



BROADBAND'S NEW AGE

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BCAP's 31st annual Cable Academy returns to the Poconos to highlight the direction our industry must embrace to prosper during the most competitive environment in its history. Cable Academy 2019 will showcase and explain the new age of broadband cable, its challenges and the vast potential it brings.

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April 22, 2019

San Jose Mercury News
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Remember the advent of the "[Do Not Call List](#)"? The year was 2003, and consumers tired of picking up the phone to an unwanted sales pitch were happy to be getting some relief.

By registering a home number with the federal list administered by the Federal Trade Commission or with the Pennsylvania list managed by the state attorney general's office, households were assured some protection from businesses or agencies making targeted sales calls. Unwanted calls from unknown callers became illegal, and businesses stopped making them rather than face fines.

Fox Business
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Sixteen years later, it's a different story. Technology has given rise to call automation, creating armies of robo-callers that can't be identified and don't care about the illegality. Robo-calls are generated by the millions from overseas servers instead of humans, flooding phone land lines. And the numbers keep rising. In 2018, Americans received 48 billion robocalls, a 57 percent increase over the previous year. Nearly half those calls are scams, meant to steal money or identity information from consumers. According to the Federal Communications Commission, consumers lose more than \$350 annually in telephone scams.

Reuters
[Huawei says it launched 'world's first' 5G communications hardware for autos](#)

What can be done? At [a Chester County forum](#) last month, consumers expressed frustration to legislators. State Sen. Andy Dinniman, Senate Democratic Policy Committee Chairwoman Sen. Lisa Boscola and Sen. Tim Kearney heard from local residents, business owners, officials from the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office, and representatives of the telecommunications industry. Among those offering testimony was West Chester business owner Karen Cavin, who said her business is interrupted nearly 50 times a day by robocalls. "How are we to know these are not customers asking questions? We have to answer them. How do I know these are not my vendors? I've got to take them. ... It's distracting, disruptive and it costs you money."

Washington Post
[Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg said to be under close scrutiny in federal privacy probe](#)

Pennlive
[Pa. is spending millions on election security, but the effort has its critics](#)

Associated Press
[As suburbs roar, Pennsylvania Democrats pick top 2020 target](#)

Allentown Morning Call
[Will Joe Biden launch his 2020 run from Pennsylvania?](#)

Philadelphia Daily News
[John Baer column: My journalistic seven-year itch](#)

One of the problems with enforcement according to Sarah Frasch, director of the Bureau of Consumer Protection in the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office, is that "even if the agents are able to identify a criminal, they are often located overseas," and impossible to fine or prosecute. Making rules or punishments more stringent has no impact when the offenders are not the least bit worried about being caught.

Stopping the onslaught created by scammers' use of technology demands a shakeup, according to officials. The latest idea is something called SHAKEN/STIR (Secure Handling of Asserted information using toKENs / Secure Telephone Identity Revisited), to stop call-spoofing, in which telemarketers use equipment to mimic local numbers or the recipient's own number. At the heart of the issue, Dinniman noted at the hearing, is privacy and the failure of government and communications agencies to protect it. We may reach the point, he said, where people no longer use land lines.

For the vast majority of people who ignore robo-calls, it's hard to imagine that money is to be gained from ringing millions of phones that don't get answered. And yet the plague keeps growing. The answer lies in the caller-ID feature in most phone plans. Due to a system of database search and reward, when a call is made a database search of the number can yield an exchange of a few cents between phone carriers. If 10 calls produce 2 cents each, there is little gain. Make it two million calls, and those pennies add up.

The issue, many say, is that the FCC has not done enough to curb robo-calls through call blocking or other aggressive measures to stop them from originating. These scammers are breaking the law, and a means of enforcement is necessary. The FCC must devise ways of making robo-calling difficult and unprofitable. Consumers are paying the price in lost time and comfort in their own homes. Since technology created this problem, a focused effort by the telecommunications industry and FCC on technology to combat it is needed. Tell your congressional representatives to get involved and pressure the FCC. Robo-calls invade our privacy, disrupt our homes, distract from work and family. It's time to end these calls. – ***Delaware County Daily Times*** editorial

Here's a sentence I never thought I'd write: I really like my cable box.

I recently upgraded from one of those fusty old boxes to Comcast's Xfinity X1 box, and the difference is insane. Rather than remember hundreds of channel numbers, I just say, "the Warriors game" into the voice-enabled remote and it jumps to the right place. With one search, I can find content across live TV, on-demand and even Netflix.

I know, I know. Talking about how great cable is in 2019 sounds like bragging about my horse-drawn buggy in the age of the Model T. The future of TV looks mostly like Netflix, Hulu, Disney+ and other streaming services. But what we're discovering is, in this cable-cut, streaming-dominated world, every set of shows we want to watch comes with its own app, password and ever-increasing monthly fee. Gee, it'd be great if someone could bundle all that content together in one place! And maybe consolidate all my bills down to one, and hand me a nice box to run it all. We could call it—and I'm just spitballing here—"cable."

