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SEPTEMBER 2026

TOP OPS

- » Mediacom, Buckeye Broadband & Ripple Fiber Named Operators of the Year
- » Founders Circle: Remembering Rocco
- » Cable TV Pioneers Turns 60

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A PROUD MOMENT. AN ENDURING LEGACY.

Mediacom is honored to be recognized as
CFX'S 2026 TOP OPERATORS

**TIER 1 OPERATOR
OF THE YEAR**

**TECH
TRAILBLAZER**

**FOUNDERS
CIRCLE AWARD**

Congratulations to the entire Mediacom family on being named Top Operator Of The Year and also recognizing Mediacom's 2025 DOCSIS 4.0 customer launch.

With great pride, we also honor Rocco B. Commisso as a recipient of CFX's prestigious Founders Circle Award — recognizing an industry pioneer whose vision, leadership and lasting influence will inspire generations.

CEO and Chairman, Giuseppe B. Commisso
and all the men and women of

Mediacom[®]

The CFX logo is centered at the top of the page. It consists of the letters 'CFX' in a large, white, sans-serif font. Behind the letters, a series of colorful lines radiate outwards from a central point, creating a fan-like effect. The colors include shades of blue, green, yellow, orange, red, and purple.

CFX

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EVERYTHING THAT RISES MUST CONVERGE (EVEN TELECOM)

Flannery O'Connor certainly wasn't writing about telecom, media and technology when she titled a story "Everything That Rises Must Converge." But lately, it's hard to think of a better description of these once-distinct industries.

Cable long ago soared past its roots of providing video to consumers, now keeping them connected to work, entertainment and the world through high-speed internet. Mobile is increasingly becoming a larger part of operators' product sets. And with such sophisticated networks, even video is part of the convergence story, as operators like Charter, this year's Convergence Champion, combine streaming apps with traditional video packages.

Of course, wireless carriers are also looking at convergence, snatching up fiber assets and expanding fixed wireless networks. Content companies are blurring lines too, pursuing integrated video gaming, shoppable TV campaigns and unique partnerships, such as bundling within a product like Walmart+.

The theme of convergence runs throughout this year's CFX Top Ops issue, which we've expanded beyond broadband providers to highlight achievements such as the launch of Fox One—a streaming product that literally converges all of Fox's offerings—and STARZ's innovative approach to allowing customers to subscribe to its service in nearly an instant, no email required.

Throughout these pages are examples of how some of the industry's best and brightest are rising to meet consumer demand for simplicity, value and seamless service. Mediacom, this year's Tier 1 Operator of the Year, has upgraded its network to DOCSIS 4.0 and is looking to use state-of-the-art technology to delight consumers. Small Operator of the Year Buckeye drew a line in the sand on what it could afford to include in its video packages, but instead of walking away, has gone all in on NCTC's broadband-delivered lineup of roughly 600 free ad-supported channels.

This year, we're also proud to name the late Rocco Commisso—founder of Mediacom and longtime industry visionary—as our Founders Circle honoree, our highest honor for those who have permanently shaped and transformed the cable, media and broadband landscape. And this issue marks a milestone of its own: a look back at 60 years of the Cable TV Pioneers, honoring the entrepreneurs who built this industry and the ones still carrying it forward.



Amy Maclean

As the industry writes the next convergence chapter, the question is where all this blending ultimately leads. O'Connor's story about convergence leads to a reckoning. The convergence in these pages is far more intentional—what will it reveal about this industry?

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**Sparklight is proud to be named
a 2026 CFX Top Ops Honoree
for Product Launch of the Year
for Sparklight Mobile.**

Thank you to every associate whose talent,
teamwork and dedication to our customers
helped make this achievement possible.

/ Sparklight®

Building the Best Team: How Mediacom Navigated a Year of Transition



Mediacom Chairman and CEO Giuseppe Commisso with the operator's 2026 summer intern class.



Mediacom EVP, Operations Toni Murphy at one of her listening tour stops.



Mediacom brings its Xtream and Mediacom Mobile brands directly to the community, staffing booths at local events across its footprint.

By Amy Maclean

In 2025, CFX opted not to name a Tier 1 Operator of the Year due to the state of flux companies were in—from management changes to major acquisitions and strategic overhauls. A year later, the landscape hasn't settled. But one MSO stood out from the crowd, not just for what it's done but also for where it's headed. Mediacom has been an industry leader in DOCSIS 4.0 deployments and symmetrical speeds, and it's steadily building up its mobile business—all while navigating the most significant leadership transition in its history.

The industry was shocked and saddened when Mediacom CEO and Founder Rocco B. Commisso passed away in January. But the company Mediacom moved forward, with his son Giuseppe B. Commisso stepping into the Chairman & CEO role. The changes aren't just at the top, though. Some of Mediacom's longtime leaders who got the business off the ground alongside Rocco are now entering retirement. It has presented Giuseppe with an opportunity to bring in some new blood and promote from within to build on the legacy of his father.

"From 1996 to 2001, my father led our company through an aggressive acquisition phase that truly established Mediacom as one of the industry's leading cable operators. However, since that time, our geographic footprint has largely stayed the same," says Giuseppe. "What has really changed over the past 25 years is all the consolidation that has happened around us. We are increasingly in competition with national companies that possess massive scale and resources. Mediacom has an ability to be more creative and fast-acting than those big companies, and we must use that to our advantage."

In other words, Mediacom may be

CFX's Tier 1 Operator of the Year, but it's not content. Giuseppe made a bold move in June, hiring former Comcast and Astound exec Toni Murphy as EVP, Operations, replacing John Pascarelli who retired after nearly three decades with the company.

"This is the first time that this company has gone through such massive change, and my story and my career has been all about transformation," says Murphy, who recently guided Astound through its pending jv with GFiber that is set to close later this year. "When the opportunity presented itself, that was one of the things that appealed to me. Mediacom is one of the best companies out there, one of the only large independents left. I've been in this industry over 20 years, and there is something really important about companies like Mediacom having staying power and continuing to grow in this really evolving landscape."

Murphy isn't the only new face at Mediacom. The departures run deep: CFO Mark Stephan (28 years, and the first employee Rocco ever hired), Pascarelli (28 years), General Counsel Joseph Young (23 years), SVP of Operations, Product Strategy &

Consumer Experience Tapan Dandnaik (21 years), SVP and Corporate Controller Julien Dancona (25 years), SVP, Programming Barry Paden (24 years) and SVP of Customer Service Jon Coscia (19 years) are all moving on. Some seats are being filled from outside the company; others are going to Mediacom veterans stepping up, like Jack Griffin, who became CFO in 2024, Glenn Goldsmith, who moved into the SVP, Programming role that same year, and Tom Larsen, who became SVP, General Counsel last year.

Murphy brought in her former Comcast colleague and ex-Amazon customer service leader Troy Griffin as SVP, Customer Operations and Customer Experience and hired Anthony Bowling, who has held senior roles at Comcast, Charter and Dish, to serve as SVP, Field Operations Strategy & Operational Excellence.

In her first month on the job, she called at least five customers a day to hear their perspectives. She visited with workers across Mediacom's 22-state footprint, looking for their input and buy-in for the operator's next chapter. She's looking to shake things up.

Murphy's approach is to pair the depth and breadth of Mediacom's network with an outstanding customer experience. "Whether the customer is taking 300 megs or 2 gigs, or if a customer has fiber, coax or fixed wireless, what ultimately matters is that the experience they purchased is the experience they're getting," she says. "Something Giuseppe has said that I think is really important is he's talked a lot about how we have to earn our customers back. We have to build customer trust, we have to be reliable. We have to make sure the network is working the way we intended and that price points are fair to the customer. I think we're going to be at the forefront of that conversation."

That same appetite for moving fast shows up in the network. Mediacom's launch of DOCSIS 4.0 with live residential customers in Moline, Illinois, in September 2025 was an industry milestone. The roll



Mediacom employees turn out in force for a breast cancer awareness walk, reflecting the company's commitment to the communities where it operates.

out—which began on one node with 14 customers—has expanded across its Quad Cities service area with more than a thousand nodes. "Before I retire, I hope to leave the Mediacom networks, not just monitorable, but I think the untold story on this next generation of amplifiers and actives is the management capabilities," CTO JR Walden said at SCTE TechExpo 25. "It's really going to allow us to absorb a lot of significant but unavoidable things that happen in a network in real time and not have the customer affected."

Mediacom wasn't first out the gate with mobile, but it's been steadily growing the business since its 2024 launch of an MVNO with Verizon. It's focusing on the value provided, plus the ability to offload traffic. And it hasn't forgotten video, being among the first to sign up for Charter and Comcast's Xumo Stream Box. "We're constantly talking to potential partners about how to maintain a video experience in the consumer household, but it may not be the Mediacom video

experience. It might be a partner video experience that we help sell or we help the consumer connect to through our broadband services," says Larsen.

All of it points to a company still finding its footing under new leadership—but moving with purpose. Larsen, who joined Mediacom in 2006, likens it to how Giuseppe approached the Italian soccer team Fiorentina, which is owned by the Comisso family.

"He realized that he needed a really good general manager for Fiorentina, and so he went out and hired one from the Premier League. He had that general manager go find a great coach, and then the general manager also went out and found a bunch of great players," he says. "He's really excited about this season because he feels like he's got the combination of the front office coaches and players that can drive the team forward to victories. And I think he feels the same way about Mediacom—putting management, coaches and players in a place where they can win."

FAST FACTS

- » Before assuming the role of Chairman/CEO of Mediacom, Giuseppe Comisso held various roles of increasing responsibility for nearly two decades, including GVP of Corporate Finance, Interim CEO and Vice Chairman.
- » Mediacom offers discounted broadband for seniors, military members, first responders and low-income households, promoted directly at community events across its footprint.
- » Mediacom debuted its live DOCSIS 4.0 customer deployment delivering symmetrical multi-gigabit speeds in Moline, Illinois, and showcased the feat at SCTE TechExpo 25.

Buckeye Draws a Line on Costs

By Noah Ziegler

When Buckeye Broadband pulled ESPN from its lineup in August 2025, the Toledo-based operator lost more than a critical channel in Northern Ohio and Southeast Michigan. The same dispute with Disney took FanDuel Sports Network with it, on top of a separate breakdown with Toledo NBC affiliate WNWO over retransmission fees and subsequently NBCUniversal networks.

For most operators, that kind of loss is treated as an unavoidable cost of doing business. For Block Communications-owned Buckeye, it became a defining moment.

“When these companies offer a direct-to-consumer product, in some cases cheaper than what they’re offering it to us, I can’t do it,” says Geoff Shook, Buckeye’s President/GM.

The math, in his telling, had simply stopped working. Rising retrans and carriage fees, stacked on top of sports rights costs baked into networks few of Buckeye’s subscribers actually watched, left him unable to justify the price increases required to keep the channels. The NBC dispute crystallized the same arithmetic in starker terms, in Shook’s

telling, since the network offered no local news or local programming—in addition to the cut NBCU wanted.

He doesn’t think the current retrans and carriage market dynamics are going to improve anytime soon, either. “I get it. I’m a capitalist, too. We’re in business for profit, but it’s just outstripped our ability to justify what the prices were in our markets,” Shook says, adding that once a network comes off Buckeye’s lineup, it’s difficult to make amends. “If I’ve got to go through and suffer the pain and the calls to drop a network, you’re going to have to turn water into wine to get me to put it back. It’s not that I’m just obstinate; it’s just that for three decades we’ve been kicking the can down the road with this, and at some point, my

foot is tired.”

Rather than simply subtract ESPN and NBCU nets and move on, Buckeye built a replacement. Partnering with TiVo through NCTC, the company launched TV Select, a \$25/month, broadband-delivered lineup of roughly 600 free ad-supported channels and a selection of linear nets, with programming guide shortcuts that route customers directly into streaming apps and subscriptions they already pay for. Plus, it scratches the local itch through regional news channel Buckeye1, Buckeye Community Arts Network (BCAN) and its RSN Buckeye Cable Sports Network (BCSN), which garnered enough credibility for Toledo ABC affiliate WTVG to contract it for local sports coverage.

Buckeye backed the transition to a more streaming-heavy video lineup with its “Brainiacs” tech-support program, which the operator extended to all customers at no charge—an extension of a broader digital literacy push that has included in-store workshops and a company-published book on how to stream, commissioned by Block Communications CEO Allan Block.

Shook was skeptical at first. “It

FAST FACTS

- » Buckeye’s parent company Block Communications was founded in the early 1900s by Paul Block, a German immigrant who came to the U.S. in 1885. It is still run today by his descendant, Allan Block.
- » Beyond Ohio and Michigan, Buckeye operates in over 20 counties across Mississippi and Alabama through its MaxxSouth Broadband subsidiary, acquired in stages starting in 2014.
- » Shook was inducted into the Cable Pioneers Class of 2025.

was like the first Bill Murray scene in ‘Caddyshack’... You want me to write a book and tell people how to fire us?” he recalls, before Block framed it as facing the inevitable. “Streaming isn’t going to go away. We have the best pipe. We need to show our customers how to use it. If our mission is to be the company our community turns to first to keep them connected, if [we] believe that, education is a part of that.”

The fallout has been manageable. Some customers left Buckeye, while others appreciated its efforts. Shook says Buckeye is positioned to post positive numbers for the year in the high-speed data category, aided by churn improvements alongside a second, major initiative: Rocket Internet, a prepaid flanker brand launched to fill the void left when the federal Affordable Connectivity Program expired.

“ACP was a wonderful business opportunity during COVID, and as quickly as it came, it disappeared and left a void,” Shook says. “I think it left a void across the industry. That was purely an economic play.”



Buckeye Broadband operates primarily in Ohio and Michigan.

Instead of losing customers in what would be an unavoidable churn event, Buckeye’s team asked what those subscribers prioritized the most. The answer, more often than not, was simplicity over the customer service extras. “I had a customer tell me, ‘Quite frankly, you guys do a great job, but I could live the rest of my life happy and not ever have to call you again.’ And so we launched a flanker brand,” Shook says.

