

QUOTABLE

“We’re suing TikTok now, so we are looking to ensure that they adopt the similar practices and commitments that Meta did. And we are very interested in Snap and YouTube as well. We want an industry-wide solution. We want everyone in the industry to be taking steps like Meta is required to now because of the settlement agreement that will protect the mental health of kids. And they can do it the easy way, or we can do it another way.”

– California AG Rob Bonta on [CNBC](#) discussing Meta’s \$17 billion settlement

FOX ONE & ESPN UNLIMITED: ONE YEAR LATER

Time flies when you’re a fresh-faced DTC streamer. **Fox One** and **ESPN Unlimited** both turned one this month, having launched on the same day last August with offerings heavily leaning on live sports and targeting cord-cutters. But they didn’t leave the pay TV ecosystem behind either, rolling out with MVPD authentication in place, making the apps and their content accessible to eligible pay TV customers.

The onboarding process for those customers was particularly straightforward on Fox One. “It’s a huge understated part of the product that deserves more attention,” **Fox** DTC EVP, Product and Engineering *John Fiedler* told **CFX**. “The public perception of the product is about cord cutters, cord nevers and how we’re sort of filling that need in the marketplace, but the product was intentionally built to support the existing cable audience.”

On recent Fox Corp. earnings calls, CEO *Lachlan Murdoch* has talked up how the DTC app, which also serves up **Fox News** content and local broadcast stations for \$19.99/month, exceeded expectations in terms of subscriber trends and engagement, although the company has stopped short of reporting the actual numbers. “We want to see at least a full cycle flow through it, so we understand any seasonality that could be in the Fox One subscriber base. Although having said that, we’re really not seeing a tremendous amount of churn within Fox One to date,” Murdoch said this month.

That said, a few early stats shared by Fox show how sports and news viewers are interacting with the app. For example, while sports drive the majority of engagement, news accounts for approximately one-third of total minutes viewed on Fox One. News viewers are also engaging with the DTC streamer 2X as many days per week as non-news viewers and watching nearly 3x as many minutes per week on average. In other words, Fox News is a major driver for the service, too. Another boon? This summer’s **FIFA World Cup**, for which Fox was the exclusive English-language broadcaster in the U.S. Research firm **Attest** estimates Fox One raked in 400,000 new subs on opening day alone, with 2.8 million signups across June.

Throughout year one, Fox stressed the DTC wins have come with minimal cannibalization of its pay TV business. According to Fiedler, that’s down to Fox One prioritizing both types of customers. “From one business perspective, we’re looking at how many acquisitions did we get, how many commerce transactions did we process [on Fox One]. But we’re also very much looking at the amount of cable customers that we’re driving into the experience to help also support those [MVPD] partnerships,” he said. “We worked with our cable partners and through our technology partners to make sure that they could handle the stampeding herd of audience to come in and authenticate. Judging by the numbers, a good amount of people had a good experience. That’s great for our linear partners.”

ESPN Unlimited authentication was only available to a select group of MVPDs at launch, with **Comcast** and **YouTube TV** notably missing from the initial list. Both have deals in place now. Additionally, *Jimmy Zasowski*, president of platform distribution for **Disney** Entertainment and ESPN, said at **NCTC** and **ACA Connects'** Independent Show that 150 NCTC members now offer ESPN Unlimited access as part of their packages, with more to come.

It's an improvement from the initial confusion regarding which MVPD customers could access ESPN Unlimited and which had to pay an additional \$29.99/month for the premium subscription (now \$31.99 after raising prices this week). It's no secret that authentication weighed more heavily on ESPN due to the fact that, unlike Fox One's all-in-one experience, it paywalled some content behind its Unlimited tier, such as WWE's "WrestleMania" and "SummerSlam" premium live events.

ESPN continues to work with pay TV partners to drive awareness for the DTC app. "What we've seen so far, with distributors across the board, the more that their consumers understand the value that's available to them, connected to their pay TV service, the more that they're actually activating those," Zasowski explained, adding that ESPN is seeing "really positive signs in terms of the rate of people that are becoming aware and actually activating on it."

Disney's streaming playbook now revolves around driving subscriptions to the trio bundle of **Disney+**, **Hulu** and ESPN, which is priced at \$35.99 with ads and \$44.99 for Premium. *Josh D'Amaro*, the company's new CEO, said this month that the trio is delivering "the lowest churn base that we have when we look at similar tenure cohorts." According to Zasowski, bundling is also helping on the pay TV side, "where when you have this full bundle and portfolio of multi-genre content, that helps to sustain subscribers throughout these different seasons." And CFO *Hugh Johnston* sees ESPN's role in getting folks through the trio door as pivotal, especially as the DTC strategy converges on Disney+ becoming an all-in-one streaming destination: "Our strategy is to bring additional sports content to Disney+ users and to drive additional upsell into the bundle."

