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Steve Burke, chief executive of Comcast Corp.'s NBCUniversal, stood before his senior executive team early this year and issued a directive: The media company needs to go where the eyeballs are going, he said, and introduce more "digital" to its DNA.

Now, NBCUniversal is making some headway in realizing those ambitions. The company said Tuesday that it agreed to invest \$200 million in BuzzFeed in a deal that people familiar with the situation said values the new-media company at \$1.5 billion. The pact comes a week after NBCUniversal said it would invest the same amount in BuzzFeed competitor Vox Media. The deals give NBCUniversal more exposure to websites that offer a combination of news, lists and advertiser-sponsored content, and specialize in reaching the young audiences that are increasingly fleeing traditional television. NBCUniversal anticipates opportunities to become partners with BuzzFeed and Vox in areas such as advertising and creating television programming to appeal to younger viewers, people familiar with the deal said.

On Monday, BuzzFeed also said it had signed a joint-venture deal with Yahoo Japan Corp. to create a local Japanese-language version of the site. Japan would be the ninth foreign market BuzzFeed has expanded into, and the company says it now gets 45% of its traffic from abroad. Many media-industry observers have been expecting for the past year to see significant mergers among television-channel owners to deal with mounting competitive pressures in the pay-TV world. But so far no such blockbuster transactions have happened. Instead, several media companies appear to be directing their capital—at least for the moment—into digital media companies that hold the promise of powering future growth.

Unlike the venture investments traditional media companies have made for years, these are sizable bets. Time Warner Inc.'s Turner cable unit paid nearly \$200 million for a majority stake in Internet TV tech vendor iStreamPlanet, saying the deal could help expand Turner's online

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video products. 21st Century Fox Inc. in July invested \$150 million in fantasy-sports startup DraftKings Inc., which is attracting the coveted demographic of young men.

Last year, A+E Networks, which is jointly owned by Walt Disney Co. and Hearst Corp., invested \$250 million in Vice Media and has since sought to rebrand one of its channels as a Vice channel. The NBCUniversal investment is likely to help BuzzFeed “grow and invest without pressure to chase short-term revenue or rush an IPO,” Chief Executive Jonah Peretti said in a memo to staff. For 2014, the company said it took in more than \$100 million in revenue.

In an interview, Mr. Peretti said there could be many potential strategic partnerships for the companies, such as allowing marketers to promote across NBCUniversal properties and BuzzFeed. He said the resources would help BuzzFeed expand into television and film, which he estimates will only make up about 10% to 20% of BuzzFeed’s business over the long term but require bigger content investments than online media. “The cost structure of traditional media is much higher—the cost to make a movie or show is higher,” he said, adding that even though BuzzFeed aims to improve on the efficiency of Hollywood’s traditional model, “it’s still going to take significant investment.”

As for Comcast, the company in April abandoned a \$45.2 billion bid to buy Time Warner Cable after strong pushback in Washington over competition concerns. Since then, Comcast’s entertainment arm, NBCUniversal, has been scouting for digital media deals, including with Vice Media, AOL’s Huffington Post, BuzzFeed and Vox, people familiar with the situation said. The company decided to move ahead with the investments in BuzzFeed and Vox.

NBCUniversal, which owns channels such as USA, Bravo, E! and MSNBC, has struggled like other media companies to maintain a connection with young viewers, who have increasingly dropped their cable connections in favor of watching video online. According to a Horizon Media analysis of Nielsen data, only about 25% of people ages 18 to 34 watch prime-time TV, compared with 53% of those over 55. Over half of BuzzFeed’s 82.4 million unique visitors in July were between the ages of 18 and 34, according to comScore Inc. Vox, which is made up of eight websites focused on sports, politics, food, fashion and technology, had a combined 54.4 million unique visitors in July, with over 40% between the ages of 18 and 34.

One potential area of partnership with BuzzFeed is the Olympics, which NBC telecasts. For a television feature about an Olympic swimmer, for example, BuzzFeed could create promotional videos showcasing young Olympic swimmers to help generate interest among younger TV viewers and bring in ad dollars, said a person familiar with NBCU’s thinking. In addition, some popular BuzzFeed shows such as “The Try Guys”—in which a few men try outlandish acts such as walking a mile with fake pregnant bellies—could get picked up as a television show or segment on an NBCU channel, the person said.

NBCU also could join forces with Vox and BuzzFeed to package together younger audiences for advertisers to target. NBCU could offer a marketer a chance to buy ads across its cable channels Bravo and E!, as well as BuzzFeed and Vox, to reach a particular demographic, the person said. NBCU’s news properties also hope to learn from BuzzFeed’s expertise in making stories and videos go viral online, the person added.