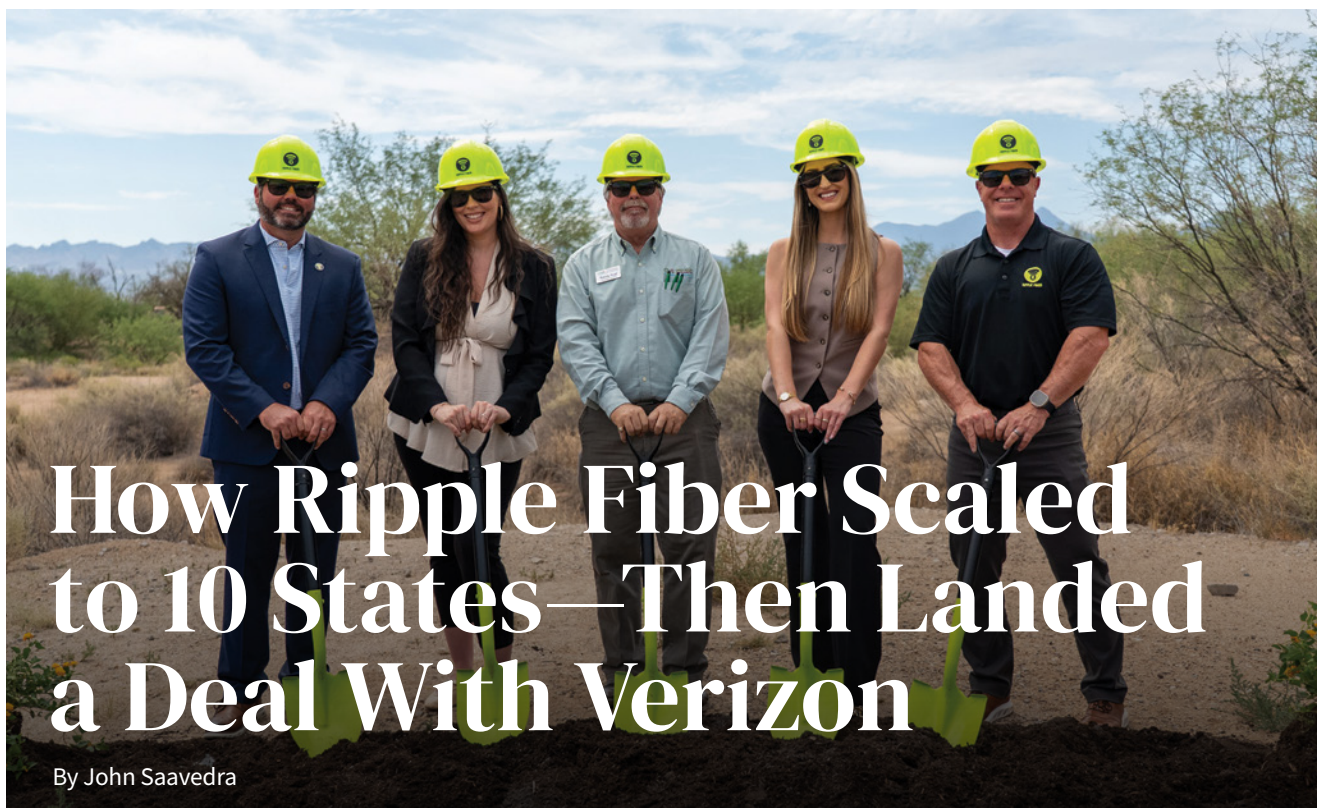
Rocket was built around that feedback, offering internet-only service with optional paid add-ons, prepaid billing to reduce bad debt

risk and a three-year price guarantee, now available across a footprint that spans Ohio, Michigan, Mississippi and Alabama. Plans start at 600 Mbps download speeds for \$9.99/month, or folks can get 1 Gig for \$19.99/month.

Shook describes a property like Rocket Internet as a core advantage of running a smaller-sized operator. “I’m proud of Rocket. I’m proud of the speed with which our team developed the concept and operationalized it, and it’s really made a positive imprint on our business,” he notes.

It also reflects Shook’s theory for what keeps Buckeye competitive against national players with larger marketing budgets. To him, there’s a distinct difference between customer service and customer care.

“Customer service is I answer the phone within 30 seconds. Customer care is I answer the phone inside of 30 seconds, and I take care of what the problem is,” he says. “I think that for our company, companies of our size, we have a greater ability and more opportunity to demonstrate care.”



How Ripple Fiber Scaled to 10 States—Then Landed a Deal With Verizon

By John Saavedra

North Carolina-based ISP Ripple Fiber has been on quite the growth journey over the past 12 months, expanding its multi-gig network into Illinois, Washington, Arizona, Florida, Colorado and Arkansas, with future plans to build in California. Homes passed grew 68% to more than 300,000, while subscribers grew 74%, marking the most aggressive expansion in company history. Founded in 2021 by CEO Greg Wilson, a 25-year veteran who began his telecom career in his native South Africa, Ripple Fiber has deployed more than 3,500 miles of fiber across 10 states and nearly 300 municipalities. That progress is the result of a clear focus.

“We’re focusing on communities around the bigger cities. So feeder towns where a lot of people are probably still economically tied to the larger metro but haven’t yet got fiber,” Wilson explains. “These are typically pretty small municipalities and their challenges are being able to deal with a construction project the size of what we bring into town. In order to not overload these cities, what we do is we spread that load and that’s why we’re fairly wide in a number of states and municipalities.”

The typical town the fiber provider is building in can only accommodate 500-1,000 passings per month. “When we realized that, then it was really a backward calculation of how many homes a month do we want to be

rolling out? How many states and cities do we need to be building in? How big do we want to get in each state to make sure that it’s viable from an operational and profitability perspective?” Wilson says. “We picked the states that had the best runway for us. It’s quite a long process and it’s taken a lot of planning and a lot of backing and faith from our funders and shareholders to get to this point.”

Supporting that process is a proprietary machine learning platform that the ISP leverages to identify expansion opportunities. Developed in-house at Ripple Labs, the platform (it doesn’t have a name yet, we asked!) is at the center of the ISP’s data-driven approach to calculating competitor density, developing the business plan,

deploying capital and predicting costs in a new market.

M&A is the other piece of the expansion puzzle. In 2025, Ripple Fiber merged with sister business HyperFiber, which added Florida, Colorado and Arkansas markets to the footprint. The same group of shareholders funded both ISPs from the beginning and “that was really about making sure that we’ve got multiple teams focused on multiple areas of the country,” Wilson says. “Once those build engines were established, then it made sense to bring them back together to gain operational efficiency.”

Ripple also acquired BridgeNET Fiber last year to strengthen its position in North Carolina, particularly in



Ripple Fiber's current footprint encompasses 10 states, with California coming soon.



Ripple Fiber CEO Greg Wilson. He founded the company in 2021.



In July, Ripple Fiber completed a \$20 million fiber project in North Carolina's Outer Banks.

the community of Statesville, where BridgeNET has 3,000 passings. This deal was about making sure Ripple could build a complete market. "Sometimes you go into a market that's already been built out 30-40% by a company. It doesn't make sense for us to come in and build the other 60%. So, we find these companies, as long as they're a clean fiber company and they're not doing other sorts of mixtures of products and services. We're happy to look at acquiring them, keeping the team on board because generally they know the local market really well and using them to continue building out that market and those adjacent to their town. What that does is it gives us an efficient build engine, and then it gives us complete coverage over those jurisdictions," Wilson explains.

The company's biggest deal of all came in July, when Ripple agreed to be acquired by Eaton Fiber, a wholesale fiber-to-the-home network provider backed by Tillman Global Holdings. Eaton—which secured a \$1.5 billion investment from Tillman and Bain Capital to fund the deal and its broader buildout—has a commercial partnership with Verizon in which Eaton funds and builds the network while Verizon serves as the exclusive retail provider. As part of the Ripple transaction, Verizon will take on Ripple's existing customers along with a small slice of Ripple's network in the Carolinas that overlaps with Verizon's own footprint; the rest of Ripple's

operations become part of the Eaton Fiber platform.

"It's a very capital-intensive business with a long return on investment. The more certainty investors can have behind revenue streams, the more appetite they've got to put funding in the business. This is exactly what this deal does for us," Wilson says. "What it does for Verizon is it gives them a build engine that knows how to go and deal with these smaller communities, the local issues and build out."

Because Ripple built its network as an open access platform, plugging in Verizon will be a straightforward process. Wilson sees plenty of other positives. "It'll be good for customers because it'll still be Ripple delivering the underlying service, managing the network, building out the network to our level of quality. And then you've got all of Verizon's offerings around mobile bundling, all of those types of product offerings which are really rich for consumers."

Underscoring that focus on the consumer is Ripple's refreshed customer-friendly packaging, with five residential tiers ranging from 650 Mbps to 8 Gigs at new lower pricing, starting at \$40/month. Gig packages include eero WiFi 7 equipment and cellular backup at no additional cost.

"The pricing's been great for us," Wilson says. "We've been able to maintain ARPU and increase our penetration. We had some markets that needed more competitive price points. Some of it was because of affordability

in the areas that we're in and some of it was because the competitors were being more aggressive in the area."

In other words, the Ripple Fiber team is keeping very busy, but Wilson still took a moment to look back at the last five years: "Launching a fresh brand with a really coherent product offering, and being able to roll that out at the speed that we do is probably the biggest milestone. But how do you offer consistency of service? It's really down to phenomenal people in the U.S. There's a massive talent pool that are super hard workers, super intelligent, so we were able to build a great team really quickly, and everybody bought into our mission and what we want to do."

FAST FACTS

- » In just five years, Ripple Fiber has built more than 3,500 miles of fiber and expanded into 10 states, adding six of those states in 2025 alone. That expansion has resulted in significant capital deployed across the U.S. economy, supporting over 1,000 jobs.
- » Ripple Fiber has scaled to more than 400 full-time employees and a robust C-suite leadership team, with deep industry expertise powering the company's rapid national growth.
- » Ripple Fiber has agreements with over 170 jurisdictions, many of them previously unserved or underserved.

Internet All-Stars

For the third year, CFX presents the CTAM and HarrisX Internet Service Satisfaction Survey results measuring the state of the customer experience across connectivity providers. From January to December 2025, CTAM and HarrisX asked a nationwide sample of 75,626 households how satisfied they were with their home internet service. Among the 10 MSOs large enough to be included in the survey, the top two providers are Armstrong, with a 73% overall satisfaction rating, and Sparklight, at 72% — statistically, a tie.

Armstrong has held a top spot since CFX began highlighting this research three years ago. Sparklight, by contrast, is a newcomer to the top tier—its rating climbed 8 points over 2024, a jump that not only pushed it into a tie for first but also earned it runner-up in this year's Most Improved category. Topping that list is Mediacom, whose 11-point gain makes it the MSO with the biggest year-over-year improvement. As CTAM SVP/GM Mark Snow notes, "Looking beneath the topline number at drivers like price and value, speed, reliability and trust, operators can identify what's improving and where gaps remain. That precision is what turns research into action."

In the profiles that follow, we take a closer look at how each top performer and most-improved company got there.

ARMSTRONG®

★★★★★
TOP SCORER

Armstrong is celebrating 80 years in business this year. The only way you hit that sort of milestone is through constant innovation. When Jud L. Sedwick started the organization in 1946, Armstrong was a construction company, hanging telephone lines and setting poles across Western Pennsylvania. While it has graduated to a fiber network and blistering fast high-speed internet, what hasn't changed is that it's still family-owned and operated. And Sedwick's initial mission still guides Armstrong: everyone has a right to stay connected to their loved ones and the world around them.

Over the past year, Armstrong has continued to innovate, enhancing its online purchase experience and refining how calls are routed, so customers who'd rather handle things themselves can do it in a few clicks, and customers who'd rather talk to a person reach the right one quickly. The company invests millions annually in its infrastructure, with its state-of-the-art fiber network now reaching more than 400,000 homes across six states. We'll be watching 2026's Internet Satisfaction Survey because it'll include the integration of MCTV into the Armstrong family, extending its footprint into new communities across eastern Ohio and West Virginia. On the product side, Armstrong has a refreshed lineup of speed tiers in the works. It's finalizing the details, but the direction is a higher entry-level speed and more symmetrical service as upload speeds matter more each year. Helping Armstrong stand out year-after-year are transparent prices with a price lock guarantee, a 24/7 care center and technicians who live in the same towns as its customers and two-hour service windows with on-time guarantees. Armstrong answers to its customers and communities, not shareholders—and that changes what it optimizes for.

CFX asked Armstrong's leadership team to share their perspective on the survey results:

Since CFX has started highlighting these scores, this is Armstrong's third time as a top performer. What do you think is driving that consistency?

People. Full stop. From the top executives of the company down to each frontline employee, we all follow the same mantra first said by our late (and great) former VP of Engineering, Ed Hassler: *Take Care of the Customer, Take Care of the Customer, Take Care of the Customer. Because if we don't, someone else will.* That philosophy drives almost every decision we make.

What's on your roadmap for the next 12 months that you think will matter most for customer satisfaction?

Four things: First, finishing the fiber conversion—retiring legacy plant so more customers are served by our advanced fiber network. Reliability is the foundation for everything else. Second, completing the MCTV integration well. Acquisitions are usually where customer experience slips; we're determined this one isn't. Those customers should feel that their service has improved, not just that it's different. Third, the speed tier refresh—getting our lineup where it needs to be for how people use the internet now. Fourth, and this one is less a project than a promise: holding our support experience exactly as steady as it is today while all of that is happening. Old plant gets converted, systems get integrated, lineups change—none of that should ever become the customer's problem. When a company has this much underway at once, consistency doesn't happen by accident, and it's the thing we're most protective of.

Sparklight®

★★★★★
TOP SCORER

Sparklight, Cable One's primary consumer brand, rocketed up this year's satisfaction survey as it continued to look for ways to improve upon customer experience. Late last year, it launched TechAssist Support, giving customers access to live, U.S.-based tech experts seven days a week. The TechAssist team can troubleshoot, help with setup and some plans offer protection on a range of connected devices. Sparklight also has been steadily expanding multi-gig speeds, with the majority of its customers expected to have access by year-end. It's pairing that with a better WiFi experience, launching the eero Pro 7 that supports WiFi 7 and delivers faster speeds and the eero Outdoor 7 that brings better WiFi coverage to outdoor spaces. In 2026, we'll be watching to see what sort of impact the launch of mobile across the footprint has on survey results.

Similar to Armstrong's focus on the local communities, Sparklight shines a spotlight on the neighborhoods it serves with Customer Appreciation Days. The events give customers a chance to meet one-on-one with associates, ask questions and explore solutions to fit their connectivity needs. Sparklight's associates live and work in these communities, use the same services as its customers and understand firsthand how important fast, reliable connectivity is to everyday life.



CFX asked Sparklight's leadership team to share their perspective on the survey results:

This is your first time topping the satisfaction rankings since CFX began publishing them, and you're also among the most improved scorers this year— what changed? Was there a specific turning point, investment or strategic shift that drove the improvement?

