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SHENTEL: STARLINK ONLY BITES RURALLY

Many connectivity providers fall into one of two categories—either they are incumbent cable operators with legacy HFC networks or they are overbuilders, challenging the incumbents with 100% fiber optic networks. **Shentel** does both simultaneously, making its observations across its eight-state footprint especially notable.

Take sales channels. For its **Glo Fiber** business, which recently passed 100,000 subscribers, 35-40% of gross adds come from door-to-door sales. Online accounts for about 25%, retail stores 20% and call centers are about 15%.

“In our incumbent cable business, it’s the opposite. The call center is still the largest sales channel there for some reason. It’s a little different demographics. Maybe the relationship between cable being old technology and the fiber being new technology, it seems to have shifted the sales channel mix to a degree,” Shentel SVP, CFO *Jim Volk* said during **Key Bank Capital Markets Technology Leadership Forum** on Monday.

While Volk described fiber as “growing like a weed,” Shentel still sees growth for the legacy cable systems that it has owned for more than 20 years. It views the cable operations as falling into three different buckets. The first is the denser areas that have another broadband provider. “We have a more competitive rate card, and we’re more than holding our share from a unit perspective,” he said. “Our churn rates have come down, but we are giving up a little bit of ARPU to accomplish that.”

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For the second bucket, Shentel has spent some capital over the last three years and is building about 25,000 passings with government grants subsidizing about half the build. “We’re at 40% penetration today and after about two years, we expect to get to about 65%,” Volk said.

The most interesting dynamics, though, are in the third bucket: very rural areas where there isn’t another broadband provider (at least one on the ground). Despite the lack of competition, growth has been slower than expected. “We think customers are just basically using their cell phone for everything and not really having a true broadband connection at the house,” Volk said, suggesting there may be some more tweaks to the rate card to get them into the fold, such as possibly a robust prepaid offering. “About half of these passings, the penetration rate is only about 40%. So we think without another broadband provider, that number should go up. It can go up.”

Churn also ticked up in those markets in 2Q26. Some are going with **Starlink**, particularly after it ramped up marketing in 1Q. Shentel responded by tweaking its rate card in the non-competition markets in March, taking its 200 Mbps entry level broadband service from \$65 to \$50. The price drops to \$40/month for the first year due to a \$10 promotion. “We think it’s a very good value for what’s the alternative, whether that be Starlink, which is a 200 Mbps service. They were pricing it at \$85, so it’s a significant better value proposition than them, and we think it’s a much better quality of service than trying to use your cell phone for everything.”

For 2Q26, Shentel reported a 2.6% decline in broadband ARPU in the quarter. It was driven in part by the competitive rate card in markets where it faced a fixed broadband competitor and in part due to a lower priced entry level rate card introduced in March in those markets with no broadband competition.

Volk said the only real Starlink impact seen has been in those non-competitive markets. “I think the reason for that is Starlink doesn’t compete in the mid- to the high-end of the market where we compete very well on,” he said, referring to gigabyte services. About 80% of Glo Fiber gross adds are buying a gig or higher, while 20% are taking 2-8 gigs. “My opinion is fiber and HFC coaxial cable will always have faster speeds—two, three, four times faster. Even as Starlink develops more advances in technologies, fiber and the cable technologies are going to be even faster,” Volk said.

Leading with the technology vs. price has always been Shentel’s approach with Glo Fiber as it competes against legacy cable companies, including **Comcast** and **Charter**. It emphasizes not just faster speeds and network resiliency, but also symmetrical speeds. “I think a lot of customers may not fully understand the benefits of that, but with more AI and more AI being done at the home, I think those uplink speeds are going to become pretty important as we go forward,” Volk said.

Speaking of AI, Shentel is thinking about connecting data centers in some of its rural markets, particularly the Columbus, Ohio, area. “We think we can get customers up and running a lot faster than if there’s a custom build with a new competitor coming in. We’ve been quoting opportunities where we can get a data center that they’ve recently started constructing up in 12 to 18 months, which is about the time it takes to build the data center itself,” Volk said. “We think that gives us an advantage to win some of this business, but having said that, we haven’t gotten our first deal done yet, so I don’t have a whole lot more details I can share there.”

