

UNCAPPED POTENTIAL CABLE ACADEMY 2017

April 19 & 20
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BCAP's 29th annual Cable Academy heads to the Poconos to highlight the direction our industry must embrace to prosper during the most competitive environment in its history. Cable Academy 2017 will showcase the "Uncapped

Potential" that exists today, and how it can further expand in the near future.

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For \$120 per month, homes across Los Angeles will be able to get 250 channels and tens of thousands of hours of on-demand programming piped into their households from a new player in cable TV. Prices start at \$89 for one set-top box.

At first glance, it doesn't sound that different than what Spectrum (formerly Time Warner Cable and Charter), Cox or other local TV providers offer. But Layer3 TV says its video quality, DVR capabilities and social media tools are unmatched in the industry. The Denver company is taking advantage of leased infrastructure to maintain a unique connection to every television, which means a home can record seven channels at once and change channels without lag time, and that advertisers someday could show personalized commercials. "It's really about bringing a robust, modern TV experience to the living room in a way that's price competitive but doesn't constrain you," Layer3 TV Chief Executive Jeff Binder said.

A new cable-TV option at a time when data show that cord-cutting is exploding may seem odd. But Binder insists that most U.S. households remain interested in a traditional TV service. Cord-cutting and cord-slimming affect about 30% of the country — a slice yearning for more affordable and specific offerings, which includes Dish's Sling service and the upcoming [YouTube TV offering](#). "There's a big group that now has alternatives to the full bundle of cable, but that doesn't mean the top 75% of the market is changing their behavior," Binder said.

His gamble on this proposition isn't cheap. Layer3 received a \$100-million investment from groups including Evolution Media Capital, the joint venture between talent agency CAA and private equity firm TPG Growth. The cash has gone to technology development, licensing deals and now marketing. Layer3's initial Los Angeles service area is expected to cover about 80% of the region, mostly in the higher-income areas on the Westside and the valleys.

The service works in Chicago and several other cities, covering about 13 million households. Subscriber figures haven't been disclosed. But Binder said the average user watches seven hours of Layer3 per day. The company wants other apps to work with its set-top boxes. The goal is to integrate popular services such as Facebook, Twitter, Nest and Amazon's Alexa. "There's no

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question that by bringing alternate assets into the experience, how people are going to interact with the television set is going to change,” Binder said. – *Los Angeles Times*

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21st Century Fox Inc., the media and entertainment group controlled by Rupert Murdoch, introduced a single app where pay-TV subscribers can watch many of its TV networks and shows, a step toward building more direct ties to consumers.

The Fox Now online app offers satellite and cable-TV subscribers live and on-demand programming from the Fox network, FX and the National Geographic

channel. In coming months, the company will add local broadcast affiliates, sports and possibly Fox News. It'll be available starting Tuesday on the newest Apple TV set-top boxes and will roll out to other platforms like Roku and mobile devices by midyear, the company said.

With the popularity of Netflix and watching on the go, Fox and other media companies are making more of their programming available online for pay-TV subscribers. With the new app, Fox is providing a single point of access to shows like "The Simpsons," "Empire" and "Legion" that air on different channels. It creates new opportunities for the company to sell ads and marks a step toward a possible direct-to-consumer offering. "Easy access to content from all of those networks will bring a big benefit to the consumer that they are not getting in the TV everywhere environment right now," Brian Sullivan, president of the Fox Networks Digital Consumer Group, said in an interview. "That will be a pretty big step forward for us."

Fox focused on giving the app the look and feel of TV, Sullivan said. Viewers will always see a full screen of video, not computer-like program options. They'll be able to get all of what's available by setting up, or authenticating, the single Fox Now app, rather than individual channels. Viewers will be able to flip between live broadcasts on different channels, restart shows or stream from different Fox channels using a TV or mobile device. "We wanted to build something from the customer perspective ground up," said Sullivan, the former chief executive officer of Sky Deutschland. "And this is the first product that we will be putting out to customers based on of that new platform and new approach."

Putting Fox programming in a single app will increase the variety of content, compared with, say, the existing FX or National Geographic online offerings. From launch, Fox Now will have 400 hours of content, rising to 1,000 hours by the end of the year, according to Sullivan. Fox Now is available to 97 percent of U.S. pay-TV subscribers, the company said. Fox Now will have an advantage over competing over-top-services by combining live and on-demand programming, Sullivan said.

James Murdoch, CEO of 21st Century Fox, said on a February earnings call that the company's new streaming product would deliver a "step change for customers and future customers in quality, in discovery, and in engagement." A major goal of the new service is to get a better consumer response to ads. The company plans to use "dynamic ad insertion" to tailor commercials, even giving audiences the option to chose one ad in exchange for getting the rest of a show ad free, Sullivan said. Some 30 percent of Fox's revenue comes from advertising. TrueX, the digital ad company Fox acquired in 2015, will create those new engagement ads.

Fox will continue to separately offer the Fox Sports Go app and a paid online sports product called Fox Soccer 2Go. The company hasn't decided yet whether to begin selling the Fox Now

programming directly to consumers who don't have a pay-TV service, as CBS Corp. has done with its All Access service. "It's an option for us in the future, whether or not we'd like to have independently priced access to that suite of apps," Murdoch said. – **Bloomberg**



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