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For years, Comcast has boasted that X1, particularly the launch of a voice remote, has helped with churn. Indeed, earlier this month CEO Brian Roberts, speaking at an investor conference, talked about how Comcast customers move outside the company's footprint and get frustrated. "They go, 'Where is my voice remote?' and 'How do I do that?'" he said.

Now more cable operators are getting to offer similar benefits, thanks to the new TiVo Experience 4 upgrade. The platform features more intuitive navigation, hyper-personalized viewing recommendations, and yes, a voice-controlled remote. Blue Ridge Communications started the process with a soft launch of the software in late August.

"We are just promoting it now," explained marketing director Joe Lorah. "We wanted to give existing customers two or three weeks to deal with the upgrade and voice remotes. Then when that dust settles, we'll go into full campaign mode... With the unknown of changing the guide for 20K people, we didn't know what kind of noise it would create and we didn't want to create a new acquisition campaign at the same time."

The Pennsylvania-based operator has started to market the upgrade along with the launch of TiVo 4K boxes to customers, with plans to ratchet up the promotion next month. Marketing plans include a contest tied to the voice remote. Mediacom is taking a different approach, with plans to roll out the TiVo Experience 4 upgrade this month starting with new customers. Eventually, the MSO will transition to include existing customers and launch marketing around it. Atlantic Broadband has deployed the upgrade in all of its legacy markets across CT, PA, MD, DE, SC and FL over the past two months.

It has started launching the service in former MetroCast markets with all markets served by Atlantic Broadband to have access to the platform by November. "Atlantic Broadband has had a very strong early response to the market launches, exceeding expected adoption rates," said Heather McCallion, vp, products and programming. "We've also had enthusiastic customer feedback, both regarding the voice remote and the improvements to the user interface through Experience 4. Because of this, we anticipate that the TiVo enhancements will not only help drive new customer growth, but also will add value for our existing video customers, benefiting long-term video retention rates."

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Atlantic Broadband took the strategy of offering the upgrade and voice remotes to all eligible existing TiVo DVR customers as an enhancement free of charge. They can upgrade the software through their existing UI and can order a voice remote online. New customers automatically get the offering. Atlantic Broadband created special one-sheeters for the launch as well as mailers, billboards, print ads and a digital TV spot. TiVo has created customizable marketing for its operator partners, including tips and tutorials.

“In addition, our own team members, who played such a key role in the deployment planning and launch, have been testing and using the product, to build excitement and solicit feedback. Because they see it as a game-changer, they are natural, enthusiastic ambassadors for us inside and outside the organization,” McCallion said.

TiVo said it works hand-in-hand with each operator to ensure a successful rollout, though it leaves the pace of launches to its partners. TiVo has a technical support team that helps manage the rollout with regular syncs and check-points with operators as well as a field trial program for operators. TiVo provides analytics, monitors “take-rates”, conducts consumer surveys, as well as provides on-going support for any issues that may arise. Additionally, strategic engagements via forums like the TiVo User Group allows the operators to engage with TiVo as a community and share best practices, the vendor said. –

Cablefax

The same type of blind auction used to pick players in fantasy football leagues could decide the fate of Sky PLC, a media company that employs 30,000 people and has a stock-market value of \$36 billion. Comcast Corp. on Saturday is slated to bid against a team of Walt Disney Co. and 21st Century Fox Inc. in a day-long auction here that—if it goes down to the wire—will culminate in the two sides [submitting secret bids to a British regulator](#). A winner will be disclosed later in the day.

Blind-auction strategy is complex, as each side tries to figure out how much it needs to pay to win while trying to avoid overspending. It has fostered a cottage industry of auction consultants, many of whom hold doctorates in game theory, a branch of math that studies how players in strategic contests make decisions. While investment bankers are used to engaging in such high-dollar auctions, it is [unusual to have a government-mandated “sealed-bid” process](#) for such a big, publicly traded company. “Game theory as a topic is well-understood by academics and has long been studied, but game theorists who also understand the market context are not that common,” said Steve Blythe, who oversees cellular-airwave auctions for French wireless carrier Orange SA .

