JOINS WORLD CUP PREP

Only 30 days remain until soccer's biggest festival kicks off. With **Fox Sports** as the World Cup's English-language home in the U.S., it's set to command viewership from all ages and backgrounds. Fox Sports is addressing the children's audience via a partnership with **PBS**' "Sesame Street," where characters such as Elmo, Big Bird, Cookie Monster and others will be integrated across World Cup programming and telecasts throughout the tournament. They'll also be seen in content segments that'll showcase the sport in fun ways, like Count von Count breaking down stats and Oscar the Grouch leading "Trash Talk." The campaign begins today and will last until the World Cup's conclusion on July 19.