It's why ESPN Unlimited continues to add to its value proposition. In the past year, it not only added WWE shows to its slate but also roughly 2,500 **MLB** games through an **MLB.TV** integration, **NFL Network** content and more college sports and **NXT** wrestling through its deal with **CW Sports**. The streamer was also the first to launch Disney's "Verts" feature, offering a personalized feed of short-form content and the AI-generated "SportsCenter for You" snackable news show. More than 24 million users have used Verts, adding up to over 1.5 billion minutes spent in the app.

As they kick off year two, both Fox One and ESPN are prepping for their second football season, with the latter service set to air its very first Super Bowl in February, alongside **ABC**. Zasowski said that setting the stage for **Super Bowl LXI** will be a "year-long effort" integrating all Disney brands. A TV spot featuring on-air talent with "Toy Story" characters is just [one example](#) of that marketing strategy. "We're thinking about this as a really unique way to bring this to the market," he said.

CFX Daily (ISSN 1069-6644) is published daily by Access Intelligence, LLC.
cablefax.com

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OPERATOR PRESSES FCC ON BROADBAND PROVIDERS' TITLE VI STATUS

Get Real Cable in Blackwell, Oklahoma, has petitioned the **FCC** to determine whether broadband providers can use Title VI cable-franchising processes to secure permits and non-cable benefits, citing the city's permit structure with **Bluepeak** as an example. "The issue is that local cable-franchise authority appears to have been used as a vehicle to regulate, obtain, condition or materially induce non-cable broadband and Internet-related obligations while the incumbent operator's federally protected renewal rights remained unresolved," Get Real, the incumbent cable provider, told the FCC in a complaint that was mailed in late June, received by the FCC mail room July 8, and posted in its electronic filing system Aug. 26. Get Real argues that if broadband internet systems operating primarily as ISPs are able to obtain the legal status and regulatory advantages associated with a Title VI cable franchise, it may "significantly erode the statutory distinction carefully established by Congress between traditional cable systems and broadband communications networks." A Title VI cable system is statutorily defined by one-way video transmission. Get Real says municipal records it reviewed show Bluepeak served approximately 783 subscribers in Blackwell, but only 12 received video—roughly 1.5% of its customer base—which it says bolsters the argument that the provider is primarily an ISP. Bluepeak/**Clarity Telecom** has not yet had an opportunity to respond; the petition reflects only Get Real's characterization of events. The FCC hasn't taken action on the petition, and it's unclear whether it will open a formal comment period or docket it for public review.

FTC FINALIZES COX MEDIA FINE

The **FTC** finalized an order requiring **Cox Media Group** to pay \$880,000 to settle allegations that it deceived customers by falsely claiming to offer an AI-powered service that could target localized ads based on conversations captured from consumers' smart devices and that consumers had opted into such targeting. Two marketing firms it works with, **MindSift** and **1010 Digital Works**, were also ordered to pay \$25,000 each. The FTC announced the [proposed settlement orders](#) in May and voted 2-0 to give final approval to the consent agreements.

NBC SPORTS WANTS TO PLAY IN THE SNOW

The inaugural season of **The Snow League** was a success for **NBC Sports**, which announced an expansion of its media rights agreement as the league gears up to begin its second season next month. Season two will see both **NBC** and **Peacock** take on a larger role, with the broadcast network adding two new events while the SVOD grows its total coverage to over 50 hours—along with plans to stream events live beginning in 2027. On top of those options, The Snow League's **YouTube** channel will stream all competitions for free. The second season starts Sept. 19 with The Snow League World Challenge in New Zealand, streaming on YouTube before an NBC encore presentation three months later on Dec. 27 at 2pm. Then it's on to Aspen from Jan. 7-9 on Peacock and YouTube, with NBC's encore running Jan. 17 at 2pm. The final two events will take place Jan. 21-23 and March 11-13. NBC's encore showings for those are slated for Jan. 24 at 4pm and March 27 at 1:30pm, respectively. The debut campaign brought in more than 8.1 million viewers across five NBC broadcasts.

FIBER FRENZY

Shentel finished FTTH network upgrades in Circleville, Ohio. The enhancement enables internet speeds of up to 8 Gbps for Glo Fiber residential subscribers, or up to 100 Gbps for business customers. Glo Fiber reaches more than 6,000 total homes and businesses in the Circleville area.