Before the NBCUniversal investment, BuzzFeed had raised \$96.3 million in five investment rounds. Last year, it raised \$50 million from venture-capital firm Andreessen Horowitz, valuing the company at \$850 million. As part of the BuzzFeed and Vox deals, NBCU will likely have a seat on the boards of each company, according to a person familiar with the transactions, which would give the media company a voice in the startups’ strategic direction. — *Wall Street Journal; more in Christian Science Monitor*

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Dancing robotic spiders, touch-free vending machines and reality television all figure into Intel Corp.’s future as laid out by Chief Executive Brian Krzanich at a company event on

Tuesday.

Intel's foray into television was a surprise, and a sign of Mr. Krzanich's determination to bring his company's vision to a larger audience. Intel will develop a contest show with Mark Burnett—the producer who created "Survivor" and many other titles in the reality genre—and Time Warner Inc.'s Turner Broadcasting unit.

Bearing the working title "America's Greatest Makers," the program will engage do-it-yourselfers who turn chips and other components into gadgets. Contestants will compete for a \$1 million prize. The show is scheduled to appear on TV and other media channels in 2016. "This is a huge cross-platform media event," said Mr. Burnett, who appeared on stage with Mr. Krzanich.

Intel has reasons to jazz up its image. The company, whose chips have long powered most of the world's PCs, has run into slowing growth as that market has declined. Meanwhile, it largely failed to get its technology into smartphones, a market that now far surpasses PCs in terms of the number of chips purchased each year. Mr. Krzanich, who took the CEO job in 2013, has vowed not to miss the next big market opportunities. He has pushed Intel to get its technology into wearable devices and other manifestations of the "Internet of Things," Silicon Valley's catchall term for computing, communications and sensing power embedded in everyday devices.

Intel's annual forum for technology developers often keys off of new Intel PC chips, but this year instead put the spotlight on markets that are newer and less well established. "This year we want to push further than ever before," Mr. Krzanich said. Many demonstrations focused on RealSense, a set of Intel technologies that are designed to give devices vision and hearing capabilities. One application is Relay, a robot from a startup called Savioke that uses RealSense and other technologies to deliver snacks, drinks and other objects to hotel rooms.

In another demonstration, Mr. Krzanich showed how a platoon of small robotic spiders—and a few larger ones—could dance in choreographed fashion after he set them going with hand gestures. Intel also demonstrated a high-tech vending machine from the Italian company N&W Global Vending SpA. It is equipped with a large display screen that customers can activate with a gesture rather than a touch—a feature suited to busy airports or other environments where sanitation is an issue. The machine also has sensors and cameras that can detect a user's size and gender and gather data about interactions to improve a user's experience, Intel said.

The company, known for chips that can cost hundreds of dollars, has developed tiny chips and modules of circuit boards that are designed to fit into wearable devices. One example is Curie, which combines a processor called Quark with Bluetooth communications and other features into a component about the size of a shirt button. To show Curie in action, Mr. Krzanich was joined on stage by a stunt rider who performed tricks on a bicycle equipped with the chips. The technology allowed a nearby personal computer to track and measure the action, for purposes such as fine-tuning an athlete's performance.

At several points in his presentation, Mr. Krzanich stressed the need to build security features into devices targeted at the Internet of Things—and showed a willingness to go beyond devices powered by Intel chips. The company announced plans to collaborate with two makers of popular, low-cost microcontroller chips—Microchip Technology Inc. and Atmel Corp.—to support an Intel technology called Enhanced Privacy ID, or EPID. That technology is designed to provide greater security than software to guarantee that unauthorized people haven't manipulated protected devices. Other companies trying to push schemes for chip-based security include Qualcomm Inc., Rambus Inc. and Imagination Technologies Ltd. — *Wall Street Journal*

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Pondering a trek to see Pope Francis next month during his visit to the East Coast? You might want to call a federal lawmaker.

The seats inside the U.S. House chamber for the pontiff's Sept. 24 address to Congress are hot commodities. But legislators also each have been allotted a set of tickets for spots on the west side of the Capitol, where observers can watch his remarks on jumbotrons and potentially get a glimpse when he steps out afterward on to a balcony. Lehigh Valley Congressman Charlie Dent said Tuesday that his 50 standing-room-only tickets to watch from outside the Capitol have not yet been claimed. His office has received only a handful of inquiries about the event, which he attributed to local residents either planning to head to Philadelphia to see Pope Francis during the final leg of his trip or not wanting to deal with the road closures and other transportation logistics.

In addition to the standing spots, Dent also handed out two seated tickets. He invited Father Bernard O'Connor, president of DeSales University, to watch the speech from inside the House gallery. Evie Rooney, wife of former Congressman Fred Rooney, will be using Dent's seated ticket for the Capitol's West Lawn. From there, onlookers will be able to watch for Pope Francis to come out and wave after his address -- provided that his speech is relatively on time. Dent said that outdoor appearance will require the pontiff to swiftly exit the House chamber, a task that could prove tricky if dozens of lawmakers are seeking to shake his hand or nab a selfie. "I'm not Catholic but I'm very excited about it," Dent said of the Pope's visit. "He is certainly a pope who has had an enormous impact in his short time. I'm looking forward to hearing his address." – *Allentown Morning Call*



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