We don't need to displace cable, we need to improve it. The cable companies are working to do exactly that, updating everything from their confusing and predatory pricing to their miserably outdated boxes themselves. Thanks to newfound competition from Apple and Amazon, Roku and Android, and every streaming service you can think of—not to mention Verizon, AT&T and even T-Mobile—this could be Big Cable's last best chance to sell you TV. It's forcing companies to finally ditch the blue TV Guide and bring the cable experience into the modern era. Besides, cable companies do still have one ace up their sleeve: They're still the most popular, and often most affordable, way to get fast internet, something all those streaming services require.

The longstanding way of getting television—call your cable provider, rent a box, two-year contract—is hugely popular and rapidly dying.

According to Nielsen, of the 5 hours and 24 minutes the average adult spends watching video daily, a full 4 hours and 13 minutes is spent on live and recorded TV. But viewing on other devices, like phones and streaming boxes, is rising fast while standard TV watching declines. Millions of people are canceling cable and finding other ways to while away the hours.

It's not hard to see why people would flee cable, either. Streaming services like Netflix and Amazon offer lots of content on demand, rather than forcing you to tune in to a specific channel at a specific time. They work across all your screens, not just on your living-room TV. But streaming has its issues. You have to manage a Rolodex of usernames and passwords, and remember to pay (or cancel) all those different bills. If you subscribe to Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime, HBO and Showtime, your monthly cost is around \$60, and you'd still need to pay extra for broadband internet—and most any live TV you might want to watch.

As for live TV, **a growing number of cable-replacement services** do add in core live channels. But although I particularly like YouTube TV's live offering, **it has raised prices, along with some of its top competitors**, so it's no longer the deal it once was. Then there's that ever-present dilemma of streaming TV: finding something to watch. You open Netflix and browse for a while, then close it and open HBO Now only to do the same before hitting Amazon Prime and Hulu and Tubi. Before you know it, you've spent your movie-watching window staring at thumbnails. I don't care what Tim Cook says: The future of TV is not apps. It's TV.

All this brings me back to my handy Xfinity X1 box, with its surprisingly fast performance and usable interface. (OK, fine, the bar for "handy cable box" is pretty low.) In addition to Comcast's live and on-demand TV, it offers content from Netflix, Amazon Prime, YouTube and others. When I search for "The Office," I can see everything on live TV, on Comcast's on-demand platform and on various streaming services from a single menu.

Most of the time, I search by speaking into the voice-enabled remote that Comcast and other providers now offer, which takes all the work out of flipping channels. The X1 doesn't include all my streaming services—I particularly miss Hulu—but it's still the biggest content library I have. For years, the most frustrating thing about cable was that it worked only in your home, only on whatever TVs you had hooked up to special boxes. Now, most cable companies offer apps

that let you access all your movies and shows on your phone, tablet or PC. You can also log into many channels' apps with your cable credentials. "Any piece of glass that can render video was something we had to build our products for, and ultimately give customers the choice," said Matt Strauss, Comcast's executive vice president for Xfinity.

But this part is still not good enough: Thanks to longstanding rights deals, some shows aren't available when you're not at home, and I can't believe how many sports games are blacked out on my phone. Also, as someone paying a ton of money for cable, it's shocking how many ads I have to sit through when watching TV on these apps. For cable subscribers, the good news is that you can finally get a huge selection of content and watch it anywhere, using much nicer products than anything cable companies offered before. The operators are even working on solving cable's single worst feature: billing. "[Users] want to understand the price, and they don't want to be surprised by fees," said Mr. Strauss. His company hasn't, however, changed anything yet.

In general, we're getting the better bundle we always wanted. But it might still be too late for Big Cable. "The cable bundle is re-forming, not via cable, but from Amazon and Apple," said Matthew Ball, an industry analyst and venture capitalist. Apple, Amazon, Roku and others are rapidly getting into the channel-bundling business, offering many of the same search and discovery features plus the same one-bill simplicity.

Apple and Amazon are not offering us home broadband service, though. Don't be surprised to see cheaper, simpler TV bundles from cable providers purely as an incentive to keep you paying for that high-speed internet—plus all the other lucrative services they now offer, such as security and smart-home systems. But also don't be surprised when, in just a few years, your wireless carrier or favorite tech company tries to sell you some great bundles of its own. No strings—or at least cables—attached. — *Wall Street Journal*

Charter Communications will expand broadband internet access upstate under a tentative deal with New York regulators. Under the proposed agreement, Charter will roll out broadband service to 145,000 upstate customers before October 2021 and pay \$12 million to expand service in especially underserved rural areas.

The state's Department of Public Service announced the deal Friday. If formally approved by regulators the agreement would resolve a dispute between the state and Charter over upstate broadband access. In a statement, the Stamford, Connecticut-based company said the settlement negates the need for a costly legal battle with the state.

Charter, which does business as Spectrum, merged with Time Warner Cable in 2016. Last year Charter agreed to give customers refunds and free services to settle allegations that Time Warner hadn't delivered on promised internet speeds. — *Associated Press*



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