

BY THE NUMBERS

A recent Parks Associates white paper revealed that 56% of vMVPD subscribers are intrigued by AI's ability to ensure ads are more relevant to them, compared to 39% of non-vMVPD subscribers. Other discrepancies Parks saw: 55% of vMVPD users are interested in clicking on an item in a program for more info, vs 31% of non-MVPD users. And 49% of streaming TV subs enjoy the ability to shop for special merchandise related to a show (23% for non-vMVPD).

CHARTER: STOP BUILDING FOR YESTERDAY

Charter CEO *Chris Winfrey* challenged vendors at this week's **SCTE TechExpo26**: "Stop developing your products to DSL or fixed wireless standards and start developing your products to a multi-gig capability."

Those advanced networks from Charter, **Comcast**, **Mediacom**, **Optimum** and other operators across the U.S. should be the basis for scaled products and software development, Winfrey said during Tuesday's opening session. It's a message that's even more important as industry group **CableLabs** rolls out a new optional annex to the DOCSIS 4.0 Physical Layer Specification that extends downstream operation to 3 GHz, a change that can enable up to 25 Gbps of aggregate network capacity.

Winfrey's message throughout the general session: Charter has the scale and the network, now it needs vendors to match it. With Charter now the biggest broadband provider in the U.S. after closing its \$34.5 billion merger with **Cox Communications**, it wants to use that scale to work with innovative partners. "I think it opens the door to have some of those conversations with global providers and let them know that we're here to act as a platform for development and testing of their products," Winfrey said.

It was hard to miss Charter's presence at the show. Spectrum had the largest booth, front-and-center, in the exhibit hall. It was actually a bit of an odd space that was left on the floor, but Spectrum saw potential and created a mammoth booth that winds



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around, showcasing everything from its VR Spectrum Front Row experience to network capability at the edge to even the world's most advanced robot. The humanoid was wandering around Spectrum's booth, but it's not just a futuristic spectacle to gawk at.

"We believe that increasingly, as robots certainly enter the business world, and over time, our homes, that they're going to need compute that's really close by," explained Winfrey. It's expensive to put that into a robot, so a cheaper alternative is for it to reside in an edge data center. Charter sees a huge opportunity in that space, with the ability to reach more than 1,000 smaller owned-and-operated edge data centers already built into its infrastructure—putting substantial capacity within 10 milliseconds of 500 million connected devices in homes and businesses across the U.S. "What we can do is start to place compute in these edge data centers, which is really close to customers, so low latency," the CEO said, noting how Spectrum is demoing with **Cast AI**, **HP** and **World Wide Technology** at its booth to showcase advancing cloud, AI and customer applications on Spectrum's ECI platform. All three are leveraging NVIDIA chips through an accelerated compute program.

Winfrey threw down the gauntlet for vendors again when discussing Charter's Invincible WiFi, which keeps a customer connected through WiFi 7, embedded 5G cellular backup and an eight-hour battery backup in a single router system. Charter's President of Product and Technology *Rich DiGeronimo* said Invincible WiFi was the first product in his career that was a sell-out, with Winfrey saying the company wants to sell more but needs the cooperation of vendors to make sure it can get production at reasonable prices.

"I know there's a memory challenge that's out there, but we're actually eager to go deploy more of this product. We really need to make sure that we have affordability for our consumers as well as for all of our prospective customers," he said. "We're working through that and trying to get more of this out the door."

It was a prevailing theme for Winfrey, who pushed incoming CableLabs President and incoming CEO *Mark Bridges* into saying that the association's top priority is to help the industry sell more broadband (Winfrey serves as Chairman of CableLabs).

The message wasn't just directed at the vendors at the show. "Whether you're an operator, a vendor, a partner, whether you operate systems on a chip, or amplifiers or nodes, the number one thing you can do for this industry is to prioritize the quality of the service on the component that you provide," he said. "I view it as our responsibility as an industry to ensure that the network is always up and running."