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NFL NETWORK, REDZONE BACK ON XFINITY

Just in time for football season, **Comcast** and **Disney/ESPN** settled their differences over **NFL Network** and **NFL RedZone**. Both channels are available on Xfinity TV after going dark on May 1. “We’re pleased to have reached an agreement with The Walt Disney Company to bring NFL Network to our customers in time for the start of the pre-season games and to offer NFL RedZone Channel at the beginning of the regular season,” a Comcast spokesperson told **CFX**.

PSKY-WBD: BONTA COUNTERS ELLISON ESSAY

California AG Rob Bonta, who is leading the coalition of 12 states suing to block the \$110 billion Paramount Skydance-Warner Bros. Discovery merger, [wrote](#) a column in response to PSKY CEO David Ellison’s [claim](#) that the lawsuit is really about the future of CNN and what the public perceives his political leanings to be. The AG called Ellison’s essay “spin” and said the lawsuit isn’t about the independence of CNN and CBS News or the future of streaming. “This lawsuit is about antitrust law. It is a straight-up antitrust enforcement case. One that is very cut and dry. One that seeks to prevent the long-term structural impact from the loss of competition. An impact that can’t be remedied with a few one-off, piecemeal promises,” Bonta said, noting that the combined companies would control one-third of theatrical motion picture distribution and basic cable channels, “including 50 of the most popular channels.” The merger would see HBO, CNN, TNT, TBS, Comedy Central, MTV, Nickelodeon, Paramount Network and more under the same umbrella. “Right now, Paramount and Warner Bros are spearheading a public relations campaign to spin a narrative that is simply false. They would have you believe that this is purely politics. It’s not,” Bonta continued. “Paramount and Warner Bros see the writing on the wall: that they will lose in a court of law. So instead, they are resorting to the court of public opinion.” The state and Writers Guild of America lawsuits seeking to halt the deal will go to trial in March.

FCC SCAM ALERT

The **FCC** sent out a consumer alert Monday about scam calls and texts from fraudsters impersonating Commissioners and other agency employees. In one case, people reported receiving a call from the FCC claiming their phone numbers were under investigation for criminal activity. In some instances, the scammers pretended to be Commissioner *Anna Gomez*, who [wrote](#) on X that “these scammers should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.” The calls may threaten legal action and try to direct people to a special “law enforcement hotline” or demand payment, personal or financial information. The agency recommends hanging up immediately if you receive one of these calls. It also has a complaint [form](#) available where consumers can report robocalls and other unwanted calls and texts.

FOX’S STREAMING MOMENTUM

Fox feels its streaming strategy is paying off, reporting strong momentum with its **Tubi** AVOD and **Fox One** DTC streamer, both of which enjoyed a considerable boost from the 2026 **FIFA World Cup**. “The tournament proved to be a customer acquisition opportunity for Fox One, driving incremental subscriber acquisition and strong retention rates that surpassed our expectations,” while also showing “minimal cannibalization” of Fox’s pay TV business, said CEO *Lachlan Murdoch* on an earnings call. Tubi’s World Cup hub also attracted over 20 million viewers across the tournament, with the simulcasts of two group stage matches generating two of the highest traffic days in the platform’s history. Tubi closed the fiscal year with 110 million monthly active users, with 4Q26 delivering a 17% increase in total viewing time and 35% rev growth. Murdoch also talked up Tubi’s ad rev potential, noting that the fact that 70% of Tubi’s viewers are cordless is an advantage. “We have the largest cohort of cord-cutters, which means very hard-to-reach viewers for the advertising market. When you add Tubi to a media buy, you really are expanding your reach dramatically, and it’s a very valuable position to be in,” Murdoch said. He added that most of Tubi’s content being VOD makes it valuable to advertisers due to the high engagement from consumers who are proactively choosing to watch a title vs if they were passively watching FAST channels. Fox is seeking to build up its streaming portfolio further by acquiring **Roku** for \$22 billion, a transaction that would see the programmer become a distributor in control of a leading CTV platform with a reach of 100 million

streaming households worldwide. The deal is expected to close in the first half of 2027. “While we are only in the early approval process, the transaction is on track,” Murdoch said.