This recognition is especially meaningful because it comes directly from customers and validates the experience we work hard to deliver every day. There wasn't one specific turning point. We believe the results reflect our sustained, company-wide commitment to delivering a superior customer experience. We're intentional about using customer feedback, including surveys, online reviews and Net Promoter Scores to name a few, to understand what matters most to our customers and where we can improve. Those insights help us refine our processes, strengthen customer communications and improve how we serve and support customers across every interaction.

At the same time, we remain focused on the fundamentals: fast, reliable internet and outstanding service and support. As competition has increased and customers have had more opportunities to evaluate their options, Sparklight has continued to stand out as a trusted, local provider with a long history of serving and supporting our communities.

What do you think differentiates Sparklight from competitors in the markets you serve?

What sets Sparklight apart is our local presence and the relationships we've built in the communities we serve. We've served many of our communities for decades, allowing us to build relationships and earn trust that extends beyond providing internet and mobile service. Our teams are locally engaged and committed to showing up for customers and communities.

That commitment includes supporting local nonprofits, schools and other essential organizations through grants, volunteerism and partnerships. Through the Sparklight Charitable Giving Fund, the company awards \$250,000 in grants annually to nonprofit organizations focused on education, digital literacy, workforce development and community improvement. Since its inception, the fund has awarded more than \$1.2 million in grants to more than 300 nonprofit organizations that expand educational opportunities, improve technology access and strengthen communities. For Sparklight, being a local connectivity provider means investing not only in our network, but also in the people and communities that rely on it.

Mediacom®

Xtream
Mobile
Business



Mediacom earning the Most Improved score fits with a company that's in the midst of changing things up—from leadership to how it goes about delighting customers. See its win in this issue as CFX's Tier 1 Operator of the Year for further evidence. It has been all-in on multi-gig upgrades across its markets. By the end of 2025, Mediacom had provided multi-gig and symmetrical speed broadband to more than 500,000 homes and businesses. It expects to exceed one million by the end of this year. Mediacom began rolling out DOCSIS 4.0 in September 2025 with 14 customers in Moline, Illinois. It's now being phased across Mediacom's Quad Cities service area, including Davenport and Bettendorf, Iowa, and Rock Island and East Moline. It's the foundation for future network expansion and innovation.

Mediacom also has launched new packages, rolling out a low-cost broadband service option for first responders, active-duty military and veterans and for seniors over age 65. The plan is priced at \$29.99/month and features a five-year price lock, free installation, download speeds of up to 100Mbps and upload of up to 20Mbps as well as a 90-day money back guarantee. The operator also introduced Advanced WiFi powered by eero 7, providing customers with a dual-band mesh WiFi 7 router that offers enhanced coverage, faster speeds and added security while supporting many connected devices. Its mesh network proactively searches for the optimal and most reliable connection, while also working to eliminate dead zones in the home. Two-year-old Mediacom Mobile is another important part of its trajectory, with customers able to receive big savings by bundling it with internet.



CFX asked Mediacom's leadership team to share their perspective on the survey results:

This is a big jump in score. Was there a specific turning point, investment or strategic shift that drove the improvement?

From a marketing perspective, we listened to what customers told us mattered most: price stability, price transparency, no surprises and offers that are simple to understand. Marketing helped shift the conversation from short-term promotions to long-term confidence by emphasizing price locks, all-in pricing, equipment included and clearer ways for customers to choose the right service.

It was more than a pricing story. It was a trust story. We worked to make every message feel more direct, more transparent and more connected to the real reasons customers choose Mediacom: reliable internet, predictable value and service that supports everyday life.

What do you think differentiates Mediacom from competitors in the markets you serve?

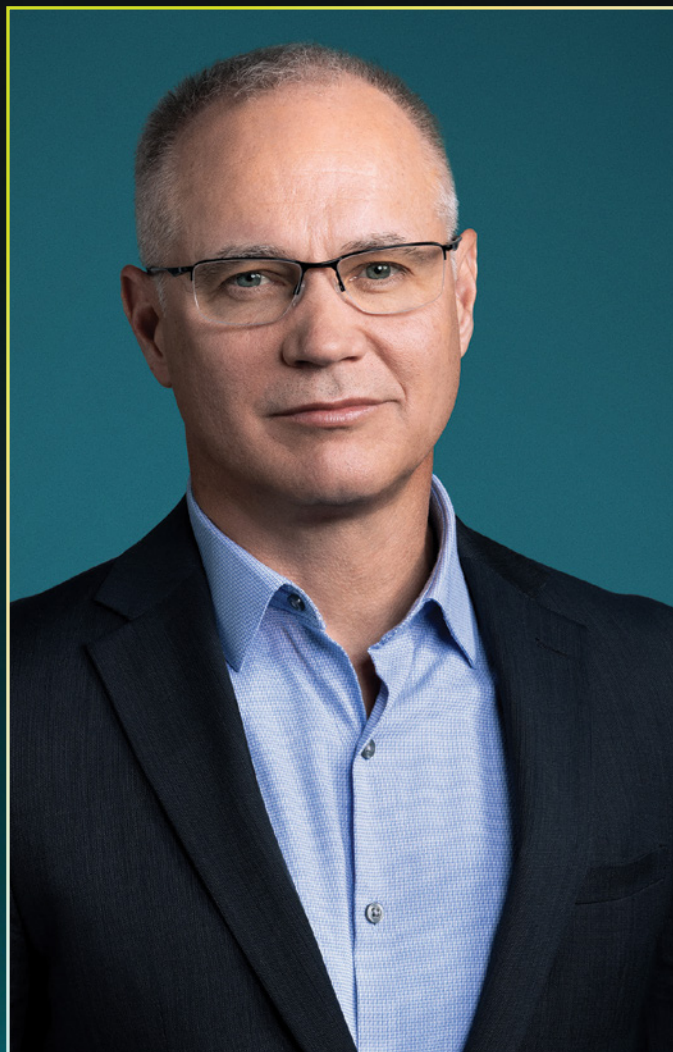
Being a family-owned company gives Mediacom a point of difference competitors cannot easily copy. It signals long-term commitment over short-term churn, personal accountability over corporate distance and investment in communities that are too often underestimated. The family-owned story is more like a promise: we are here for the long run, our name is on the door and we measure success by the trust we earn in the communities we serve.

Mediacom's existence has always been rooted in keeping America's smaller communities connected to opportunity—delivering powerful, reliable technology with the personal commitment of local people who live where they serve. Built on grit, trust and long-term investment, we bring the scale to compete, the heart to care and the promise that every customer deserves a connection that makes life easier, better and more possible.

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JASON WYRICK
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Jason Wyrick
Executive Vice President, Technology, STARZ

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‘If You Take Care of Me’ —

Rocco B. Commisso and the Family He Built

By Amy Maclean

For Rocco B. Commisso, family wasn’t a metaphor for how he ran Mediacom—it was the org chart. He worked side by side with his own blood relatives at the company he built from nothing into what’s now the fourth-largest cable provider in the country, and he expected everyone else on the team to be treated with that same loyalty. It’s why his passing in January at age 76 didn’t just ripple through Mediacom—it landed across an entire industry that had come to think of him as one of their own.

“If you take care of me, I will take care of you,” he liked to tell employees—a mantra his son Giuseppe Commisso, now Mediacom’s CEO, calls his own guiding principle as he leads the company.

“I never imagined the success he achieved over the years or the wealth he created, not just for himself, but for everyone who joined the venture at the conception of Mediacom Communications. It was never solely about the wealth—it was about the passion and love for the business,” says Catherine Commisso, who was married to Rocco for 50 years and serves as Mediacom’s Vice Chair & EVP, Corporate Strategy and Administration. “He always said that if you are passionate about

what you’re doing, it will never feel like work.”

Rocco was certainly passionate, and no one ever questioned his work ethic. The stories of him arriving in America from Italy at age 12 without speaking English, how he used his accordion skills to secure admission to Mount Saint Michael Academy in the Bronx and how he earned a soccer scholarship to Columbia despite never playing in high school are legendary. Catherine said he worked 40 hours a week just in high school. After college, he joined Pfizer, where he persuaded his boss to finance his MBA at Columbia while working the 4pm-to-midnight shift. In his spare time, he became student body president and helped his brother Nick start a disco in

the Bronx.

That was around 1973 when his relationship began with Catherine. Even in love, Rocco, a whiz at numbers, was doing the math. “Our engagement was supposed to last four years, but Rocco wanted to marry in two, and he convinced me I could finish my studies in New York. He was always so quick to plan. In my life with him, I always felt I was catching a train,” she says.

After graduating from business school in 1975, he spent a decade in finance, lending to media and communications companies. That led to him serving as CFO of Cablevision Industries Corporation. After it merged with Time Warner in 1995, Rocco set about creating Mediacom in the basement

of his home, acquiring a patchwork of cable systems that were overlooked and underperforming.

His son Giuseppe, then 14, helped him send faxes and set up his computer in those earliest days of the company, giving him a front-row seat to how it was created. “My father’s founding principle was that smaller cities and towns across America deserved the same or better communications services as our nation’s largest metropolitan areas,” says Giuseppe. “He turned that belief into a reality for the 1,500-plus communities served by Mediacom and proved to the broader industry that a smaller market strategy built around advanced technology was both achievable and sustainable.”

Giuseppe wasn’t the only family member Rocco pulled into the venture in its earliest days. Italia Commisso Weinand received a call from her brother in 1996 while she was working at Comcast. She had 19 years in cable under her belt, including stints at Time Inc. and Times Mirror. “Rocco’s idea ‘to serve the underserved markets of America’ resonated with me,” she says. She helped him with some due diligence, and it wasn’t long before she signed on as his third employee, serving as VP, Operations. “It was scary, but how do you say no to your big brother? He was willing to give me free rein because he had that much trust and confidence in what I had already accomplished,” says Commisso Weinand, who was crowned as Comcast’s first-ever GM of the year.

Rocco had bought a system out in California that his sister was visiting every other week. Soon Rocco ran the numbers and convinced her she’d save money by flying on a Saturday. “We always wanted to please Rocco, and I was at the front of the line. His motto was underpromise and overdeliver. Early on, we were a few but mighty, as all the years of experience served us well. In the course of growing, we learned as we performed,” she says. “The secret is that it is difficult to duplicate Rocco’s success because his ethics and morals combined with his genius are difficult to live up to. He was



Rocco Commisso earned an MBA from Columbia in 1975. He began his business career at Pfizer and later worked in the financial industry at Chase Manhattan and Royal Bank of Canada.

the real thing.”

Today, Mediacom provides internet, video, phone and mobile services to more than 3 million households and businesses across 22 states, mainly in the Midwest and Southeast. It’s been at the forefront of delivering gigabit speeds, with a goal of bringing DOCSIS 4.0 to a million homes by the end of the year.

Rocco’s belief in what smaller markets deserved was matched by an equal belief in the people he did business with. Patriot Media Chairman Steve Simmons felt that loyalty firsthand, and from both sides of the negotiating table. He first met Rocco 50 years ago, when Rocco was a young banker at Royal Bank of Canada. He financed Simmons’ purchase of the jointly owned Long Beach cable system from Times Mirror and Knight-Ridder in 1984. “The transaction was viewed as very risky, but I sensed rightly that Steve would make me look good,” Rocco said in a video for Simmons’ 2015 Cable Hall of Fame induction.

The tables turned when Rocco bought a number of systems for Mediacom, some of them belonging to Simmons. “I forever felt happy for Rocco and sad for me because he always would tell me that some of my systems were the best in his company. I thought, ‘why did I sell?’” recalls Simmons.

The two continued a lifelong friendship, with Simmons co-founding the Entrepreneurs Club, a group of former and present Chairs and CEOs of cable operators that Rocco proudly belonged to—and where he’d happily speak his mind on retransmission consent, carriage fees and other pressing issues. “He’d ask great questions and cause us to have wonderful debate,” says Simmons. “He was just an all-out titan of the industry, and one who fought fiercely for his company and for cable operators.”

Rocco also was a leader in cable in upgrading his systems. Even the more rural areas had money put into them to make sure they got higher internet speeds and new technology.

“He was just an entrepreneur through and through, top to bottom. He did a spectacular job of winding up with almost 100% of Mediacom, and we would talk a lot about how he had no debt,” says Simmons. “That part of it allowed him to become probably the wealthiest of all of us cable industry entrepreneurs, except for [John] Malone, because he had this equity with no debt on the company. It also allowed him to use his cash flow to upgrade those systems and do things to improve the service for customers.”

It was a move Giuseppe didn’t fully appreciate at the time, but values today.

Founders Circle Award

“After my father took Mediacom private in 2011, he would often joke that he was the most indebted man in America! While many business leaders in our industry spent the past decade focused on M&A strategies, my father was instead keenly focused on paying down our corporate debt,” he recalls. “As I step into my new role as Mediacom’s Chairman and CEO in a highly competitive broadband market, I feel incredibly fortunate for his emphasis on delivering a clean balance sheet. It is a luxury that very few companies in our business enjoy and I strongly believe it will be a competitive advantage for us moving forward.”

Mediacom’s success let Rocco pursue another one of his passions: soccer. He purchased a majority stake in the New York Cosmos in 2017 and Italian soccer club Fiorentina in 2019. And Columbia University was always in his life. Catherine says he co-founded the alumni advisory group Friends of Columbia Soccer in the mid-1970s and he gave to both the men’s and women’s teams. “He never forgot where he came from; it stayed deep in his mind. The love for soccer gave him a clear path to invest, and he did so profoundly,” she says. “He created the most beautiful soccer training center in all of Europe, Rocco B. Commisso Viola Park. It is the largest training center in Italy, housing the kids’ women’s and men’s soccer teams. He gave Fiorentina what no other owner ever did: a home.”

That willingness to open doors for people extended well past the soccer pitch. Giuseppe said his father would be the first to tell you he was the beneficiary of generosity. “He knew that the scholarship he received to Columbia University changed his life’s trajectory. It is the reason why he gave away nearly 4,000 scholarships to young people during his lifetime,” he says. “He wanted to provide support to young people at a pivotal point in their lives because he knew how important those gestures could be in helping them realize their dreams.”

In 2023, Rocco and Catherine made one of Columbia’s largest-ever gifts



Rocco Commisso with his son Giuseppe at a Fiorentina match. The Commisso family has continued ownership of the club since Rocco's passing.

for undergraduate scholarships, establishing the Rocco and Catherine Commisso Scholarship at the university’s Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science. The award supports up to 20 students annually, in perpetuity, with eligibility built around Rocco’s life story: students must have lived or studied in Italy, speak Italian, be involved in Italian cultural life, play on Columbia’s soccer teams or hail from the Bronx, with preference given to fellow alumni of Mount Saint Michael Academy. He carried the same instinct into Mediacom itself, where the company’s World Class Scholarship

Program has spent years helping the children of Mediacom customers cover the cost of college.