JUST RELEASED: CFX TOP OPS MAGAZINE

CFX: The Magazine's annual **Top Ops** issue has arrived, spotlighting what convergence looks like when the industry's best turn talks of transformation into tangible progress. **Mediacom** not only earned Tier 1 Operator of the Year, but its late founder and longtime Chairman/CEO *Rocco Commisso* was honored with the Founders Circle Award. Mediacom also scored an Internet All-Star accolade along-

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side **Sparklight**. **Charter**, **Ripple Fiber**, **DirecTV**, **Hotwire Communications**, **WOW!** and **Starz** were among the other honorees. Check out the complete list of winners and a digital copy of the Top Ops issue [here](#).

AMC TAKES THE TECHEXPO STAGE

AMC Global Media, **SCTE TechExpo**'s first-ever programmer co-host, took the main stage Tuesday morning, with CTO and Global Head of Media Operations *Stephanie Mitchko* stating quite plainly why she thinks it's important to be here: "Everything we knew yesterday, it is almost like it's no longer valid because when you think about using AI, everything changes... I feel like everything I've done in the past is no longer relevant." Those are strong words coming from one of the key technologists behind cloud storage DVR, which is the backbone for today's streaming technology. AMC Global CEO *Kristin Dolan* said it was Mitchko who convinced her the programmer needed to have a presence at the show. Dolan pointed to **Charter**'s hybrid video bundles that combine streaming services such as **AMC+** and **Hulu** with Ads along with traditional live TV with no extra fees. "I think things like that are going to continue to develop across the industry, and that's another reason why we felt like having content creators and content distributors here at such an important technical conference made a lot of sense," Dolan said. AMC Global was an early partner with Charter. In fact, CEO *Chris Winfrey* praised the consumer spots AMC created and said the operator used them to spur other programmers to do the same. While AMC was all in on the effort, Dolan noted that there was technical work that had to happen to ensure the customer experience was seamless. That goes back to why AMC is at the show. "We are the products that run across the networks that all of you will be engineering and using the technology you learn about here to enhance service availability and customer experience," Mitchko said.

CABLELABS CHANGING OF THE GUARD

The upcoming **CableLabs** transition took the **SCTE TechExpo26** mainstage Tuesday, with outgoing CEO *Phil McKinney* sitting down for a chat with President and soon-to-be CEO *Mark Bridges* and **Charter** CEO and CableLabs Chairman *Chris Winfrey*. "This is by far the best job I have ever had in my entire career," said McKinney of his 14 years leading the cable industry's research and development consortium. He began working on succession planning with the board 18 months ago, with Bridges to move into the CEO job at the start of 2027. Winfrey said that the board looked outside CableLabs and within and realized Bridges was the right person for the job. Bridges' No. 1 priority: how to sell more broadband. "January 1, we really just hit the ground running. We've got the plan in place. We know what the priorities are. We've got the right engagement with the industry, and we know exactly what to do," Bridges said, adding that the extra time in the transition to work with McKinney has been very beneficial. Speaking of his exit, McKinney said, "the timing is right—where the industry is at, where it's going, and then some of my own personal objectives." He got emotional as he talked about spending more time with his five grandchildren, one of whom (13-year-old Liam) is with him at the show (he's quite mature, with a strong handshake and good eye contact—something Winfrey complimented him on). McKinney also has two upcoming books to work on, one on critical thinking and the other on innovation. "The team at CableLabs—the member teams that partnered with us, the vendor community that innovates alongside of us—that is what has enabled our industry to be as successful as we are," he said. "Our outlook going forward is unbelievable."



