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Advertising Age has named Comcast Corp. the nation's leading advertiser in 2016, spending \$5.6 billion. No. 2 was Procter & Gamble, whose big-time brands include Bounty paper towels, Head & Shoulders shampoo, Pampers diapers, and Crest toothpaste, at \$4.3 billion.



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Comcast's top ranking in "total ad spending" reflects the broad portfolio of consumer and entertainment products that Philadelphia-based Comcast now peddles to American consumers — from Xfinity internet services to Universal animated films and theme park attractions. The \$5.6 billion expenditure includes both "measured advertising" on television and print, and other promotions, Ad Age says.

Indeed, today, big media companies such as Comcast and the Walt Disney Co. could be considered giants, marketing themselves with TV broadcast and cable networks and movies. Disney ranked No. 16 with expenditures of \$2 billion in 2016. 21st Century Fox, controlled by Rupert Murdoch, ranked No. 24. Comcast executives were not available for comment on Monday.

In addition to Comcast and Procter & Gamble, the big U.S. advertisers in Ad Age's top 10 were General Motors, \$3.8 billion; AT&T, \$3.6 billion; Nestle, \$2.8 billion; Verizon Communications, \$2.7 billion; American Express, \$2.7 billion; Amazon, \$2.6 billion; Ford, \$2.3 billion; and JPMorgan Chase, \$2.2 billion.

The Ad Age report noted that companies spent almost \$200 billion on advertising in 2016. And yes, you did see a lot of the Geico lizard. Geico was the most heavily promoted single brand, supported by \$1.4 billion in advertising.

Automakers advertised the most as a sector, spending \$15 billion. But Tesla — the electric-car company — didn't advertise at all. — *Philadelphia Inquirer*

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One rumor making the rounds last week was that Verizon may be eyeing a Disney purchase. While that sounds fantastical, a well-placed banker told On the Money not to count Verizon out. "It feels like Verizon is playing checkers while AT&T is playing chess," said one media observer, reflecting the view that Verizon needs more content assets to shore up its mobile ad ambitions.

Meanwhile, AT&T CEO Randall Stephenson, who is bagging Time Warner, is also slated to attend Allen & Co.'s annual Sun Valley mogulfest, along with Time Warner's CEO Jeff Bewkes and his three divisional chiefs: John Martin, Richard Plepler and Kevin Tsujihara. The three amigos will be part of AT&T's Dallas-headquartered telecom universe come fall. We'd love to hear if the gang goes whitewater rafting together in Sun Valley and what news they'll discuss.

The high-octane deal-making powwow will be absent Disney CEO Bob Iger, Twitter boss Jack Dorsey and former Uber chief Travis Kalanick. They're not on the attendee list, though they could always just show up. In the case of Kalanick, however, we hear the Allen & Co. hosts are very buttoned up and do not tolerate bad-boy behavior from those on the invite list — hence his absence.

There's a sprinkling of businesswomen on the attendee list this year: Sara Blakely of Spanx, GM's Mary Barra and IBM's Virginia Rometty. Could Barra be in the driver's seat and headed to replace Kalanick at Uber? On the Money hears she is certainly a candidate. Tipsters also shared that ViaSat, a global broadband company that among other things is used to "empower international war fighters on the front lines of battle," will be part of the new tech breed lined up to present. — *New York Post*

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CenturyLink has launched its anticipated virtual MVPD service in beta. Per the live-streamed service's [product page](#), the base tier will run \$45 a month and include almost 50 networks, including four iterations of ESPN, History Channel, Food Network, Viceland and HGTV. The page lists NBC and ABC as available networks, but it's unclear how infiltrated CenturyLink is in terms of local network affiliates.

The Fox Broadcast Network and CBS don't appear to be part of the initial mix. Neither do their associated cable networks. Viacom, Time Warner Inc. and AMC Networks channels also seem to be left out of the base tier. Additional sports channels like Outside Television and beIN Sports can be added with a \$10-a-month "Sports Extra" package. Add-ons of smaller networks are also available for entertainment, Latino-targeted entertainment and cable news, among other programming themes.

The skinny bundle is discounted \$5 for CenturyLink broadband subscribers. Features include a cloud DVR that can store up to 50 hours of HD programming. News of the CenturyLink beta comes as Charter confirmed testing of an IP-based skinny bundle. While Spectrum Stream is an IP-based video service delivered within Charter's footprint over managed network, CenturyLink Stream is a full-fledged, nationally distributed virtual MVPD service, competing head-on with Sling TV, DirecTV Now, Hulu Live, YouTube TV, Sony PlayStation Vue and FuboTV.

Initially, CenturyLink Stream is supported on Roku OTT devices, as well as iOS and Android mobile devices. It's also playable on the CenturyLink player, a \$90 Android-powered device manufactured by LG Electronics. CenturyLink executives have indicated previously that the introduction of Stream doesn't bode well for the telco's existing IPTV video product, Prism.

"With over-the-top product, we don't have to make a truck roll," said CenturyLink CEO Glenn Post at an investor event in February. "We have much wider availability due to lower bandwidth requirements of over-the-top. We have network-based storage for DVR. We'll have local channels to help distinguish that product. And our trial is getting really strong reviews right now. But we have really deemphasized the Prism product because of the margin issue." — *Fierce Cable*

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**U.S. Rep. Brendan Boyle** wants to require that voter registration forms be given to all new U.S. citizens at their naturalization ceremonies. "Once someone becomes a citizen, making sure that they have the information on how to register to vote ... is an important thing we can offer them," Boyle (D., Pa.) said Monday.

Boyle and Rep. Joe Crowley (D., N.Y.), chairman of the House Democratic Caucus, co-sponsored legislation that would require the Department of Homeland Security to allow chief election officers throughout the country to distribute voter registration forms “to each person who becomes a citizen of the United States at a naturalization ceremony.”

According to Boyle, few states and municipalities, excluding Pennsylvania or Philadelphia, provide voter registration material to newly sworn U.S. citizens. “It’s completely haphazard,” Boyle said, noting that some places include the information in new citizens packets, while others have a stand outside of the naturalization ceremonies. Boyle wants the process to be uniform.

The issue came up at a community meeting last fall in which Philadelphia City Commissioner Lisa Deeley was taking questions. One woman asked her if newly sworn citizens are registered to vote on the spot. Deeley, who is part of the three-member board of commissioners that oversee local elections, said she didn’t know the answer to that.

She reached out to Boyle, who told her that voter registration wasn’t a requirement. Boyle took it from there and created legislation that would require voter registration forms be given to every new citizen, Deeley said Monday. “Certainly we want people who are becoming citizens of our great country ... to be part of our voting process,” she said.

The legislation, which was introduced last week, would also allow election officials to set up informational tables outside naturalization ceremonies. Philadelphia has four to six administrative naturalization ceremonies each week, according to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

The USCIS announced last week that it will naturalize 15,000 new citizens on the Fourth of July in several dozen Independence Day-themed naturalization ceremonies across the country, including at the Betsy Ross House in Philadelphia. “We should do all we can to provide all citizens a fair opportunity to participate in our democracy — and in fact encourage them to do so — regardless of the location they happen to be naturalized as a U.S. citizen,” Boyle said. — *Philadelphia Inquirer*

