

**Bloomberg Time Warner Acquires 10% Stake in Hulu as Cable Drives Profits**

**Tampa Bay Times Frontier Communications lost \$80 million in quarter it took over Verizon services in Tampa Bay**

**Wall Street Journal Viacom Executives Held Settlement Talks With Sumner Redstone's National Amusements**

**Zap2it Cable Top 25 for Week Ending July 31**

**Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Harrisburg, Pittsburgh restore direct flight after 8 years**

**Associated Press N Carolina voter ID ruling means another election disruption**

**Pittsburgh Tribune-Review Taxpayers to pay \$150,000 to resolve Kane 'wrongful termination' lawsuit**

Sinclair Broadcast Group has expressed interest in acquiring the Weather Channel's TV operations from private-equity firms Bain Capital LLC and Blackstone Group LP, and Comcast Corp.'s NBCUniversal, people familiar with the matter said. Talks between Sinclair and the Weather Channel owners have been off and on for about a year and heated up again recently, the people said.

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Last year International Business Machines Corp. bought the Weather Company's digital assets for more than \$2 billion. The deal didn't include the company's cable TV channel, though IBM did retain rights to the name "Weather Channel." Sinclair has now emerged as a suitor for the TV network, though there is no

guarantee a deal will be consummated. According to people familiar with the situation, a deal could be valued at around \$100 million. A Weather Channel spokesman declined to comment. Sinclair Broadcast Group didn't return calls seeking comment.

For Bain, Blackstone and NBCUniversal, a sale of the Weather Channel at the valuation being considered, combined with the IBM transaction, would highlight how the assets have weakened. The trio purchased the Weather Channel and its other assets in 2008 from Landmark Communications Inc. for about \$3.5 billion.

For Sinclair, a Baltimore-based local television owner, the deal would be its second foray into cable programming this year. In January, it bought the Tennis Channel for

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\$350 million. The Weather Channel is one of the largest distributed networks on the dial, with a reach of over 90 million homes. Still, the long-term forecast for the Weather Channel isn't sunny. Once a must-have for pay-TV distributors, the network has lost some of its relevance thanks to changing technology and consumption habits. Ratings for the channel are tiny as consumers more often count on the internet and phone apps to keep tabs on the weather.

Efforts to boost ratings by adding entertainment content and hiring big name talent, including former "Good Morning America" weatherman Sam Champion, didn't help. The company has had fights with large distributors over the past few years who felt the price tag for carrying it in cable and satellite packages was too high given the shrinking ratings.

Concerns about consumers cutting the cord to their pay-TV has made networks with smaller followings—and which aren't part of bigger media conglomerates—more vulnerable to being dropped. When IBM acquired the Weather Channel's parent last October, it was telling that it didn't want the TV channel that was once the backbone of the company. Instead it bet on its popular Weather.com site and all the data it has compiled as well as its forecasting resources and technology.

Sinclair, which owns or operates 164 television stations in 79 markets, sees the asset as providing synergies with its local news and weather. However, it may have to persuade cable and satellite distributors to continue to distribute the channel. Typically when a channel changes ownership or goes through a major rebranding, it can open a window for distribution contracts to be reopened. – *Wall Street Journal*

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The National Football League is huddling up with Snapchat Inc.

The two parties have extended a partnership that adds the NFL to Snapchat's roster of **Discover partners**, making it the first sports league to get a media channel on the popular messaging app when its season starts this fall. The NFL will compile news analysis and behind-the-scenes shots catered to the brief, animation-friendly delivery format that resonates on Snapchat.

As part of the multiyear extension, the NFL will also package Live Stories, a 24-hour diary that stitches together photos and video content from fans and the league, for every game during the season, including the Super Bowl and other major events such as the NFL Draft. The league and company will sell the ad slots that will appear within the Discover and Live Stories content, with Snapchat taking on the bulk of the responsibility. They declined to disclose financial terms or elaborate on how the advertising revenue will be shared.

The NFL's content won't be exclusive to Snapchat. Still, the partnership will help the millennial-heavy messaging app broaden its supply of professionally produced videos and articles. Snapchat, which has about 150 million users who log into the app daily, has featured stories from the NFL, Major League Baseball and the National Basketball Association over the past year. An agreement with Turner Sports in March brought Live Stories throughout the March Madness tournament, college baseball and professional golf. "We think that we're really complementary to what [the NFL is] doing on other platforms, particularly television," said Ben Schwerin, Snapchat's head of partnerships. During the 2015 season, he said, fans created about 60 hours of content a game, taking and sharing "snaps" from the stands and during tailgates.

