

## ESSENTIAL READING for INDUSTRY EXECs

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More consumers are cutting the cord—or in the case of millennials, never connecting one in the first place—and the TV business has gone from growth engine to albatross for companies like Disney. That's why they're rushing to sell their content directly to consumers over the Internet. Soon you'll be able to get sports without the entertainment you don't like on ESPN's streaming service. Or, if you prefer, Disney's animated movies without the sports that evoke unpleasant memories of being picked last for the dodgeball team in gym class.

A new future for television is on the horizon: One in which we all cut the cord from our costly cable packages stuffed with channels we don't watch. Instead, we'll subscribe one-by-one to the streaming video services we actually want, on which everything is available on-demand on any device. It could be total chaos.

[Disney's recent announcement that it will launch an ESPN streaming service in 2018](#) and a family-friendly one in 2019 will one day be remembered as the inflection point in how we consume media. After years of talking about how they needed to adapt their business models to be more appealing to consumers but doing nothing because the checks from Comcast and DirecTV to maintain the status quo were too enticing, Hollywood's entertainment giants are rushing in the opposite direction.



**BCAP offices will be closed Friday, September 1 and Monday, September 4.**

All of Disney's competitors, like Time Warner and NBCUniversal, are discussing or actively working on similar services featuring their most popular brands and some of their best programming. You can hardly talk to anyone in Hollywood these days without hearing the words "direct-to-consumer." What's not to love?

A lot, once you start digging into the details. Because the more entertainment companies start dividing their content into separate, and separately priced, services, the harder it could be to find what you love and the faster the costs for your household will add up. The future is ideal for the single person who just wants to watch sports, or Disney animated movies, or the new "Star Trek" show CBS debuts next month on its digital app.

Many of us, though, live in households with people who have varying tastes. Someone likes sports, someone else likes animated movies, and yet another person loves super-heroes. That means a subscription to ESPN, Disney's family service, and one for Warner's DC Comics that will launch in 2018. What about the new shows and movies that debut with mind-boggling frequency on Netflix and Amazon Prime and Hulu and HBO (available digitally as HBO Now)? Gotta have those if you want to keep up with "Fuller House" and "Transparent" and "The Handmaid's Tale" and "Game of Thrones."

Those four services alone currently cost \$41 per month. If you're a "Star Trek" nerd, add \$6 for CBS All Access and \$10 more if you want to skip the commercials. Disney hasn't announced prices for its services, but \$10 per month sounds like a safe bet. Warner charges \$5 per month for Boomerang, which features animated shows like the Looney Tunes, and will probably charge at least as much for the DC service. Expect something similar for future apps that may be built around Universal's kid-friendly Minions, Fox's X-Men super-heroes, or Star Wars.

Did I mention Apple? **They're about to start spending \$1 billion per year to produce television shows** and they're certainly not going to give it away. We won't all subscribe to every service, of course, but if you and your family want a reasonably broad selection of the best programming available, it's easy to imagine paying \$60 or \$80 or \$100-plus per month. And don't forget high-speed Internet for \$50 or more.

It's enough to make you nostalgic for a cable bill.

Proliferating digital video services will also make turning on our TV or tablets feel like a research project: Quick quiz: Which app has the new marijuana comedy from "Big Bang Theory" creator Chuck Lorre? Where can you watch super-hero comedy "The Tick?" What about the upcoming super-hero drama "Titans?" Where can you stream the World Series?

The answers are Netflix, Amazon, DC, and nowhere—you still need TV to watch the biggest sporting events. Oftentimes, the answer will be the latest new service that we don't yet subscribe to. Is that show everyone's buzzing about really worth another \$10 per month? Wouldn't it be nice if you could just change the channel and check it out, like we did in the good old days?

It's easy to imagine a solution to these problems. What if your Internet company (which probably used to be your cable company) offered you several video streaming services together, at a discounted price? They might force you to take a few services as part of the package that you don't use much, but it would probably be worth it for the discount and the convenience.

It's a cable TV bundle for the Internet age, in other words, and it's inevitable. For most of us, managing a dozen or more individual subscriptions to streaming services simply won't be worth the time or cost. The cable bundle of today is an obese anachronism, packed with channels like MTV2 and ESPNU that nobody watches and designed by people who think TV Guide was the ultimate consumer-friendly interface.

But despite the greed of entertainment companies responsible for those failings, the basic idea behind the bundle is sound. Without one, the future of video will quickly become a mind-numbing, wallet-draining nightmare. – **Wall Street Journal**

I recently traveled to the far western reaches of our state (Washington) to celebrate an event that will instantly change lives for an isolated community.

It will be remembered as the day fiber-optic cable finally reached people living in the rural coastal town of Neah Bay. For the first time, these rural Washingtonians, including the Makah Tribe, will have access to reliable broadband internet service — something most of us take for granted. The event didn't generate many headlines beyond the Olympic Peninsula, but access to high-speed internet is an absolute game changer for far-flung towns in our state.

And too many are still waiting. More than 200,000 people in Washington still lack access to broadband, and more than 400,000 have access to only one provider and no choice. A staggering 68 percent of Americans on tribal lands are still cut off from broadband access. After my military service, when I came home to Tulalip in the early 1980s to help my community create what is now the Quil Ceda Village, one of our first priorities was installing state-of-the-art telecommunications.

We realized that before any major construction occurred, the team had to map out our ability to connect electronically to the outside world. Today, the casino, hotel and retail shops would not be able to run without high-speed internet service. We know without a doubt that those underground lines of fiber are just as important as bricks and mortar. Without reliable internet service, people and businesses are simply disconnected from today's world.

That's why it's so frustrating that we walked away from another legislative session in Olympia without progress at the state level for our rural communities that are still waiting for a way to connect. DSL, cable, fiber optic, wireless or satellite service remains out of reach for too many because it's either not available or not affordable. In fact, the priority of big telecom companies is to focus on speeding up existing internet service in big cities.

I get it — businesses like to see a profit, and these companies don't see big dollars in rural Washington. This means someone in Seattle will soon be able to enjoy lightning-fast 5G service while a family in Adams County struggles using dial-up. So how can we move forward and help bridge the rural/urban cyber divide?

The easy answer is better cooperation between public utilities and private companies. We know many of our public utilities districts (PUDs) are eager to help connect their customers to the internet but lack the resources. Companies like Century Link, Verizon and Comcast have repeatedly made commitments to serve communities disadvantaged by the lack of broadband infrastructure.

I introduced legislation last session to expand the authority of PUDs and ports that want to invest in broadband, and I support other bills that would provide an improved pathway for public-private partnerships. Unfortunately, Senate Republicans in Olympia refused to hold a public hearing on the bill. Broadband finally reached Neah Bay and the Makah Tribe, thanks largely to federal support and persistence from U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Washington. State leaders should follow suit by encouraging telecom giants to serve those with no access before expanding their footprints inside dense urban areas.

Otherwise, without fiber-optic cables, rural reservations and communities will remain cut off from the education and economic opportunity everyone else enjoys. — **Op-ed by Washington State Sen. John McCoy (D) in *Seattle Times***