RATINGS

NFL Network still cracked the top five of the weekly cable network rankings (Aug. 17-23), despite **ESPN** bouncing back from the prior week. **Fox News** led in primetime with 2.01 million viewers P2+, followed by ESPN with 1.48 million and **MS Now** with 851,000. NFL Network came in at 796,000, beating out **HGTV**'s 680,000 for the No. 4 spot in prime. In total day, Fox News posted 1.29 million, well past ESPN (590,000), MS Now (572,000) and **CNN** (405,000). NFL Network's total-day mark settled at 334,000. -- Although it'll count toward this week's ratings, Fox News said "Jesse Watters Primetime" pulled in 3.3 million viewers overall Monday and nearly 3.7 million from 8-8:30pm. Why the viewership bump? Monday's episode featured an interview with Michigan's Democratic nominee for Senate Ab-

dul El-Sayed, giving the program a 17% uptick compared to its August total viewer average. -- The monthly numbers are in for **Spectrum News**, and it averaged 1.73 million daily viewing households across linear and digital platforms throughout August. That beats out the broadcast nets, Fox News, CNN and MS Now among Spectrum households, but some of the Spectrum News nets had success on social media as well. Florida's **Spectrum Bay News 9** and **Spectrum News 13** reeled in 2.9 million views on social media platforms for their coverage of the state's primary elections on Aug. 18-19. **Spectrum News 1** in Ohio also had 1.7 million views from Aug. 11-20 amid coverage of severe storms and flooding.

PROGRAMMING

Division-I college football returns this weekend. Tonight's festivities include a slate of FCS games (most of which are streaming on **ESPN+**), followed by **ESPN's** kickoff with Idaho vs Cal Poly on Friday at 10pm. Saturday is the start of the FBS' "Week 0," with North Carolina and TCU squaring off at Noon on ESPN. ESPN's only other game that day is NC State vs Virginia at 3:30pm. **NBC** will get its season underway with San José State vs USC at 3pm. North Dakota State's FBS entrance against Jacksonville State is scheduled for 5:30pm on **CBS Sports Network**, as fellow FBS debutant Sacramento State travels to Eastern Michigan at 6:30pm on ESPN+. Other matchups include Hawai'i vs Stanford (7pm on **ACC Network**), New Mexico State vs Florida State (7pm on **CW**) and Memphis vs UNLV (10pm on **Fox**). -- As if there was ever any doubt: "Love Island USA" is getting a ninth season on **Peacock** after Season 8 ranked as the No. 1 streaming reality series for five consecutive weeks, per **Nielsen**. The show generated a combined 2.3 billion minutes viewed during its first two weeks alone, representing a 50% increase from the first two weeks of season 7.

PEOPLE

Former **NBCUniversal** exec *Jen Carfley* has joined **Scripps** in the newly created role of head of small and medium business growth and direct response advertising. Beginning next year, she will lead direct response advertising for Scripps' **ION** and **Bounce** networks, while Scripps' partner **Marathon Ventures** will continue overseeing those efforts for Grit, **ION Mystery**, **ION Plus** and **Laff**. -- *Brett Jenkins* is taking a step back from his full-time duties as **Nexstar's** EVP/Chief Digital and Technology Officer. The broadcaster announced Jenkins' plan to transition to an Executive Advisor role come Oct. 1, where he'll be responsible for "overseeing the completion of several special projects" and providing counsel to Chairman/CEO *Perry Sook* and COO *Michael Biard*. Jenkins was named Nexstar's CTO in 2017 during its acquisition of **Media General**. He was promoted to Chief Technology and Digital Officer in 2023 and was tasked with the development and deployment of ATSC 3.0. -- **Gateway Fiber** appointed *David Curran* as its new CTO. Curran, who most recently served as VP, Network Architecture at **Verizon** and also held roles at **Frontier** and **Windstream Communications**, will be responsible for guiding Gateway's technology strategy, including network architecture and infrastructure innovation.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The **CFX** team is spending this Friday hard at work on the upcoming **Top Ops** issue of **CFX Magazine**. Your next issue of **CFX Daily** will arrive Monday, Aug. 31. Cable-fax.com and the **CFX Download podcast** will keep you posted in the meantime.

BASIC CABLE P2+ PRIME RANKINGS*

(08/17/26-08/23/26)

MON-SUN	MC US AA%	MC US AA (000)
FNC	0.613	1972
ESPN	0.420	1352
MS NOW	0.256	825
NFL	0.230	741
HGTV	0.212	681
CNN	0.175	562
HALL	0.160	515
TLC	0.138	443
USA	0.136	437
TBS	0.134	432
FOOD	0.128	412
DISC	0.127	409
GSN	0.120	385
INSP	0.117	378
TV LAND	0.115	371
HIST	0.115	369
TENNIS	0.094	304
ID	0.091	293
HALLMYS	0.088	283
BRAVO	0.082	265
NAN	0.080	259
TNT	0.076	246
OXY	0.074	240
WETV	0.070	227
A&E	0.069	222
LIFE	0.069	221
FX	0.068	220
REELZ	0.064	205
COM	0.062	200
BET	0.058	186
FRFM	0.056	181
AMC	0.056	180
MGNLA	0.054	175
E!	0.053	171
IFC	0.053	171
ADSM	0.052	168
DSNY	0.049	159
NATGEO	0.049	158
NWSMX	0.048	155
SYFY	0.048	154
ESPN2	0.046	148
FXX	0.046	147
LMN	0.044	143
UP	0.044	141
FETV	0.041	132
SNDNCE	0.039	126

*P2+ L+SD rankers are based on national Nielsen numbers, not coverage.