In the streets of Italy, soccer fans would call out “Il Presidente” when they’d see the Fiorentina president. Forbes dubbed him one of America’s wealthiest citizens, with an estimated net worth of \$5.6 billion. But such honorifics didn’t matter much to Rocco.

“In the cable industry, he was simply known as Rocco, and so was he in soccer,” says Catherine. “He asked people to call him simply Rocco—titles were not of interest to him; his character was.”

HONORING

OUR MEMBERS RECOGNIZED IN THE

CFX 2026 TOP OPS ISSUE



Founders Circle Award

Rocco Commisso

In Memoriam
Mediacom



Lifetime Achievement Award

Marty Carollo

Retired
All West Fiber

**Operator of the Year,
Tech Trailblazer, and Internet All-Stars**
Mediacom

Product Launch of the Year
Cable One

Executive of the Year
Gavin Keirans, Blue Stream Fiber

Community Relations Award
Shentel / Glo Fiber

Market Mover Award
WOW! Internet, Cable & Phone

Smaller Operator of the Year
Buckeye Broadband

Work Culture Award
Hotwire Communications

**Mobile Momentum Award
and Public-Private Partnership**
Midco

Internet All-Stars
Armstrong
Cable One / Sparklight

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL
CFX 2026 TOP OPS HONOREES!

Charter's Rich DiGeronimo on How Spectrum Is Redefining Convergence

By John Saavedra

To say it's been a busy 12 months for Charter Communications would be an understatement. Not only did it close its \$34.5 billion merger with Cox Communications, but it also pushed its convergence strategy even further—bundling broadband and mobile, backed by initiatives like its savings guarantee and the launch of Invincible WiFi, the industry's first WiFi 7 router with battery and 5G cellular backup. Meanwhile, its Seamless Entertainment now packs \$130 worth of streaming apps with live TV packages. Rich DiGeronimo, President of Product and Technology, answers a few questions about Charter's convergence strategy and what's next.

More operators are taking a converged approach to their product offerings. What sets Spectrum's approach apart?

Convergence isn't a buzzword for us—it's an operating strategy built around how customers live and connect today. Customers don't separate their internet experience from their wireless experience. They just want connectivity that works wherever they are.

Spectrum Internet and Spectrum Mobile work together over the Spectrum Fiber Broadband Network and are supported by approximately 45 million WiFi access points across the country, delivering a faster, more seamless experience than 5G. Our Seamless Connectivity bundle delivers the fastest and most reliable service and helps customers save with our \$1,000 savings guarantee. For video, Spectrum's Seamless Entertainment brings live TV and popular streaming apps together, all in one place. Spectrum TV Select plans include ad-supported streaming apps—providing more than \$130 of monthly retail value at no extra cost. The Spectrum TV App is available on phones, tablets and the most popular connected devices. It is one of the best places to watch live sports in 4K or many games at once with Multiview. We bring

together internet, mobile and video in a way that makes the experience simpler, more reliable and more valuable for customers.

T-Mobile has downplayed convergence as an effective strategy. Why do you feel it is the way forward?

Every operator has its own strategy, but for us, convergence is where consumer behavior is already headed. Customers increasingly expect one provider to deliver a connected experience inside and outside of the home. They want simplicity, value and reliability. We have the network and partnerships to deliver the industry-leading converged experience to every home and business that we serve.

With the Cox deal now closed, what opportunities do you see ahead?

With the combination of both companies, we now have a footprint across 45 states reaching nearly 70 million homes and businesses. That gives us more opportunities to extend our strategy across a larger base, and with scale you get more ability to innovate, more efficiency in how you operate, greater ability to partner with technology leaders and more ways to create better experiences for customers.

Operators are taking very different



FAST FACTS

- » Spectrum Internet customers who bundle mobile or video service are 40% less likely to churn.
- » Approximately 87% of Spectrum Mobile's wireless traffic is now offloaded to WiFi, a number Charter expects to grow further.

paths on network upgrades right now—some going all-in on fiber, others upgrading HFC with DOCSIS 4.0. How does Spectrum's infrastructure strategy fit into the broader convergence story?

We're building the best platform to support a converged customer relationship at scale. Our network evolution gives us a strong balance of performance, deployment efficiency and return on investment. We now deliver gigabit symmetrical speeds, and DOCSIS 4.0 allows us to continue to increase capacity and performance while leveraging the strength of the network we already have in place.

How is AI shaping the way Spectrum thinks about convergence?

We use AI and machine learning to help our products work together more seamlessly and to give our employees better tools to support customers. That can mean helping customers troubleshoot issues faster, optimizing network performance, providing faster support, fewer service disruptions and a more reliable, seamless experience—the foundation for successful convergence and a more intuitive entertainment and connectivity experience.

Scaling Without Slipping: How Gavin Keirans Built a National Platform at Blue Stream Fiber

By Noah Ziegler

When Gavin Keirans stepped into the CEO position at Blue Stream Fiber in June 2025, he inherited a company with a strong Florida foothold and a fresh expansion into Houston. More than a year later, that footprint has grown to include Alabama and Georgia, bulk unit sales are up 42% year-over-year and Keirans has emerged as the architect of what he calls a “national, scalable platform” for community-based connectivity.

Keirans, who moved up from President and COO, inherited a 46-year-old bulk provider riding high on double-digit annual growth and full coverage across Florida. His task was translating regional density into a repeatable model that can permeate throughout the U.S.

“We made a decision to go to Houston,” Keirans says. “What we found was a lot of the channels that we were working with—particularly national developers and home builders, as well

as if you think about asset owners in our space that own multiple portfolios of multi-dwelling units—[responded well to what we’d done]. Ultimately, we felt that the reputation and references we built in Florida were able to scale really across Florida, then Texas and now Alabama and Georgia.”

That channel-first logic, rather than a state-by-state land grab, defines Keirans’ approach. Blue Stream has identified roughly 10-15 target states concentrated in the Southeast and Southwest, screened for factors such as new-build density and legacy HOA footprint.

“We’re not trying to jump to X state or Y state,” he says. “It’s about being really thoughtful around working with our partners to grow [and] leveraging a lot of what made us successful in the past.”

The results back up the strategy. Beyond bulk unit growth, Blue Stream posted a 52% jump in bulk brownfield sales, launched service at 70 new properties and locked in 12 major renewals spanning more than 5,000 residential units—while adjusted EBITDA hit an all-time high. Keirans credits that consistent, scalable playbook with the company’s ability to serve single-family, mid-rise and high-rise communities alike.

That thinking extends to Blue Stream’s brownfield strategy, building fiber-enabled “smart-life” communities in areas served by incumbents like Comcast. Combined with new greenfield development, it’s given the company an “organic muscle” for growth. Under Keirans, Blue Stream has seen a 72% increase in referral generation.

“Gavin pairs a clear vision for where we’re headed with the discipline to



actually get us there, and that’s what’s kept our culture strong while driving the growth we’ve seen this year,” says Blue Stream CRO Iain Urquhart.

Looking a few years out, Keirans sees Blue Stream becoming a top 10-to-15 ISP nationally. He’s quick to credit the team he’s assembled for Blue Stream’s accomplishments and upward trajectory. “It’s deeper trust in the management team that we’ve been able to assemble. It’s knowing that as you run the operations, you’re in every aspect of the day-to-day,” he says. “I have great confidence in what we’re able to build in the operation and what they’re able to deliver. That’s allowed me to pivot toward more of a true commercial focus and financial focus.”

When asked how Blue Stream acquaintances would describe him in one word, Keirans paused before landing on “committed.” It’s a fitting illustration for an executive whose growth story circles back to the same idea: that scaling a national platform starts with a deep bench that can go toe-to-toe with competitors.

FAST FACTS

- » Under Keirans’ leadership, Blue Stream improved its average time to repair by 25% YOY, while also reducing trouble calls by 59%.
- » Before Blue Stream, Keirans spent nearly three years as VP, Strategy & Business Development for Optimum (formerly Altice USA), also making a stop at the Madison Square Garden Company as VP, Customer Experience.
- » Adoption of Blue Stream’s proprietary AI platform grew from roughly 250 employees to nearly 400 over the past year, with the system processing an average of 50,000 transactions per month.

Fox One Wins Big in Year One

By John Saavedra



Fox's John Fiedler

Fox One has had quite the freshman year. Not only did Fox Corp.'s direct-to-consumer streaming service launch in time for the NFL season last fall, but it also served as the English-language streaming home of the 2026 FIFA World Cup this past summer. It pulled out all the stops for the world's biggest sporting event, rolling out a slew of advanced viewing, personalization and content discovery features, including customizable multiview, AI-powered search, key plays and more.

Delivering a great World Cup experience is what really got the Fox One team excited, says Fox DTC EVP, Product and Engineering John Fiedler, reflecting on the service's major milestones so far. "Once you have the product out in market, you're obviously getting a lot of feedback. You're seeing how consumers behave, and then you can start to be really innovative," he says. "For launch, our mission was to get a product in market that was working and could process commerce transactions at scale and support usage during NFL season, the nuts and bolts of what you would expect a streaming product to need to be. But World Cup was the fun stuff. That was the innovative stuff."

The results were worth the effort. The World Cup drove incremental subscriber acquisition and strong retention rates that surpassed Fox's expectations, and according to research firm Antenna, Fox One received 2.8 million signups in

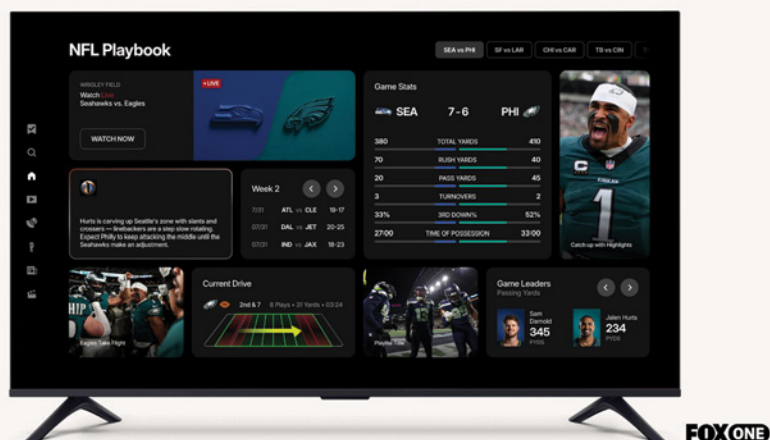
June, with opening day alone raking in 400,000 new subs. Most importantly, the wins aren't negatively impacting Fox's pay TV business—an industry concern whenever a programmer launches a DTC service. The minimal cannibalization comes down to partnering with pay TV partners to make the service available to cable customers at no additional cost and making the authentication process as simple as possible.

"It's a huge understated part of the product that deserves more attention. 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," Fiedler says. "From one business perspective, we're looking at how many acquisitions did we get, how many commerce transactions did we process. 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 partnerships."

As another NFL season kicks off and the midterm elections draw near, Fiedler and his team are looking forward to continuing to build on the foundation they set in year one. For election coverage on the streamer, Fiedler is thinking about how to present an interactive real-time data component next to a live video stream in multiview, calling it "the next fun product challenge."

"We're trying to make the product as engaging as we possibly can. There's still such a high ceiling on where we could take live viewing experiences using technology today, and building experiences that feel genuinely interactive, personalized, built for you, allow you to catch up on the things you care about and get into product experiences that are much more dynamic and unique and compelling than what has traditionally been put into the market to this point."



FAST FACTS

- » Fox One streamed all 104 matches of the 2026 World Cup live and on-demand in 4K. The final drew 38.9M viewers on FOX—the most-watched soccer telecast in U.S. history.
- » Fox One added popular podcasts from FOX News Media and Red Seat Ventures this year, including "Hang Out with Sean Hannity," "Ruthless," "The Riley Gaines Show," "The Brett Cooper Show" and "Kill Tony."

Fox One launched on Aug. 21, 2025, with a retail price of \$19.99 per month.



DIRECTV Rebundles the Rulebook

By John Saavedra

When DIRECTV launched its new Genre Pack skinny bundle offerings in 2025, the pay TV distributor had a clear goal in mind for its new packaging.

“There’s this whole segment of the country we were not in the consideration set for whether it was due to price or having the right content, and so we have to evolve with consumer demand. That’s really why we did Genre Packs,” DIRECTV VP/GM, Residential Growth Stefanie Ball says. “It was about opening new doors for us, so we could build new relationships.”

Looking at the skinny bundle strategy, one of the things Ball is proudest of is that 60% of Genre Pack subscribers are customers DIRECTV hasn’t done business with in the past, showing that the packaging is bringing in new viewers. “That gives us a lot of confidence that we’re not just recycling customers,” she says.

DIRECTV currently offers five Genre Packs. The best performer to date is a no-brainer. Yes, it’s the one bundling live sports. The MySports bundle packs ESPN and Fox Sports linear channels, local and national broadcast nets, MLB Network, NBA TV, plenty of ways to watch college sports, access to ESPN Unlimited and more for \$65/month. “It’s really your one-stop shop for all the sports that you need, and so that is a lead horse for us, especially this time of year [because of football season],” Ball

explains. Rounding out the top three performers are the MyEntertainment pack, which mixes linear channels with access to Disney+, Hulu, HBO Max and AMC+ for \$43/month, and MyNews’ combo of Fox News, CNBC, CNN, MS Now, C-SPAN and local stations for \$45. Ball adds that the \$38/month MiEspañol is also “really competitive,” calling MyKids an “important part of the portfolio” that DIRECTV is still perfecting.

DIRECTV isn’t slowing down in terms of adding value across the entire Genre Pack portfolio. In August, it launched a new deal offering 12 months of Netflix Standard with ads at no additional cost to customers who sign up for a skinny bundle and Gemini device. Part of the why behind the Netflix partnership is to continue to build the relationship with the “more transient customer base” that

subscribes based on the specific content they want to watch.

“It’s really important for us to have breadth of content at the right price. But as they go in and out, we needed a compelling reason for why to take our hardware,” Ball says. “Why not try to bundle Gemini with one of the best SVODs?” An added bonus of the Netflix deal? It’ll give Genre Pack bundle customers access to the live sports presented on the streamer, including next June’s FIFA Women’s World Cup.

Over a year into the Genre Pack strategy, DIRECTV is of course thinking about what’s next. “We’re focused on bringing new value props to the market that don’t exist today,” Ball says. One possibility is a “non-live only” bundle for customers who don’t watch live TV and prefer streaming and on-demand programming.