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SCTE NOTEBOOK

You can't have **SCTE TechExpo's** first-ever programming co-host and not have a bit of entertainment. Attendees got a sneak peek of upcoming AMC scripted drama series "Thunder Road," starring *Dennis Quaid*. It started shooting a few weeks ago in nearby Senoia, Georgia, which is where "The Walking Dead" universe was filmed. "It's a multi-generational family racing drama in partnership with NASCAR," said **AMC Global Media** CEO *Kristin Dolan*. Set to debut next year on **AMC** and **AMC+**, it follows the Whitlock family, whose matriarch puts it bluntly in the clip: "Family is like racing. You win together or you wreck together." – A streaming panel ended with a discussion about the future of multiview. "We have found good enough technical solutions. Now we need to find the right use cases to realign them with the homescreen itself, where you have the entirety of all of the streams in your guide selection, and now you're allowing the user to select something that he can [already view], rather than just clicking on icons," answered **Charter** Spectrum engineer *Moin Pansare*, calling homescreen approach "one of the lowest hanging use cases." *Nishant Sirohi*, **Paramount Skydance** Director, Live Video Platform, chimed in that now is a good time to focus on enhancing multiview capabilities as "our minds are so tuned to process multiple things," noting that most TV viewers look at their phone screens at the same time.

AT&T SIGNS \$3B FIBER DEAL WITH CORNING

Corning and **AT&T** are expanding their fiber supply partnership through a new multiyear agreement valued at more than \$3 billion. Corning will provide the fiber and cable AT&T needs to expand its internet footprint as it strives to reach 60 million people by the end of 2030—not to mention meeting the growing demand in AI, streaming, gaming and cloud services as well. For context, the company cited AT&T Fiber households now use over 1 TB of data per month, which is 5X the levels recorded in 2016. AT&T expects usage to hit 2-2.5 TB by 2030, and it believes fiber remains "the only technology that can meet the growing demand for data" as opposed to wireless or satellite alternatives.

RATINGS

Prime Video kept its solid start to the **NFL** season up. Thursday's Packers vs Falcons stream averaged 16.82 million viewers, bringing Prime Video's TNF average to 17.94 million through two games. It's the best start since TNF started its run on Prime Video back in 2022. The postgame program "TNF Nightcap" is also having its best start so far with 3.56 million viewers through two weeks. Thursday's telecast had 3.46 million viewers, down from the season-opening 3.66 million following the Lions vs Bills. -- **USA Sports** said viewership for its inaugural season of **WNBA** coverage came in at an average of 525,000 viewers across 48 regular-season games. Five telecasts averaged north of 1 million and seven eclipsed 900,000. USA Sports also noted that simulcasts on **CNBC** "introduced 1 million new viewers to the WNBA" and "represented the highest average household income of any network televising the WNBA." Coverage will continue throughout the WNBA Playoffs and culminate with the WNBA Finals. USA will split the championship round with NBC, with the former handling Games 2-3 and 5-7.

PIONEERS SPARKLE MONDAY NIGHT

The **Cable TV Pioneers** 60th induction gala Monday night brought the bling—living up to its billing as a Diamond Jubilee. James Bond theme song "Diamonds are Forever" played throughout an evening that included a few diamond tiaras and diamond bowties as the newest class of 22 Cable TV Pioneers was inducted. **The Weather Channel's** *Jim Cantore* helped get the festivities started—he's celebrating his own ruby anniversary, with 2026 marking his 40th year of reporting for the network. And he offered a forecast for next year's Pioneers gala: it'll be a beautiful class to celebrate in Denver. The Cable TV Pioneers has grown to more than 600 members spanning cable, broadband and connected media, with members nominated and selected by Pioneers. "Being a Pioneer is not only an industry honor, but an ongoing industry connection," says *Yvette Kanouff*, a **JC2 Ventures** partner and past Pioneers chair. "Pioneers mentor new and rising members of our industry, speak and moderate at conferences, and host industry events. Our industry is built on grit, innovation and culture. The Pioneers represent all three." Check out CFX's 60th anniversary celebration of the group in the [latest issue](#) of CFX Magazine.