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Washington Post
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Zap2It
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Sky posted double-digit earnings growth after it added another 500,000 customers in its latest financial year, showing why Comcast and Rupert Murdoch's Fox are slugging it out to buy the European pay-TV leader. "It's been an exceptional year of progress, delivering against our plans but also laying the groundwork for the future," Chief Executive Jeremy Darroch told reporters. "[We are] excited about the opportunities ahead no matter what our future ownership structure is, we're certainly not slowing down."

U.S. cable company Comcast is leading the race to buy Sky after it offered 14.75 pounds a share this month, valuing the group at $34 billion. The bid came just hours after Fox had upped its own bid to 14 pounds. Sky, which is already 39 percent owned by Fox, reported a 11 percent rise in core earnings for its established business to 2.5 billion pounds ($3.3 billion) for the year to June 30. Revenue was up 5 percent to 13.59 billion pounds, beating a forecast by UBS, as the company said more than 23 million European households were subscribing to 63 million pay-TV, broadband and mobile services.

Darroch said Sky's content in sport, drama and entertainment would be bolstered by new partnerships with Netflix, BT Sport, Mediaset Premium and Spotify. Shares in Sky are trading at record levels, and above Comcast's latest offer, as investors bet that Fox will return with a higher bid. They were up marginally at 1,511 pence at 1240 GMT. Lee Wild, head of equity strategy at Interactive Investor, said Sky had shown just why Fox and Comcast were fighting tooth and nail for control of the satellite broadcaster. "These numbers and a bullish plan for further aggressive growth in the current financial year are

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Wilkes-Barre Times Leader
Trump coming to Wilkes-Barre to stump for Barletta

clearly presented to squeeze the maximum from potential buyers," he said. "It could work." (For a graphic on 'Sky share price as percentage of competing cash offers' **reut.rs/2JU0WRn**)

The fight for Sky had been played out in the shadow of a bigger battle in the United States between Comcast and Disney to buy most of Fox's assets, including its stake in Sky. Comcast conceded that contest to Disney a week ago, in part because the bidding war was inflating the value of Sky, given Fox's partial ownership, according to sources. Fox - and by proxy Disney - has until August 9 to increase its bid for Sky, a move which could cause British regulators to trigger an auction procedure.

The takeover battle, which started in December 2016, has not knocked Darroch off course in his strategy for Sky, centred around content, such as its own production "Patrick Melrose", partnerships with potential rivals and better technology. Reports have said Comcast wants Darroch, in the top job since 2007, to stay if it buys Sky. The executive, however, said on Thursday it was too early to say whether he would remain after a sale.

Analysts expect profit growth to accelerate in the coming years, helped by a reduction in the price the broadcaster will pay for English Premier League soccer rights from 2019. UBS said Sky had put in place the building blocks for future growth. "Financials for Sky are inflecting after a period of investment and growth should accelerate going forward," it said. Sky added 20,000 customers in Britain in its final quarter, which UBS said was below its forecast, but churn, a measure of the number of people leaving, fell to a decade low of 10.3 percent. – ***Reuters***

TV networks historically have sold ads targeting broad groups of people, but they've been less known for targeting specific audiences. AMC Networks Inc. wants to change that. The media company, which owns AMC, SundanceTV, WE tv and IFC, has partnered with technology company Sorenson Media to send different ads to different households' smart TV screens based on data about viewers and their behavior. Sorenson's ad-targeting technology currently only works on TVs made by Samsung, but the company said it's in the process of partnering with additional TV manufacturers.

Networks generally sell ads based on broad age and gender demographics. The ability to serve more targeted ads to individual households, often described as "addressable advertising," allows TV networks to charge higher ad rates. "Addressable advertising has been something that's grown in popularity with advertisers," said Adam Gaynor, vice president of AMC Networks's advanced ad sales group. "Bringing this capability into our toolbox allows us to enhance the opportunity for existing clients and bring new clients into the AMC Networks family."

TV networks like AMC have come under pressure to try new ad sales tactics as they face stepped-up competition from digital outlets and consumers tune out or skip TV ads. A handful of media companies, including 21st Century Fox, Viacom Inc., AT&T Inc.'s Turner cable networks and Comcast Corp's NBCUniversal, partnered to create OpenAP, a consortium meant to help advertisers identify shows that reach specific audiences, such as people who like to drink soda. AT&T, which recently acquired Turner parent Time Warner, also has

expressed an interest in building a TV ad market and making national TV ads addressable.

With Sorenson, AMC will allow advertisers to buy a 30-second national ad, but instead of only showing one ad to everyone watching that show, the network will be able to show different ads to different households. For example, if an automaker purchases a 30-second ad unit during the "Walking Dead," AMC will now be able to send a truck ad to the Samsung TV screen of a farmer in Illinois, and a sports car ad to the screen of a 20-something car enthusiast or in Los Angeles. The rest of the people watching the show at that time might see an ad for a standard four-door car or minivan.

Sorenson then provides AMC with a report on the number of impressions or views an ad gets after retrieving anonymized viewing data from the TV manufacturers. Historically, networks have relied largely on Nielsen to measure programming views. "Addressable TV affords advertisers the opportunity to be more efficient in reaching intended audiences" at a time when it's "harder to reach audiences," said Mr. Gaynor. Addressable TV advertising typically has only been possible for pay-TV operators like Comcast and AT&T's DirecTV, which have access to two minutes of TV ad time per hour to sell to local advertisers. **Sorenson's technology** allows networks to get in on the action, said Pat Ivers, chief revenue officer of Sorenson. – ***Wall Street Journal***

Cable tycoon John Malone has retired from the board of Charter Communications Inc., the company said Tuesday. Mr. Malone, who owns a significant stake in Charter, said he is reducing his travel and wants to focus on fewer board positions. He will become Charter's director emeritus and won't be able to vote on board matters. "I remain heavily invested in Charter, both financially and emotionally," Mr. Malone said in a statement.

Charter has elected Sirius XM Chief Executive James Meyer to its board, as a designee of Liberty Broadband Corp., which Mr. Malone also was. Mr. Malone has interests, personally and through various holding companies, in media companies including Sirius, Discovery Inc., Hollywood studio Lions Gate, international cable operator Liberty Global PLC, Formula One, internet-radio service Pandora and home shopping channels. – ***Wall Street Journal***

BCAP
Broadband
Cable Association
of Pennsylvania
127 State Street Harrisburg, PA 17101
717-214-2000 (f) 717-214-2020
bcapa.com
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