FAST FACTS

- » Over 60% of DIRECTV’s Genre Pack sales are from consumers leaving another live streaming platform—SVOD-only households or cord-nevers.
- » DIRECTV launched Curated Sports Multiview in August, giving users an enhanced way to watch the day’s biggest games across different leagues.
- » The distributor launched service on Meta Quest headsets this year. DIRECTV is offering a five-day free trial to headset owners.



Sparklight supported animal shelters by donating for every new mobile line activated.

Sparklight Breaks It Before Customers

By Amy Maclean

When Cable One decided it was time to get off the sidelines and into the mobile game, it knew it would never be able to gain consumers' trust if it didn't have buy-in from within. That's why leadership made Sparklight Mobile's launch a company-wide collaboration from Day 1, with Marketing, Operations, Technology, Customer Care, Corporate Communications and teams all across the organization leading the charge.

It started first with an internal group dubbed the Sparklight Mobile Insiders that included associates in sales, marketing, operations, technology, call centers, field technicians and more. They tackled everything: trying out different devices in different geographies, using an eSIM vs a physical SIM, porting phone numbers and getting brand new numbers.

"The main challenge I gave them was to break it before a customer could," says Director of Product Management Ryan Kelly. "We felt like if we could get a lot of people involved early on with testing the product, then they could really spread the word almost in like a grassroots style to our customers and really vouch for how easy it is to purchase, how much money they can save and how reliable the network is."

Sparklight Mobile stands out as CFX's Product of the Year honoree for going beyond employees as testers, with every department 100% part of the launch. At the center was a campaign developed by the Corporate Communications

team—Connect for a Cause—which donated \$10 for every new mobile line activated in select markets, resulting in \$10,000 for local animal shelters.

"Rather than looking at it as a one-time product announcement, we wanted to look at it as a month-long campaign, so we could amplify the visibility of some of the hardworking nonprofits in our areas alongside our new affordable mobile service that keeps customers connected," says Jamie O'Driscoll, Cable One's Communications Manager.

In April 2026, Cable One completed its full-footprint launch, introducing bundled wireless plans starting at \$15 per month with Sparklight internet and a promotional offer providing eligible customers with one free unlimited line for 12 months. Customers could also bring their own devices and add optional Mobile Device Care for added protection.

After reaching its first major subscriber milestone, Sparklight Mobile achieved the next milestone four times faster, reflecting the impact

of increased brand awareness, full footprint availability and continual process improvements. Weekly activations increased more than 15-fold during the rollout and more than 60% of new subscribers chose to transfer their existing wireless number to Sparklight Mobile, demonstrating trust in Sparklight as their wireless provider.

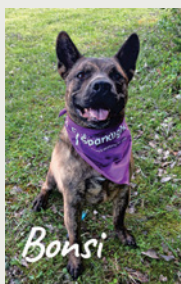
For Kelly, that number surprised him. "I was thinking we'd be less than 50%," he says. "I thought a lot of people would actually just get a new number, try it out, see if it worked... The fact that our customers were willing to use a number they've had for years and move that over to a new carrier—I think that's why we've had that trust."

That trust is now the foundation for what's next. Sparklight Mobile currently operates on a bring-your-own-device model, but it plans to begin offering devices directly before the end of the year. Kelly's team is also focused on expanding beyond single-line customers to entire households, encouraging families who trusted Sparklight with one line to bring over the rest.

More than a successful product launch, Sparklight Mobile marked Cable One's evolution from a broadband provider into a full-service connectivity provider. It also established a repeatable model for introducing new products. It's a formula it plans to lean on again: disciplined execution paired with local impact, creating launches that resonate with customers, associates and the communities Sparklight serves.

FAST FACTS

- » **6** — animal shelters supported across select markets through Connect for a Cause
- » **\$1,500** — guaranteed minimum donation to each participating shelter, regardless of activation totals
- » **70** — surrendered dogs taken in by one local shelter that helped inspire the cause selection



Mediacom Skips the Line on DOCSIS 4.0

By Sara Winegardner

Mediacom has never been afraid to take a leap of faith if it means bringing next-gen technology to the rural communities in its footprint. When its DOCSIS 4.0 technology gave an impressive showing in a laboratory environment, the operator was faced with two options—wait and allow some of the larger MSOs to launch first and work out any initial wrinkles or strike out and be the pioneer. Mediacom CTO JR Walden was more than ready to take the leap.



Mediacom CTO JR Walden

“If the new technology is ready and the upgrade... is customer impactful, why not try to push?” he says. “Every day we wait to move to the new technology is a market that will never have those capabilities.”

The move to DOCSIS 4.0 required upgrading the network to a 1.8 GHz spectrum capacity and implementing an ultra high-split architecture. Mediacom tapped ATX Networks, Harmonic and Hitron to serve as its initial vendor partners, providing everything from 1.8 GHz amplifiers to unified Remote PHY devices and a vCMTS.

When it came time to deploy, Mediacom asked for volunteers across its organization that felt positively about the condition of their local network to offer their locations as possibilities for the initial rollout. In the end, it settled on a small group of customers served by a single node in Moline, Illinois.

“Every customer was contacted in advance. We told them we would want to come out and install a new 4.0 modem and that we were going to leave it blown wide open. They were going to get all the speed that was possible and we were going to find out together,” Walden says. Almost immediately, speed tests were showing promising numbers of 9 Gbps downstream and 3 Gbps upstream.

While DOCSIS 4.0 unlocked more capacity and the potential for reduced latency and higher speeds, Walden was most excited for the installation of new smart amplifiers that would offer network telemetry that had previously been unavailable.

“We’ve gotten shockingly good at looking at the endpoints and telling what’s going on in the middle, but a dream of mine was: can we proactively not just monitor, but manage a whole part of the access network?” Walden says.

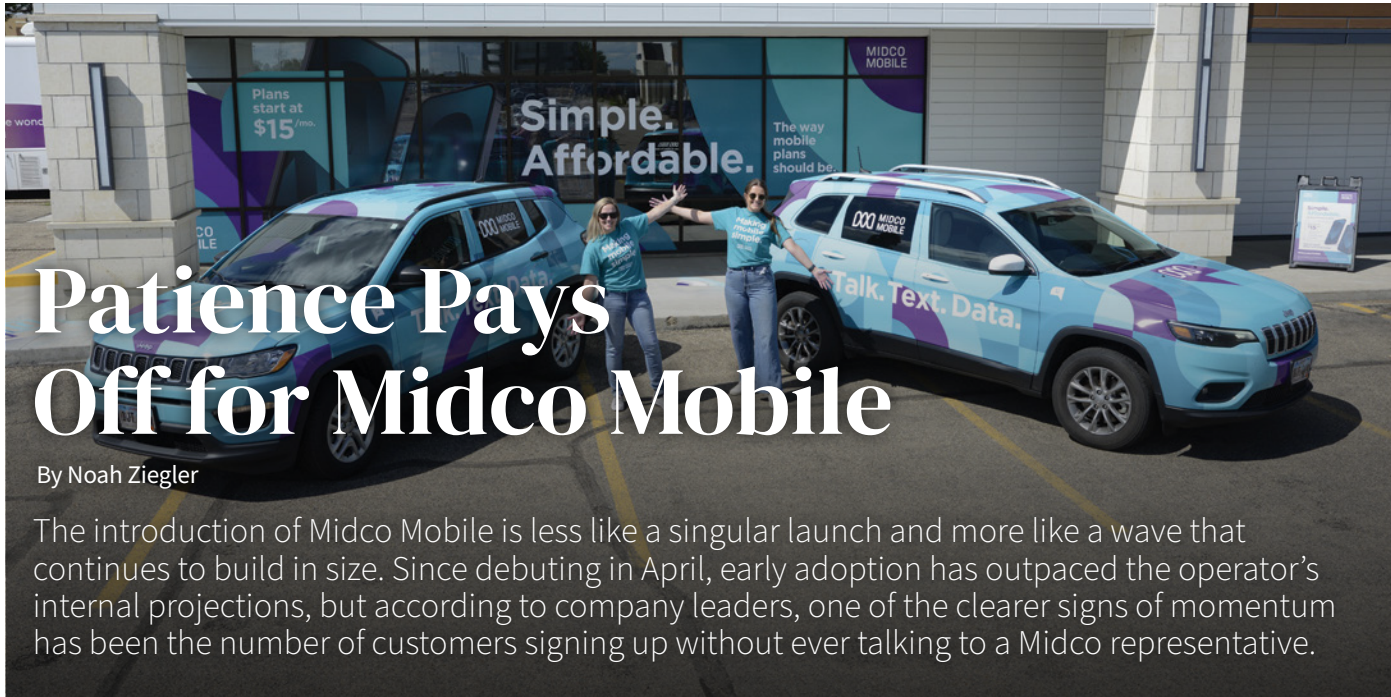
Mediacom now has approximately a thousand nodes deployed on DOCSIS 4.0 and it estimates upgrade costs at approximately \$180-185 per home passed. It also believes these upgrades can be finished at a pace that is three to four times faster than a comparable PON fiber overbuild. Customers are not required to swap out their CPE at the time of a DOCSIS 4.0 upgrade. That change is recommended if a customer decides to subscribe to Mediacom’s 5-Gig tier, which was introduced to more than 500,000 locations across nine states in May.

“There is an outage when we do the upgrade, but we’re basically upgrading whole networks in a day. Everything that impacts the customer is done in a day... and we’re not tearing up roads,

FAST FACTS

- » Mediacom’s broader DOCSIS network modernization efforts have reduced service calls by 40% in upgraded markets through the deployment of new equipment, modernized network architecture and smaller service nodes.
- » Applied Optoelectronics has joined the Mediacom vendor family, providing 1.8 GHz amplifiers and line extenders as well as its QuantumLink remote management and monitoring software to the operator as part of its DOCSIS 4.0 upgrade efforts.
- » Mediacom aims to make its 5-Gig tier available to more than one million homes by the end of 2026.

disturbing flower pots, none of that stuff,” Walden says. “I think it’s often forgotten when you talk about these kinds of upgrades just how much the community and customers appreciate that versus some of the things they have to deal with when a different technology or provider comes to town.”



Patience Pays Off for Midco Mobile

By Noah Ziegler

The introduction of Midco Mobile is less like a singular launch and more like a wave that continues to build in size. Since debuting in April, early adoption has outpaced the operator's internal projections, but according to company leaders, one of the clearer signs of momentum has been the number of customers signing up without ever talking to a Midco representative.

At the same time that a growing number of cable operators are introducing their own mobile offerings, those companies are also making an effort to alleviate customers' potential hesitation about switching from a more traditional carrier to the new kid on the block. Midco President/COO Ben Dold is well aware of that sentiment and acknowledges such a transition "can be a little intimidating" for customers. However, Midco has also seen "a meaningful percentage of orders coming in online where someone's seeing the marketing or hearing from someone," which Dold attributes to the company's preparation ahead of launch.

It also helps that Midco has spent nearly a century growing its roots throughout the Midwest. "Midco is such a known, established 95-year-old company, and because of that, people feel really good about taking a leap with a new product," says Midco VP of Product Management Emma Fox. "We started to see more and more customers asking for their connectivity from one person, and we thought, well, let's see if we can be that person."

Midco Mobile's momentum started with an internal commitment well before launch. Dold ported his own number onto the platform to become the company's first live customer,

and Fox's team ran employee field trials, expanding the scope after each stage proved solid. "That was part of that deliberate [approach]—make sure every step works before you add another step," Fox says. Dold echoed the importance of internal support. "We knew that if our teams were excited, they would be excited about telling our customers and talking about it within the community."

That philosophy paid off when Midco saw mobile sales come in before it even turned on marketing. Once teams took Midco Mobile to market, the rollout leaned into storytelling and showcasing the product at local events, rather than touting it as a pure price play.

Midco took on other means of marketing, including a wrapped

promotional Jeep that is an unexpected fan fave. "I've driven the Midco Mobile-wrapped vehicle several times, and it gets people's attention on the road and when you're filling it with gas," Dold says.

Midco isn't treating the early success as a finish line. Dold and Fox said the next step for Midco Mobile is compounding the momentum it's built so far, and the roadmap ahead is about giving customers more reasons to remain engaged.

"We're listening to customers and what they're looking for, and we're going to build in more flexibility in the future," Fox says. "So different packages, different promos—I think there's a lot of exciting ideas out there and we're excited for what's next."

FAST FACTS

- » Midco Mobile runs as an MVNO built with Telgoo5 serving as the mobile virtual network enabler—handling billing, lifecycle management and digital commerce—while BlueConnects manages the underlying MVNO relationship, OSS/BSS operations and eSIM/physical SIM capabilities.
- » Its two plans start at \$15/month for a by-the-gig "Flex" option that comes with unlimited domestic talk and text. That's alongside the \$30/month Unlimited plan that includes a three-year price lock, 5 GB of mobile hotspot usage and unlimited talk, text and data.



Comcast's Vito Forlenza

Comcast Puts Fans Ahead of the Game

By John Saavedra

If you tuned into Xfinity TV's RealTime4K broadcasts of Super Bowl LX, the Winter Olympics or the World Cup earlier this year, there's a good chance you watched the biggest moments unfold before anyone else. Comcast reported that the new, low-latency format delivered the Super Bowl feed 9 to 49 seconds faster than rival MVPDs. The innovative tech is just one of several enhancements the operator has delivered to sports fans in the past year.

"Sports fans are our best customers—longest tenure for us, they take premium services, they have the highest satisfaction scores and they're the most engaged," Comcast VP, Sports Entertainment Vito Forlenza says. "We have data that shows that 62% of sports fans are keeping their overarching Xfinity plan—not just the video plan, but video, internet, wireless—because of the sports content and product features. So that is a huge piece saying, 'We're on the right path here.'"

The World Cup numbers speak for themselves. More than two-thirds of Xfinity TV customers watched tournament coverage on the MVPD, its most-watched ever. Over 60% used the MVPD's advanced viewing features, including Create Your Own Multiview, an interactive companion supporting content discovery called Fan View, AI-generated highlights and on-screen stats. Meanwhile, RealTime4K, which was available for all 104 games on Fox and select matches on Telemundo, saw its best engagement to date.

The global sporting event also provided the perfect platform for Comcast to showcase how its WiFi network can boost the sports watching experience—literally. The operator expanded its smart-boost feature, allowing customers watching in RealTime4K to prioritize their TV box by simply pressing OK on an on-screen

prompt. The goal was to provide more seamless network management without needing to pull up a phone app during game time. Smart-boost saw a 20% usage bump during the tournament.

"What we're telling our customers is that you have our WiFi service, you have our cable service and these should work better together. You should see some benefit from having those bundled together," Forlenza explains, promising that Comcast is "just scratching the tip of the iceberg for how we could add more value to our products and services by converging them and making sure that when you have multiple services from Xfinity, you're getting the best possible experience."

Customers can of course tap into all of these features during football season, but Forlenza and his team are also busy thinking about what's next. That creative process not only involves surveying a panel of Xfinity customers for feedback but also looking back at the major learnings so far.

"We focus so much on the multiview, Fan View, AI highlights, but now what we're doing is thinking back like, 'Alright, for those customers who just want to lean back, how can we improve their experience?'" Forlenza says, referring to users who simply want to tune into a game without all the extra bells and whistles. Beyond making it as easy as possible for those fans

to find the event they want to watch, whether that be via the X1 homepage or voice remote, Xfinity also wants to make it easier for fans to access the best broadcast quality, automatically tuning customers with 4K-capable TVs to the RealTime4K feed when possible. "Let's not forget about these customers who just want to watch. There's definitely a benefit that we can create for them by utilizing features that are intuitive, smart and personalized."

FAST FACTS

- » More than 90% of Xfinity TV households watched at least one event during NBCUniversal's Legendary February, which included coverage of the 2026 Milan Cortina Winter Olympics, Super Bowl LX and the NBA All-Star Game.
- » The World Cup may be over, but the soccer action continues on Xfinity TV. In fact, its \$95/month World Soccer Ticket channel bundle, which offers access to over 1,500 matches across 56+ channels, turned one in August.
- » Comcast is set to spin off NBCUniversal and Sky in the U.K. in 2027. Sky is also set to merge with U.K. broadcaster ITV next year.



Midco's Fiber Growth Runs Through City Hall

By Noah Ziegler

Midco's expansion map over the past few years is illuminated by government partnerships at every level—city councils, county boards and state broadband offices alike. It's part of the operating model behind how the operator's fiber network reaches new communities, but in Midco's view, the commitment doesn't end once the ribbons are cut. It continues by following through on promises made to the areas it's being welcomed in throughout its five-state footprint of Kansas, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

Midco's pledges are led by establishing a presence in communities, but some of the most visible of its partnerships are architectural. The operator backs Midco Arena at Augustana University, home to South Dakota's first Division-I hockey program, and it renewed a 10-year sponsorship of the Midco Aquatic Center with the City of Sioux Falls, which now draws roughly 220,000 annual visitors against an original 80,000 estimate.

"We look for partnerships that align with our purpose; they really can improve the life in the communities we serve," says Paige Pearson Meyer, VP, Corporate Communications. "Both Augustana and the city of Sioux Falls, these are generational facilities. These were gaps—it's the first aquatic center in our region... [Augustana] now provides a hockey rink to thousands of youth hockey players, and we know that hockey space is obviously missing in many Midwest communities."

Midco's network expansion is governed by a thorough game plan that often utilizes a tandem technique. New Minnesota markets like Janesville, Victoria and Pipestone came online after each respective city approved franchise agreements. In Forest Lake, Minnesota, its pact with the city came with

something else attached: a blended project combining Midco's own \$1.2 million investment with a Minnesota Border-to-Border Broadband Grant and a city contribution that brought the total project cost to \$2.2 million.

"We believe that if we invest in a community and it thrives, that's good for us, and that's good for everybody," President/COO Ben Dold says. "It's just been a big part of who we are as an organization. And I think it's contributed meaningfully to our success in a really crowded, competitive environment."

The push in the Land of 10,000 Lakes is part of a larger regional effort that connected nearly 1,400 previously underserved addresses, reflecting a \$4.1 million investment from Midco—in addition to public-private partnerships with Minnesota's Office of Broadband Development, Washington County, Chisago County and the Cities of Forest Lake and Wyoming.

On a larger scale, Midco's Fiber Forward initiative has turned network investment into an ongoing, multiyear relationship with state and local governments. Recent updates include a \$43 million project to wrap up network upgrades in South Dakota and a \$9.1 million enhancement in North Dakota's

Bismarck-Mandan communities.

Ongoing quality is a deliberate effort, whether a partnership involves government or community groups. "It's not like, 'Hey, we cut the ribbon, we celebrate and we move on,'" Pearson Meyer says.

Dold ties it back to the values he helps lead Midco with. "Our ethos is to be a force for good in the communities we serve. That's part of our DNA," he says. "The company's been around for over 95 years, and throughout that history, we've always been involved and supportive of the communities we serve."

FAST FACTS

- » Augustana University President Stephanie Herseth Sandlin, who led the push for D-I hockey and Midco Arena, was the first woman elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from South Dakota, serving three full terms.
- » The Midco Foundation's semiannual grants delivered \$144,000 across 89 organizations in its most recent round. Since 1988, the Foundation has given over \$6 million to various causes within its service area.

The Infinite Feedback Loop — How Hotwire Turns Listening Into Loyalty

By Paula Hendrickson

Most companies would be thrilled with an employee net promoter score of +20. Hotwire Communications hit +55. For Chief People Officer Paul Hilber, that number is proof of something the concierge-service provider has believed all along: take care of employees the way you take care of customers, and the loyalty follows.

“Hotwire’s culture is so impactful that it’s really the foundation to the success of the organization,” says Hilber. “We’re all about the customer and focused on providing premier experiences with the customer. If you’re trying to do that with a customer, the only way to inspire employees is to give them that experience, too.”

Hotwire, which serves commercial and community-living customers across nine states, takes a concierge approach to customer service. Company leaders know providing that level of service requires happy, healthy and engaged employees willing to advocate for their customers as well as themselves. Communication is vital to employee engagement, but overcommunication can be problematic.

“People aren’t living in an inbox, so communication can’t be that sort of one and done, click it, send it, check off. For us it’s a 360-degree effort,” notes Hotwire Chief Communications Officer

Karla Thatcher.

Explaining reasons behind process changes and other issues growing companies face—things which Thatcher says fall under the “shift happens” banner—requires frequency as well as clarity. “Things are going to constantly be shifting and changing. I think recognizing that with humor and meeting employees there and changing the cadence depending on who’s receiving the message has served us pretty well,” she says.

Instead of flooding employee inboxes with messages that might not get read, Hotwire’s 360 approach might incorporate videos, animation or other types of spoken messages. They have even placed information kiosks at places employees are physically present. Thatcher says the options are limited only by imagination.

When Brookfield Infrastructure Partners acquired Hotwire in 2025, a lot of messages needed to be conveyed



Hotwire’s CX leaders come together for a Make-A-Wish event.

to employees. Hilber had long wanted to conduct an anonymous employee engagement survey, but waited to launch it until the transition was complete. One of the first things he asked was what words came to mind when thinking about the company. The results included: grit, dynamic, collaborative, proactive, adaptable, trustworthy, driven, curious, self-starter, innovative and accountable.

The goal of the survey was to produce actionable results, not merely to get employee feedback, complaints and opinions. “I asked people to give us what we need to start doing, what we need to stop doing and what we need to continue to do,” Hilber says. “What are the most important things in those categories?”

Remarkably, 77% of the company’s workforce responded to the survey, which had a solid first-time benchmark score of 69% for overall engagement. But what really delighted Hilber was Hotwire’s Net Promoter Score [eNPS], which reflects employee loyalty and whether an employee would recommend Hotwire as a good place to work. “In the U.S. right now +10 or +20 is pretty standard [for an eNPS]. We’re at +55,” Hilber says. “They’re not telling us we’re perfect. They’re telling us we’re the best company to work for because we listen.”

FAST FACTS

- » Hotwire Communications is now the largest privately-held ISP serving commercial and community-living spaces.
- » In 2024, Hotwire opposed an FCC proposal to eliminate the type of bulk-billing contracts it uses when negotiating service rates for multi-tenant environments; in January 2025, the FCC withdrew the proposal.
- » In 2025, Brookfield Infrastructure Partners acquired Hotwire Communications for about \$7 billion.

At Shentel, Community Outreach Is the Culture

By Noah Ziegler

In the small towns and rural counties where Shentel and its Glo Fiber brand operate, reputation still travels the old-fashioned way.

“We don’t serve major cities. We serve smaller cities, smaller towns in rural areas, and by far the best advertising is positive word of mouth,” Shentel President/CEO Ed McKay says. “The effort we’re doing with the community outreach and the volunteer efforts absolutely helps us.”

The company’s philanthropic infrastructure, run through an employee-led Shentel Cares Committee, fuels its philosophy that community trust is inseparable from commercial success. The Shentel Cares Committee oversees three core initiatives: the Summer Backpack Program, the holiday-season Big Give and Shentel Caring Days, which

launched in 2023 to give employees paid volunteer time.

This past year’s Summer Backpack Program raised \$28,000—combining \$10,600 in employee payroll contributions, a \$10,000 match from the Shentel Foundation and \$7,400 from banking partner CoBank—and distributed \$4,000 in grants to seven regional organizations fighting food insecurity. Shentel Caring Days engaged 81 employees across eight events in five states, logging 330 volunteer hours.

Another recent visible project came in June when its Glo Fiber business brought high-speed fiber internet and entertainment packages to more than 560 assisted-living units at Friendship Richfield Living in Salem, Virginia. Rather than simply install and leave, the team ran “Glo Fiber Days,” which offered hands-on sessions to help residents learn about the new technology.

“We recognize that our employees actually live in the service areas where we work, and so we want to make sure that we’re investing in those communities, not just from providing products and services, but also giving back into the communities,” VP/Chief HR Officer Heather Tormey says.

It’s a cross-functional team effort from all levels, too. McKay painted fences and cleaned a playground at a children’s transitional housing facility in Winchester, Virginia, while Tormey picked strawberries alongside

colleagues at a Maryland farm, in a harvest later delivered to a local school’s lunch program that same day.

“No task is too small,” says Tormey, recalling getting “stained literally all over my clothes and hair” while a colleague giggled. “It makes people feel real, like we’re relatable. Whether we’re a member of management or we’re an individual contributor, it doesn’t matter. We’re all doing the same good work to help that community partner.”

McKay echoed the sentiment: “Standing side by side with an employee with rubber gloves on, sorting through produce—that’s meaningful when they see the leader of the company working with them.”

Glo Fiber’s footprint continues to expand. It added 22,000 new passings in 1Q26, pushing its footprint to 449,000 homes and businesses across 19,000 route miles, with a year-end goal of 510,000. Revenue-generating units grew 31% YOY against a churn rate of just 0.92%—a sign, McKay believes, that the trust built through community work translates directly into long-term customer relationships.

“We’re not just building fiber networks; we’re building relationships,” he says. “Shentel has been in business for 124 years, and our connection to the community has been one of the factors that’s been a big reason we’ve been able to be in business and support these communities for that period of time.”



Shentel’s 2026 Summer Backpack Program generated a total of \$28,000 for seven local organizations working to address food insecurity.

FAST FACTS

- » Shentel’s roots go back to 1902, when it was founded as the Farmers’ Mutual Telephone System of Shenandoah County—a cooperative in which local subscribers held equity stakes in the network they built.
- » Shentel serves Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Delaware and Maryland through its Glo Fiber and Glo Fiber Business brands.
- » In January, Glo Fiber launched symmetrical 8 Gig residential service across those six states, making fast broadband speeds available for more than 400,000 homes and businesses.



How Versant Built Community Impact Into Year One

By Paula Hendrickson

Being spun off from Comcast in January didn't slow down the years of work Versant's brands have put into making a positive community impact and building toward the future. Versant has a wide-ranging portfolio that includes tee time reservation system GolfNow as well as television networks such as USA and MS Now and digital entertainment platform/movie ticketing service Fandango. And each of them has found their own way to make a difference.

Even while Versant was still under the auspices of Comcast, Will McIntosh, now Versant's President of Digital Platforms and Ventures, helped launch GolfNow's round-up campaign to raise funds for Youth On Course, a nonprofit dedicated to making golf more affordable and accessible to kids in the U.S., Canada and Australia. He'd seen successful round-up campaigns on in-store sales and wanted to try it digitally.

"We allowed GolfNow customers to round up their transactions at checkout to donate and bring more kids into the game. We also helped them identify a number of golf course partners that would be willing to host these kids," McIntosh says. "We started in late 2020, and since then we've raised over \$5 million for Youth On Course."

Versant has been building a similar effort over the years with Fandango, but it wasn't a copy-and-paste effort. "The challenge was there was not an entity in the cinema industry that was set up like Youth On Course, meaning nobody at scale was really trying to get kids out to movie theaters," McIntosh explains.

As a member of BGCA's Board of Governors, Versant CEO Mark Lazarus has seen firsthand what that

FAST FACTS

- » Versant officially became a standalone public company in January 2026.
- » Fandango's round-up campaign raised over \$5M for BGCA between January 2025 and August 2026.
- » Versant's community impact efforts in 2026 alone served over 10 organizations.
- » As part of its commitment to supporting STEM education, Versant launched Hackathon, an event benefiting Girls Who Code.

partnership has produced. "I have a front-row seat to the impact Clubs have on young people. Fandango customers have contributed more than \$5 million to BGCA through the round-up program, and those dollars have helped provide movie experiences to more than 20,000 young people across 151 Clubs," Lazarus says. "The broader partnership goes beyond seeing a movie. We want young people to see themselves not just as fans, but as people who can create, contribute and build careers in news, sports and entertainment."

Versant's community reach extends beyond fundraising. Volunteerism is a core part of the company's mission. "For us, purpose fuels performance," says Steve Arocho, Versant's VP, Corporate

Communications.

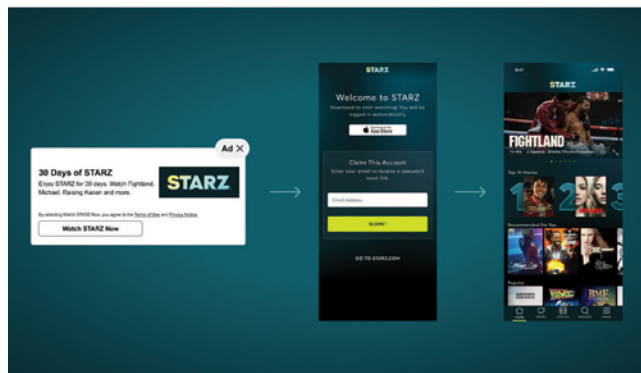
Efforts span anything from packing goodie bags for USA Sports events to hosting a Day of Play where employees might do art or craft projects or play kickball with BGCA kids. Versant workers also sent over 200 thank-you cards and letters to overseas military personnel as part of Operation Gratitude.

Arocho knows Versant's customers—especially the younger ones—like doing business with companies that share their values. "The beautiful thing is that this is year one," he says. "Without overstating expectations, we're looking to take our momentum and build an even greater platform. We're really excited for what's ahead."

One-Click Wonder: STARZ Kills the Sign-up Form

By Amy Maclean

Realizing how easy it is to lose a potential streaming customer if they have to tackle multiple steps to sign-up, STARZ President and CEO Jeffrey Hirsch challenged the company to make the experience frictionless. The STARZ technology team answered the call, with a revolutionary solution that whittles a two-minute registration process for its streaming service down to about two seconds.



STARZ's streamlined sign-up flow, which cuts registration down to about two seconds.

"Two minutes to sign-up doesn't sound like a big deal. But it is because that's not why you're there. Your intent is not to give out your email and enter in billing information. Your intent is to get in and start enjoying content," explains EVP, Technology Jason Wyrick. "It's kind of a pain to enter in your email address, enter in a password, go find your credit card, pull it out, put all of that information into a system before you ever actually are engaging with the service or being entertained in any way whatsoever."

So STARZ decided to handle all that messy stuff for the customer. Internally referred to as "one-click acquisition," the experience allows customers to click a link or button to instantly launch an account within the STARZ platform, without needing to provide personal identifying information upfront. It's an innovation STARZ doesn't think any of its competitors have mastered yet. Any additional needed info, such as billing details, is provided at a later date. It's not the largest subscriber acquisition funnel for STARZ, but the results are strong and conversions are 100%.

"The important thing is the customer engages with some type of call to action. We know that it's coming from a valid source, a valid partner. We are validating that the customer came from a valid third party," says Wyrick. "We're

auto-provisioning the unique identifiers that we need to ingest that customer into our system and set them up for recurring subscription billing. We're doing it all for them. They are then presented with an ability to download the app or to log in, and we handle all of that in the back office for them."

Of course, security is top of mind. Interestingly, this new mechanism actually performs better than the traditional method of using an email and password. "We've not had any fraudulent playbacks, any fraudulent password sharing. There's been zero customer care cases opened against this particular mechanism for acquisition," notes Wyrick.

Beyond security, STARZ had to make sure it was covering other areas—like having a valid way to contact people

for things like terms of service changes. Most assume that requires an email, but the one-click acquisition team thought outside the box and worked across legal, finance and other departments for a solution.

"The problem with email is it's asynchronous in that if you need to reach out to the customer via email, they may or may not see your email. Across the industry, you see very low email open rates in general for almost any type of email," notes Wyrick.

Instead, STARZ built a system that communicates and notifies the customer at the point at which they're interfacing with the product. "If there's something that we have to communicate to them, whenever they open the app or engage with the experience, that will be the first thing that we do," says Wyrick. "There's two benefits to that. One is you're catching them at the time where you know you have their attention, and they're more likely to read it. Two, you're also catching them at the point in time when it's important to deliver the information to them, not out of channel."

In the end, Wyrick says it all comes back to Hirsch's vision of focusing solely on the customer: "Their intent is to be entertained. Their intent is not to give us a bunch of information, and so I think that it's really forward-thinking."

FAST FACTS

- » STARZ completed its separation from Lionsgate and returned to being a standalone company in May 2025.
- » Since the "one-click acquisition" method's launch, there has been zero fraudulent activity.
- » It took the technology team about three to four months to develop the solution.



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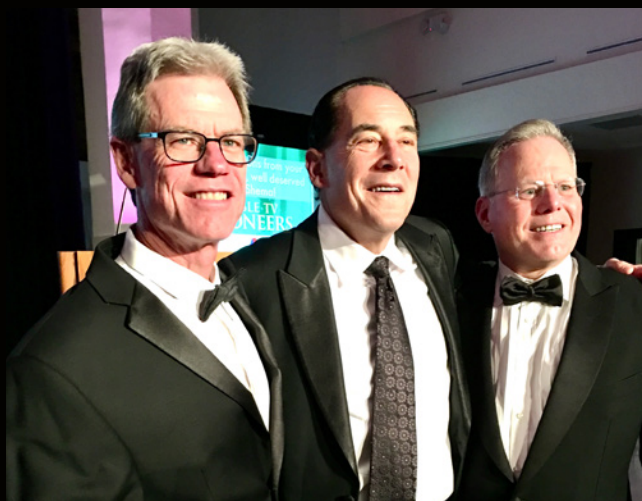
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Standing is the late Les Read, a longtime organizer and key fixture for the Pioneers, seated beside an unidentified colleague. Read's rich baritone emceed many Pioneers events over the years.



Cable TV Pioneers Mike Egan, Tom Rogers and David Zaslav pose together at a gala dinner.

DIAMOND JUBILEE

Still Wired for Grit

CABLE TV PIONEERS TURN 60

For an industry that's changed so much its very name is up for debate, it's quite a feat that the Cable TV Pioneers is celebrating a 60th anniversary in 2026. The organization began by honoring the architects and entrepreneurs behind America's earliest cable systems. Today it's grown to more than 600 members spanning cable, broadband and connected media.

The annual Pioneers Banquet, celebrating each new class of members, sells out nearly every year—organizers are often hunting for a bigger ballroom. But the group's reach goes well beyond one gala night: it's the driving force behind what's now known as the Syndeo Institute at The Cable Center.

"I feel like it would be a most worthwhile project for the Pioneers to undertake as its main project the foundation and maintenance of a cable TV source library," cable entrepreneur Ben Conroy, who chaired the Cable TV Pioneers Managing Board from 1968 to 1993, wrote in a 1974 letter urging the group to act.

The idea took root. A 1985 partnership with Penn State created the National Cable Television Center and Museum, which moved to Denver in the mid-1990s. The Cable Center opened its Denver building in 2002 as both an archive

of cable history and a hub for training and mentorship. Renamed Syndeo Institute at The Cable Center in 2023, the organization sold its physical building earlier this year and is now in a temporary space while its board weighs next steps. With Pioneers counted among the industry's most dedicated supporters, they're sure to help shape whatever comes next.

"Being a Pioneer is not only an industry honor, but an ongoing industry connection," says Yvette Kanouff, a JC2 Ventures partner and past Pioneers board 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."

That's why there's little doubt the Pioneers will be marking a 75th and a 100th anniversary, too. "Being a Cable TV Pioneer isn't just a personal honor—it comes with a responsibility to build relationships, share what I've learned, mentor the next generation and give back to an industry that's given me so much," says Hotwire Communications CTO Pragash Pillai. "The Pioneers stay relevant because of the experience and relationships in this group—and that knowledge and network still have an important role to play in where the industry goes next."



Front: Jana Henthorn, Cathy Rasenberger, Ellen Schned, Susan Bitter Smith Back: Pat Kehoe, Vicki Lins, Diane Christman, Char Beales, Italia Comisso Weinand.



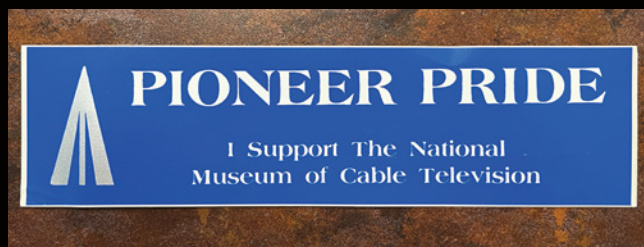
Stan Searle with Randolph Tucker at a Pioneers event in 1967.



The Pioneers signed an agreement in 1985 with Penn State University to create the National Museum of Cable Television.



A sold-out ballroom for the Cable TV Pioneers' annual induction banquet.



A bumper sticker that was part of fundraising efforts for the museum, which became The Cable Center and later the Syndeo Institute.



Cable TV Pioneers Class of 2005.



Cable TV Pioneers Class of 1967.



Bill Daniels, sometimes called the Godfather of Cable, and longtime Pioneers Chair Ben Conroy.



Bill Stone, Sally Davison (standing), Randolph Tucker and guest at the 1984 Pioneers dinner.



A classy group of Cable TV Pioneers.

DIAMOND JUBILEE

It Runs in the Family

Cable has always been a business built on relationships—sometimes literally. Here's a look at some of the family ties woven through six decades of Pioneers.

Ed Allen & Steve Allen - Father & son

George Barco & Yolanda Barco - Father & daughter

Jeff & Tracy Baumgartner - Husband & wife

Steve Bell & Steve Bell, Jr. - Father & son

Steve Boyers & Patty Boyers - Husband & wife

Bill Bresnan & Pat Bresnan - Brothers



Albert Carollo, Al Carollo, Jr. & Marty Carollo - Father, son & grandson

Italia Commisso Weinand & Rocco Commisso - Sister & brother

John Egan, John M. Egan & Chris Egan - Father & 2 sons

Richard Gessner & Bob Gessner - Father & son

Tom Gleason, Sr., Tommy Gleason & Jim Gleason - Father & 2 sons

Robert J. Greiner, Robert Greiner & Daniel Greiner - Father & 2 sons

James H. Hall & Jim Hall, Jr. - Father & son

Frank Hamilton & Mason Hamilton - Brothers

Les Hilliard, Russ Hilliard & Chris Hilliard - Brothers & Russ' son

Walter Kaitz & Spencer Kaitz - Father & son

Ruth Kolpin & Dean Petersen - Mother & son

Craig Leddy & Kevin Leddy - Brothers

Charles McGinty, Edward McGinty & Robert McGinty - Brothers

Bruce Merrill & Phil Merrill - Father & son

Bob Miron & Nomi Bergman - Father & daughter



John Pascarelli & Vic Pascarelli - Brothers

Rex Porter & Jeff Porter - Father & son

Milford Richey & Steve Richey - Uncle & nephew

Ralph Roberts & Brian Roberts - Father & son

Robert St. John Roper & Lee Clayton Roper - Husband & wife

Ray Schneider & Gene Schneider - Brothers

Robert Searle & Stan Searle - Brothers

Don Tykeson & Amy Tykeson - Father & daughter



Pat Tylka & Shawn Tylka - Father & daughter

Cable Television Pioneers: Past and Present (and Future)

By Stan Searle

Over the six decades since the first Cable Television Pioneers were singled out for recognition by their peers, the technology and business have been transformed beyond anyone's imagination. That's the nature of free enterprise and American ingenuity. No industry—even steam power, automobiles or aviation—more dramatically embodies those unique qualities than does the one that began as the Community Antenna Television business.

In 1966, three of the early entrants to the industry were asked to name the most noteworthy participants in the

CATV business. The 21 who were named on all three lists were selected to be honored as "CATV Pioneers." Within a few years, technological progress had mandated a name change to Cable Television Pioneers.) This year the 60th class will be so recognized.

In 1967, the initial "class" of cable pioneers gathered, mostly for fellowship, but also for sharing the "war stories" and success stories that were part of creating this new industry. With enthusiasm, the idea was embraced and the annual dinner tradition ensued.

Cable technology has undergone multiple transformations. But the pioneering spirit remains—and the



legacy of the first "CATV Pioneers" is still powering innovation and opening doors for today's entrepreneurs. From the beginning, delivering an irreplaceable service to customers remains the core attribute of the cable industry. The Cable Television Pioneers, as an organization and fraternity, serves to unify and encourage those who maintain an interest in the industry.

— Stan Searle is one of the founding fathers of the Cable TV Pioneers and a member of the Class of 1975

harmonic

HARMONIC PROUDLY CELEBRATES THE CABLE TV PIONEERS DIAMOND JUBILEE CLASS OF 2026



Nimrod Ben-Natan
President and CEO



Jeffrey Glahn
Senior Vice President, Global Sales

Congratulations to Harmonic leaders, Nimrod Ben-Natan and Jeffrey Glahn, on being inducted into the Cable TV Pioneers Class of 2026. We celebrate your vision and leadership that drives our industry forward.

Meet the Diamond Jubilee Class

Sixty years ago, 21 entrepreneurs gathered in a Miami hotel room to launch the Cable TV Pioneers. This year, 22 honorees join their ranks as the Diamond Jubilee Class of 2026—a group nearly matching that founding number, fitting for an organization marking six decades of recognition. Spanning broadband, content, technology, distribution and allied fields, this year's inductees have helped drive the industry's growth and reinvention, carrying forward the same bold, builder's spirit that started it all. From the fiber routes and massive balance sheets of today's cable landscape to the scrappy beginnings of 1966, their work stands as a testament to how far—and how fast—this industry has come. “To be associated with a group of people who have truly influenced society in the United States is truly humbling. Our industry literally led the world in the deployment of cutting-edge services which has influenced culture, technology and how people live a better life,” says Pioneer Chairman Jim Gleason. “The Pioneers are the people who made that happen in each decade dating back to the '50s and '60s. This organization represents a true entrepreneurial spirit and is made up of amazing risk takers who saw a vision of the future.”



Dr. Alexander Adams
AXP Engineering



Hernan Benavides
Technetix, Inc.



Nimrod Ben-Natan
Harmonic



Dr. Alberto Campos
CableLabs



Wayne Davis
ATX



Lino Garcia
Unanimo Sports Media



Jeff Glahn
Harmonic



Richard Jennings
Comcast



Peter Kiriacoulacos
Comcast



Jason Livingood
Comcast



Stephanie Mitchko
AMC Networks



Tom Nathan
Comcast (Retired)



Sandy Padula
E.W. Scripps



Peter Plaehn
NESN



Steve Riedl
Paramount



Josh Seiden
Ten Mile Ventures



Dr. Yasser Syed
Comcast



Susie Tomenchok
The Cable Center



Glenn Walden
Mediacom



Adriana Waterston
Horowitz Research



Robert Wieand
Service Electric



Melissa Jo Wood
Sand Cherry Associates



ShowSeeker's Nick Anaclerio

One Year In, ShowSeeker Pushes to Unify Linear and Digital Ad Sales

By Sara Winegardner

One year after being acquired by Charter ad sales arm Spectrum Reach, ShowSeeker has set itself apart as a trailblazer in cloud-based campaign management, planning and workflow solutions.

The acquisition crossed the finish line in August 2025, giving ShowSeeker's software and team a new home. Having the scale of what is now the largest U.S. cable operator behind the ShowSeeker team and its product suite has helped elevate it to a new level of visibility with potential partners, according to VP, Product Strategy Nick Anaclerio. Central to ShowSeeker's product strategy is Pilot, its order management system for MVPDs. Over the last 12 months, the company has crafted a roadmap for making Pilot capable of seamlessly managing both linear and digital impressions.

A major step toward that goal was the integration of programmatic advertising into Pilot, allowing media planners to execute converged campaigns from one interface.

That meant revamping the UX to be less linear-centric while also finding additional ways to easily integrate with more third parties.

"We've had to slowly over time change those pieces without disrupting our current users," Anaclerio says.

Also shaping the evolution of Pilot was ShowSeeker's acquisition of operational improvement firm Innovar Solutions in January 2026. A major driver of that deal was Innovar's experience in creative management, a process that has historically lived separately from order management due to challenges with

FAST FACTS

- » ShowSeeker was founded in 2003 with an original aim to make it easier for advertisers to sort through the vast amount of content available on cable television.
- » With a team in the single digits at its founding, ShowSeeker now has approximately 100 employees including its data science group.
- » ShowSeeker Co-Founder Dave Hardy remains at the head of the operation, now serving as a VP/General Manager at Spectrum Reach.

legacy traffic and scheduling systems. ShowSeeker's vision in the coming months is to create one platform for stakeholders to manage the complete ad sales process for linear, streaming and other CTV inventory.

Within the creative management piece, ShowSeeker has developed an automated parser designed to bring in instructions from agency advertisers and normalize data from a number of sources ranging from emails to Excel spreadsheets, shortening the amount of time it takes to push out an order.

ShowSeeker also plans to continue developing Breaks, a commercial break structure product that recently received a complete makeover. Between Pilot and Breaks, users will have the ability to manage their program targets as well as how those ads are laid out across linear and digital.

"There are so many insane rules that exist for different traffic systems, network instances, the way they want

those breaks laid out, and we built this entire system to allow maximum flexibility," Anaclerio says. "We have recently introduced this additional function that allows us to send those same targets and same structures to the streaming services." Optimum is currently in the process of launching Breaks, he adds.

Looking ahead to 2027, ShowSeeker will be reshaping the buying process for agencies to remove the significant amount of manual entry that it currently requires. That means automating the exchange of new orders, makegoods, revisions and more.

"We want the systems to talk to each other so that there's a full end-to-end feedback between the buy side and the sell side. It makes a ton of sense for that to be the next evolution," Anaclerio says. "Some of that is working now. It's about rolling out and deploying more than anything else."

WOW! Pushes Fiber Into New Ground

By Noah Ziegler

WOW!'s greenfield strategy has quietly become one of the more aggressive expansion stories in the broadband industry. In the past 12 months, the company grew fiber passings in its expansion markets by more than 50% YOY, adding roughly 47,000 homes and businesses across three fronts: Central Florida, Greenville County, South Carolina, and East Central Michigan.

The Central Florida buildout added 20,000 homes and businesses throughout Orange and Seminole Counties, bringing the region's all-fiber footprint to nearly 75,000—part of what the company describes as a \$140 million investment in the market since 2022. South Carolina saw a similarly sharp jump with 10,000 new homes and businesses in Greenville County, bringing WOW! within reach of eclipsing the 20,000 milestone. East Central Michigan added another 17,000 across Genesee, Livingston and Oakland Counties, with construction underway to push the region's total beyond 27,000.

Behind the market-by-market numbers is an operator that says it's become more selective about where it builds next. "We've learned the importance of a disciplined, data-driven approach to market selection—prioritizing markets based on demographics, competitive dynamics and expected penetration and return," CEO Frank van der Post says. "We've also learned the value of standardizing our construction and activation playbooks so we can replicate proven processes from market to market rather than reinventing the wheel each time."

That discipline extends past the ribbon-cutting. WOW! says it tracks penetration and customer satisfaction

FAST FACTS

- » WOW! was taken private at the turn of the year by Crestview Partners and DigitalBridge.
- » WOW! serves nearly 2 million residential, business and wholesale customers across 20 markets in the Midwest and Southeast.
- » Van der Post previously led Cogeco-owned Breezeline before arriving at WOW! in January.

closely after a market goes live, treating low churn as just as important as new connections. "We must always combine new adds with low churn. That's why we measure customer satisfaction levels and are continually improving our customer experience efforts to be sure we're retaining customers who are happy with the service we provide," van der Post adds.

The expansion strategy isn't limited to purely commercial buildouts, either. A \$3.41 million joint investment from the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (\$2.39 million in state grant funding plus a \$1.02 million company match) brought fiber for the first time to Houston and Henry Counties in Southeastern Alabama, reaching areas where more than 15%

of residents previously lacked full connectivity.

It would also be easy for WOW! to treat its legacy hybrid-fiber-coax markets as an afterthought while chasing greenfield fiber growth elsewhere. Instead, the company has leaned into upgrading both. One example is Newnan, Georgia, where WOW! combined bandwidth reclamation—migrating legacy video subscribers to YouTube TV to free network capacity—with distributed access architecture and high-split conversion on its existing HFC plant. The result is "the largest capacity increase for WOW! internet customers in more than a decade," with substantially improved upstream speeds delivered without a full-on fiber rebuild.

"The greenfield initiatives have been a great success for the company and we're accelerating these efforts to help reignite growth for WOW!. But success will be equally dependent on modernizing our legacy network so that growth is being fired from both engines," van der Post says.

With additional fiber passings planned into 2027 and new ownership pushing for speed, WOW! is betting that a repeatable, metrics-driven blueprint is what turns greenfield expansion into durable market share.

From Marine Biologist to Rural Broadband Champion



Marty Carollo

Retired Government Relations and Strategic Partnership Representative

All West Fiber

By Paula Hendrickson

Receiving CFX's Lifetime Achievement Award is the latest accolade for recently-retired Carollo, a longtime champion of rural broadband. When inducted to the Cable TV Pioneers in 2025, Carollo, his father and grandfather—who founded Sweetwater Cable Television in 1956—became the industry's first three-generation Pioneers.

Carollo grew up learning the family business. "I remember as a little kid going down with my dad to change tubes for the amplifiers," he recalls. "Through high school, every one of my siblings worked in the company. We did everything. We dug the ditches and we did the installs and learned it all."

A career in cable seemed inevitable, but instead Carollo became a marine biologist and worked as an aquarist at Sea World in San Diego and the Oregon Coast Aquarium. The untimely death of his brother, his grandfather's impending retirement and the advent of digital cable convinced Carollo to rejoin Sweetwater in 1999.

"At that point, we were planning on selling the system," Carollo says. But his father guaranteed him five years' worth of work. "We started putting in fiber in 2001, tied our two towns together. Digital cable came out, and we went from 65 channels to several hundred. I was involved with all of that. When you're a small business you do it all."

His mission became learning

everything he could about all facets of the business. And his industry knowledge grew with each advancement, just like high-speed internet. "I was just a marine biologist trying to figure it out, through stupidity more than anything else. To be honest, I didn't know any better that it couldn't be done, so we just did it," Carollo says.

As Sweetwater grew, Carollo recognized its ability to keep pace with technological advances was limited. "I could see what was coming down the pike—demands and needs and all the things coming in with fiber—and

knew it was time to let somebody with greater resources take it on. It was going to be too much for us to be able to do what has to be done with the overbuild of fiber," Carollo says.

In 2017, Sweetwater was sold to All West. "I thought that was the end of my career." But All West kept him on.

"After the acquisition, Marty had a number of different roles with us. He ended up in our government relationships group, which was fantastic for us. He was well known. He had the right contacts—not only state representatives but federal, on the Senate and House side. It was a natural fit for him," says retired All West CEO Matt Weller. "He's genuinely a good guy. He honestly cares, which is what comes across, and what helps him make connections with people."

Before retiring earlier this year, Carollo had served on the Wyoming Cable Association Board for 14 years and was appointed to the ACA Cable Connects Board in 2023.

"He was a one-man advocate for the western half of the United States, on behalf of all things rural telecommunications, rural independent operators," says Patricia Jo Boyers, ACA Chair and President/CEO of Boycom Cable. "I don't know anybody that rolls their sleeves up and jumps in, whatever it is and whatever it takes, like he does. If anybody deserves to ride off into the sunset on a well-bred horse, it's Marty."

FAST FACTS

- » Professional detour: Carollo earned a degree in Marine Biology from Humboldt State University and worked as a professional aquarist for several years before rejoining the cable industry.
- » Personal influence: Carollo also uses his advocacy skills in support of one of his favorite organizations, Ducks Unlimited.
- » New venture: Carollo, along with two business partners, is currently renovating the historic Tomahawk Hotel in downtown Green River, Wyoming, into a meeting and event space with nine short-term extended-stay residential suites.



Q&A with AOI's Steve Pederson

SVP and GM, Broadband Access, AOI

What does AOI's milestone of one million amplifiers shipped tell you about where cable operators actually are in the 1.8 GHz upgrade cycle?

It tells me the upgrade cycle is real and it's accelerating. When you're moving a million units, that's not pilot programs, that's network-wide commitments. It also tells me that operators are being deliberate about sequencing. They're upgrading outside plant while they work through the headend and node decisions. The amplifier is often the first domino in a 1.8 GHz deployment because it's the most field-intensive piece, and operators want that work behind them before they move deeper into the architecture. The appetite for extended spectrum is broad, and that's a healthy sign for where the industry is headed.

Cable operators are no longer competing with each other—they're facing fiber overbuilders, fixed wireless and subscribers with rising expectations. How does that convergence change what operators ask of vendors?

The ask has shifted from 'give us more capacity' to 'give us more intelligence.' Capacity was the first major challenge—operators needed spectrum to match what fiber could promise on paper. That problem is being solved with 1.8 GHz and DOCSIS 4.0. But the second major hurdle is about operational agility. When you're losing subscribers to a fixed wireless provider or a fiber overbuilder, often it's not because your speeds are slow—it's because your competitor installed faster, responded faster or detected a service problem before the customer did. So what operators are asking us for now is an outside plant that talks back. They want amplifiers and nodes that surface diagnostics proactively, that integrate with their orchestration layer, and reduce the truck roll. That's a very different conversation than we were having five years ago.

As operators push toward DAA and Remote PHY, the node-amplifier relationship is evolving. Where does AOI's Quantum18 fit in that transition, and does QuantumLink change the calculus for operators converging active hardware and network management layers?

The Quantum18 portfolio was designed with the DAA transition in mind. As Remote PHY nodes move deeper into the network and the cascade gets shorter, the amplifier has to perform in an environment where there's less tolerance for signal variability and more expectation of consistent, programmable behavior. Quantum18 handles the 1.8 GHz passband in that context without requiring operators to rethink their outside plant topology wholesale, which matters enormously for operators managing capital carefully. QuantumLink is where I think the

story gets really interesting. Historically, active outside plant has been something operators monitor reactively. When something fails, you find it. QuantumLink delivers a superior customer experience by preventing outages before they happen, resulting in little to no downtime. The calculus changes for operators when their OSS/BSS team can see the outside plant the same way they see the headend. The convergence of active hardware and management layer is where we're investing heavily, because that's where we can actually help operators reduce operating cost, not just capital cost.

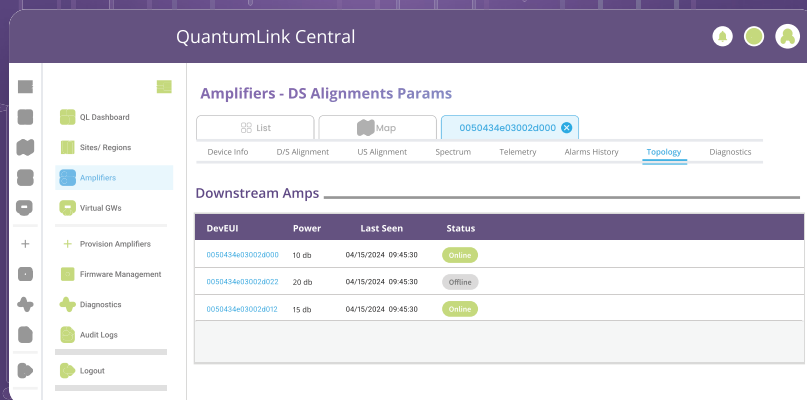
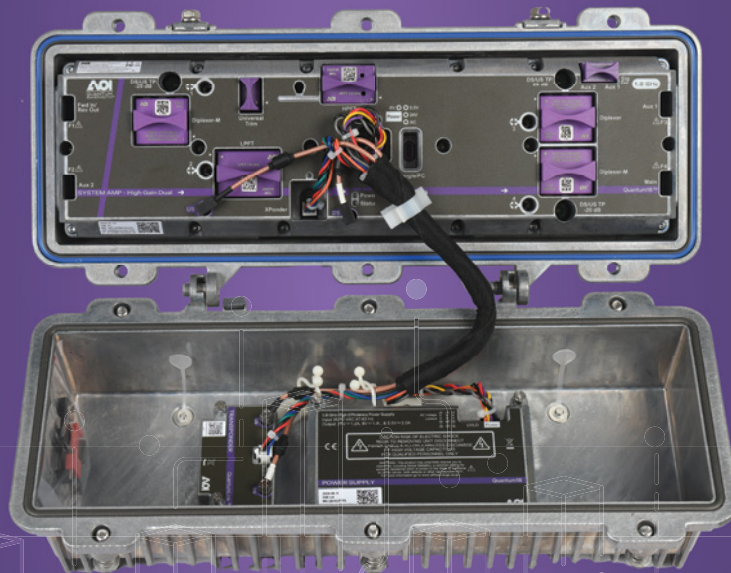
What did you learn during your time at Cisco about what operators actually need on the ground that you couldn't fully address from inside a large platform vendor?

Large vendors are excellent at solving the problem they've defined. The challenge is the problem operators face in the field is often messier and more specific than the platform was designed for. At Cisco, I saw sophisticated technology sometimes struggle to get adopted at scale in cable because integration points didn't match what operators had deployed in the outside plant. There was a translation layer missing. What that taught me is that the outside plant isn't just a physical medium. It's also an information layer, and the companies that figure out how to surface that information in a way that fits operator workflows will win. This shaped how we're building AOI's roadmap. We're not trying to build the next great platform from the top down. We're starting with what's in the ground, what operators are trying to manage today, and building intelligence out from there.

From where you sit, what does convergence mean for cable operators? Is the industry moving toward a unified vision, or are operators charting different paths?

The industry is not converging on a single vision. What I observe is three different bets being placed simultaneously. Some are doubling down on HFC—extending spectrum, deploying DOCSIS 4.0, treating coax as a durable asset for another decade or more. Others are running hybrid strategies, deploying PON in greenfields and new subdivisions while maintaining HFC in their legacy footprint. A third group is quietly accelerating their path to full fiber replacement, treating HFC as a bridge they want to cross as quickly as economics allow. What's interesting is all three strategies are defensible right now—the technology exists to support all of them. Where I do see convergence is in what operators are trying to achieve: symmetric multi-gig, low-latency performance, and operational efficiency. The destination is agreed upon. The route is still operator specific.

Total visibility and control for next-gen HFC networks.



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