ROKU’S NEW ‘AI SLOP’ CHANNEL

Over the weekend, the internet discovered a new FAST channel on **Roku** made up completely of AI-generated content. **Fairground AI Creator TV**, which serves up a 24/7 stream of AI movies and series, was founded by *Colin Petrie-Norris*, the former CEO of **Xumo** before it was acquired by Comcast in 2022. Dubbed the “AI slop channel” online, it features content from several AI creators and studios curated by Fairground Entertainment. Among the programs on the channel are this [bizarre medieval drama](#) and whatever this surreal theme park [nightmare](#) is supposed to be. When we tuned in this afternoon, it was streaming a program called “Myth & Legends: Circe” about the character from Greek mythology. Let’s just say it wasn’t appointment television.

FIBER FRENZY

Fiber provider **Kinetic** added 8,000 additional homes across more than 30 Oklahoma communities in 2Q26. That includes locations in Broken Arrow, Hominy, Stilwell, Elmore City and Fairfax. It adds up to 76,000 connects in the state to date. In total, Kinetic added 141,000 fiber locations across its 18-state footprint in the quarter. – **Charter** will connect over 2,000 homes and businesses in the Michigan counties of Genesee, Hillsdale and Roscommon to Spectrum services.

CARRIAGE

Outdoor lifestyle FAST channel **Game & Fish TV** is now available on the **Truth+** streaming platform after **Outdoor Sportsman Group** inked a deal with **Trump Media**. The channel serves up **Major League Fishing** competitions, wilderness adventures and educational wild game cooking demos.

PROGRAMMING

Disney will air a multiplatform commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the September 11 attacks at 8pm across **ABC**, **Disney+**, **Hulu**, **National Geographic** and **ABC News Live**. “9/11 Tribute in Light: Live from Lower Manhattan” will broadcast from the 9/11 Memorial & Museum in Manhattan, anchored by *David Muir*, *Robin Roberts* and *Diane Sawyer*. Nat Geo will also release a three-part docuseries, “9/11 Reunited” on Aug. 21. On Sept. 1, ABC will broadcast a special at 9pm looking at how sports and entertainment helped America heal after the terror attacks, hosted by football legend *Michael Strahan*. -- **HBO** and **BBC** are teaming up to co-produce a drama series “1536.” No word on when it’ll come out, but it’ll span six episodes and tell “how the actions of a man in power changes the fate of working-class women on the edges of the country.” - **A+E Global Media** announced that a sequel to last year’s “Christmas Everyday,” a **Lifetime** movie starring Grammy Award-winning singer and actress *Brandy Norwood*, is coming as part of 2026’s “It’s a Wonderful Lifetime” holiday slate. The movie recently wrapped production with a premiere date TBA.

PEOPLE

Orbitel Communications, which falls under the **Schurz Broadband Group** portfolio, named *Latisha Rose* as its President/GM. She’s held the same position on an interim basis since September, having filled in for *John Schurz* following his promotion to SVP, People and Culture of Schurz. Rose will continue to oversee Orbitel’s go-to-market strategy, key initiatives and other company divisions. She’s been at Schurz for nearly 20 years, and previously spent several years in the manufacturing, banking and health care industries.

DOING GOOD

TDS matched up to \$10,000 in donations at the recent Mile of Music Festival in Appleton, Wisconsin, to support those impacted by severe storms and a tornado in the Fox Valley. The match comes after the original music festival committed to donate 5% of merch sales to a Tornado Recovery Effort fund through United Way Fox Cities, the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region and the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation.