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
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Sling TV Chief Executive Roger Lynch finished the race to launch online TV just in time for the start of a new contest between the devices that stream it.

Launched in February, Sling TV is the first virtual TV service with multiple live channels. Its bundle of select channels, starting at \$20 a month, lets customers watch live television over the Internet without a pricey cable subscription loaded up with hundreds of networks.

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As recently as a couple years ago, that was a galling prospect to the TV industry. Sling also offers a peek at a possible future for television. As digital video options like Netflix, YouTube and Hulu have gained momentum, people's interest in dropping regular television subscriptions has grown.

Afraid that young people and folks fed up with sky-high cable bills will forsake pay TV completely, some old-school TV companies have shown interest in backing online options like Sling. As the only service of its kind available across the US, Sling provides a glimpse at what may become the norm in your living room. The emergence of Sling TV, which is owned by traditional satellite TV provider Dish Network, comes as a clutch of tech giants vie for a place in your home. Google, Amazon and Roku all sell online set-top boxes, and on Monday, Apple began selling its updated \$149 Apple TV.

When Apple touted its new box, Chief Executive Tim Cook proclaimed that the future of television is apps. Lynch agrees. He predicts that smart televisions, the sets capable of hooking up to the Internet, will be powered by the companies making streaming boxes. That means your TV screen may look more like your phone than the current, unwieldy grid

progress on one side of the table

Pittsburgh Tribune-Review Grand jury judge: Kane or her agents stole confidential files from office

of channels, times and programs. But Lynch also viewed Apple's move in the direction of an App Store for television as an interesting reversal for the electronics giant. Apple TV now features a catalog of apps that contrasts with the "pretty closed environment" it previously offered. He hopes this will bring "a lot more content to Apple TV." Sling TV isn't among the first wave of new content on Apple TV. A Sling TV spokeswoman said the company is evaluating development of an app for Apple TV. Apple didn't respond to a request for comment.

Customers can watch Sling TV on the boxes and sticks made by Roku and Amazon, the Nexus Player created by Google and Taiwanese electronics company Asus, and Microsoft's Xbox 1 gaming console. Google's popular Chromecast stick is next on the list. A month ago, Sling said its service would be available through a dedicated app for Google's \$35 device, which you plug directly into the back of your television. Sling wouldn't specify a date for its app on Chromecast to go live.

Chromecast support will bring Sling TV to more people who want to navigate around their television with a mobile phone, Lynch said. Since Sling TV launched, he said, the majority of people who sign up directly create their account on their phones, even though they end up watching the most hours on their televisions.

One thing that surprised Lynch as Sling TV expanded was that customers sign up and then keep their traditional pay-TV subscription too. When Sling's head of marketing warned him to expect these so-called "supplementers," Lynch told him that was crazy. But they make up roughly 5 percent to 10 percent of Sling customers. Sling TV declined to provide its total number of subscribers.

Another surprise: For a service that hinges on live TV, on-demand content was still popular. Some channels like sports giant ESPN are still attractive mostly for live programming, but others, like Food Network, have a big pile of on-demand shows to watch whenever you feel like it. For channels like those, people prefer to watch on demand rather than live, and the more video the channel makes available, the more people watch, according to Lynch. "In every deal that we do, and even after the deal's done, we go back for more content available on demand," he said.

But the turnaround in attitude may be the biggest surprise. "When we were first talking to programmers about what ultimately became Sling TV, we were selling them on the idea," he said. "Now programmers who aren't on Sling TV are selling us on the fact that they should be." – **CNET**

Comcast has positioned itself as an Internet-access savior for thousands of Twin Cities low-income households that were about to lose their low-cost online service from other providers.

Comcast, the Twin Cities' dominant Internet provider, is teaming up with PCs for People, a St. Paul-based nonprofit that has supplied about 14,000 metro-area homes with affordable Internet access. PCs for People gets this online connectivity through two national nonprofit providers, Mobile Beacon and Mobile Citizen, which provide their connectivity via an outdated Sprint wireless-data network. This does not, however, resolve a long-term financial problem for the agency, which had derived about half of its income from its role as a budget Internet provider. The other half comes from refurbishing donated PCs and selling them at low prices to the economically challenged.

PCs for People had been depending on Sprint, which was to migrate Mobile Beacon and Mobile Citizen users to a newer wireless-data network. But that shift has been held up by increasingly contentious negotiations among those parties as the Nov. 6 deadline looms. PCs for People is scrambling for other income sources, such as selling refurbished PCs online. Until now, it had only sold the computers out of its offices in St. Paul and several other cities, including Denver. The lack of Internet revenue has halted its planned expansion into additional cities, including Philadelphia and Oakland, Calif.

Comcast, at least, is providing a lifeline for PC for People's Internet customers who can't afford conventional broadband. This arrangement is likely going to continue as long as PCs for People does not have other options. "When PCs for People reached out to us, we were quite frankly more than thrilled since both organization share a common commitment to provide low income families with the Internet service they absolutely need," said Jill Hornbacher, Comcast's Twin Cities-based spokeswoman.

Comcast said it has fine-tuned how Internet Essentials operates. Eligibility requirements have been loosened a bit to include any family, regardless of income, with a child who attends a school where 50 or percent or more of the students are on free-lunch or reduced-lunch programs. The Internet Essentials download speed has doubled to 10 megabits per second, with 1-megabit-per second uploads. Comcast also recently sweetened the deal with Wi-Fi at no extra cost. – **St. Paul (MN) Pioneer-Press**

Alphabet Inc. is dangling the possibility of its high-speed fiber-optic Internet service before three additional cities. The company formerly known as Google said it is working with leaders in Jacksonville, Fla., Tampa, Fla., and Oklahoma City, Okla., as potential expansion sites for Google Fiber.

Google Fiber offers speeds of one gigabit per second, about 100 times as fast as the average broadband service in the U.S. It's available in Provo, Utah; Austin, Texas; and Kansas City, Mo. Alphabet has committed to providing Fiber in six other cities.

The three new cities were chosen because of their tech cred, [according to a blog post on the company's website](#). "These growing tech-hubs have a strong entrepreneurial spirit and commitment to small business," wrote Jill Szuchmacher, director of Google Fiber expansion. She cited Jacksonville as a top 10 city for tech jobs, Tampa's spot on the list of best cities for young entrepreneurs and Oklahoma City's recognition as the number-one city to launch a business.

Google Fiber is expensive. The company has to dig up roads to bury the cable, or string it to utility poles. Analysts estimate it costs more than \$500 a home. Before committing to a city, Google assesses local governments' willingness to limit the costs and streamline permitting. Even if Alphabet does expand its Internet service to these three cities, leaving a traditional Internet provider for Alphabet's service isn't without risk. You may find yourself unable to watch the World Series. That's what happened in Kansas City Tuesday night. During arguably the most important local sporting event of the year, Google Fiber suffered an outage for about five minutes. "We know it couldn't have happened at a worse time," the company said in a tweet.

It blamed the outage on a security process that went awry, blocking many users from reaching Google's servers. "We hold ourselves to a higher standard than this, and we're taking steps to ensure this type of issue doesn't happen again," a Google Fiber spokesman said. – **Wall Street Journal**



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