For the NFL, the deal gives it a fresh way to reach audiences. During its one-year partnership, Blake Stuchin, the NFL's director of digital media business development, said the NFL's content gained traction with casual fans, particularly young female viewers. The Discover channel will also be available to international users in the U.K., Canada and Mexico on a limited basis. For now, it will be viewable once a week as the league tries "to get the execution right in the U.S.," Mr. Stuchin said.

As a Discover partner, the NFL will receive a recurring spot in prime location on the app's Stories page where it can showcase not just snaps but more polished videos and articles about the trends and stories of the day. Other media outlets that are part of Snapchat's cadre of Discover partners include BuzzFeed, Vox Media, ESPN and The Wall Street Journal. Snapchat said Discover stories garner about 70 million unique viewers a month.

The NFL said 70 million people world-wide viewed its Snapchat content over the course of 58 Live Stories created around games in the regular and post season as well as other NFL events during the 2015 season. With this new partnership, the NFL will create a Live Story for each one of its 256 regular-season games and through the postseason, making it by far the most prodigious producer of stories on the platform.

The NFL has been testing out content on different social platforms as it seeks to capture the attention of the digitally savvy. Earlier this year, Twitter won the rights to live-stream 10 of its Thursday night games. In May, it renewed [its content deal](#) with Alphabet Inc.'s YouTube. — *Wall Street Journal*

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Federal Communications Commission Chairman Tom Wheeler says robocalls and telemarketing produce more consumer complaints than any other telecom issue, and he wants phone companies to do something about it.

But don't hold your breath. Experts say it's technically feasible for phone companies to crack down on robocalls, but it's unlikely the carriers will take on the necessary effort and expense. Wheeler said in a recent blog post that he has written to the heads of all the major landline and wireless companies instructing them to step up their game and offer customers free call-blocking services. He's also demanding that they come up with "concrete, actionable solutions" within 30 days.

And what do phone companies say? Not much.

I reached out to every leading phone provider asking what technologies or initiatives they have in the works that would provide customers with meaningful protection from robocalls. In response, most said only that they're studying Wheeler's remarks or steered me toward industry groups such as CTIA-the Wireless Association, which represents mobile communications firms.

CTIA emailed me a statement from a senior vice president, Tom Power, saying that "unwanted calls and texts are a consumer issue the wireless industry works hard to address and we look forward to working with the FCC to help address this challenge together." How's that for a call to arms?

"The carriers are always big on promises and self-regulation, but it doesn't normally work that way," said Christine Mailloux, staff attorney with the Utility Reform Network, a San Francisco advocacy group. "Even if they have the ability to put their foot down and eliminate robocalls, they'll probably have to be pushed harder to do it."

Only one leading phone company promptly rose to the FCC's challenge — sort of. AT&T said last week that CEO Randall Stephenson will lead a newly formed "Robocalling Strike Force" whose goal will be "to accelerate the development and adoption of new tools and solutions to abate the proliferation of robocalls and to make recommendations to the FCC on the role government can play in this battle."

A Robocalling Strike Force conjures up nifty images of phone company commandos dropping out of helicopters and doing battle with evil telemarketers. But AT&T's announcement was short on specifics and failed to address the key issue: Why aren't phone companies already doing more? At the moment, consumers' best bet is filtering services such as Nomorobo that aim to intercept robocalls before they reach people's

homes. However, such systems are imperfect and are easily defeated by robocallers switching lines.

If there's to be real progress in stopping robocalls, most experts agree, it will have to come in the form of phone companies halting the offending calls where they originate, before they get across the network. Most phone companies already say they won't tolerate automated dialing systems on their networks. Trouble is, robocallers frequently hire third-party telecom firms to mix their calls with legitimate phone traffic, making it harder to spot them. Carriers thus would have to develop the means to see past this ruse and quickly block all short-duration calls emanating from a specific line. If the robocaller responds by switching lines, the carrier would need to keep pace.

Ben Ferguson, senior network architect at Shamrock Consulting in Hermosa Beach, Calif., said carriers would need to develop algorithms capable of scanning their networks and spotting flurries of short-duration calls — a telltale sign of a robocaller's automated dialing system at work. Ferguson said such capabilities would require an investment of millions of dollars by each phone company, but there's no technical barrier to getting the job done. "The problem," he said, "is that for the carriers, it's a conflict of interest. All of these robocallers represent billable minutes. From a revenue standpoint, anything they do to crack down represents a reduction of billable traffic on their networks." — *Los Angeles Times*



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