Complicating matters in the Sky auction: Fox already owns 39% of the London-based company, and Disney earlier this year [agreed to buy a big chunk of Fox](#), including its Sky stake. That arrangement puts Disney and Fox on the same side of the table, but with Disney calling the shots. It also gives Disney an incentive to maximize bidding, even if it doesn’t ultimately prevail. A higher price would allow Disney to offload its Sky stake at a premium—though it doesn’t necessarily have to sell. Fox, Comcast and Sky declined to comment on the auction. Disney didn’t respond to requests for comment. Rupert Murdoch and his family are major shareholders of Fox and News Corp , which publishes The Wall Street Journal.

Mr. Murdoch has long sought to consolidate his holding in Sky. Disney and Comcast see Sky as a way to expand internationally. The broadcaster also sells wireless, TV and internet services throughout Europe, and it is a media company that produces its own news, entertainment and sports programming. Both sides agreed to the auction's terms. The U.K Takeover Panel, the agency running the auction, polices big deals involving British companies. It has the power to force a formal auction to prevent a never-ending series of bids and counterbids, and it worked out the process with the companies.

Under the auction rules, only Fox can bid in the first round because Comcast enters the processing having already made a higher bid. In the second round, Comcast can counterbid. If that doesn't determine a winner, each side can submit sealed-bid offers in the third and final round. Maher Said, a New York University Stern School of Business professor who focuses on auctions, said the first step in an auction like this is figuring out how much the asset is really worth to you, and then what you think it's worth to your rival. Next is gaming out a range of possible bids from your rival. "The concern is you don't want to raise the price so high and end up holding the bag," he said.

Fox initially bid £10.75 a share for Sky in December 2016. Comcast's current offer, made in July, is £14.75 a share – already 37% above Fox's first offer. Blind auctions are more common in other industries. For example, wireless carriers often hire outside, game-theory advisers when bidding for rights to cellular airwaves, which governments worldwide typically sell at auction. Not all wireless auctions are blind, but the ones that are tend to be the hardest kind to prepare for, Orange's Mr. Blythe said. "It's difficult to persuade your boss you did a good job," he said. Here's the dilemma: Bid too low and lose. Bid too high and risk spending much more money than needed.

For example, let's suppose you bid for a house. Your \$450,000 offer wins. But then you learn the second-highest bid was \$300,000. Would you really feel like a winner? Mr. Blythe's goal is to win cellular airwaves at a price at which Orange would profit. Failing that, his goal is to make rivals spend as much as possible, he said. With millions or billions of dollars on the line, wireless carriers recruit the few top-tier game theorists with experience.

The tricky part is that buyers might value assets differently. Consider fantasy-football leagues. Many of these online games give each player a budget to bid on free agents during the season. This week, many players are bidding for Atlanta Falcons running back Tevin Coleman, a second-string player now coveted after an injury sidelined starter Devonta Freeman. "If you're looking for a replacement running back, you're going to be bidding for Tevin Coleman," said Adam Hoffer, a University of Wisconsin at La Crosse economics professor who co-wrote a paper about fantasy-football economics. "But you know the person who owns Devonta Freeman is going to bid high," too. – ***Wall Street Journal***

Susquehanna County is the first in Pennsylvania to buy a voting system under new security standards by Governor Tom Wolf's administration. The new optical scan system will be in use for the November 6 general election. Wolf earlier this year ordered counties to

replace their electronic voting systems with machines that leave a paper trail as a safeguard against hacking.

Counties have warned that the price tag is a major problem. But the Wolf administration says many other counties appear likely to implement new systems in 2019, while some may wait until the 2020 primary. Wolf's order followed last year's disclosure by the federal government that election systems in at least 21 states, including Pennsylvania, were targeted by hackers before the 2016 presidential election. – **Associated Press**

Under President Obama, Democrats lost **more than 900 seats** in state legislatures across the country. Forward Majority, a super PAC, is **trying to win them back** before congressional districts are redrawn in 2021. Philip Shulman, a spokesman for Forward Majority, shared details with Clout about the group's plans for Pennsylvania. He said the organization is "looking at over 20 races" here and could spend "somewhere well into the six figures, if not more."

He specifically mentioned a few state Republicans who may be in the super PAC's bull's eye: Martina White, Thomas Murt, Rosemary Brown, and Duane Milne. As opposed to focusing on the Philadelphia suburbs alone, where Democrats hope to make gains, Shulman said their targets are "all over the place." "There's a lot of flippable seats," Shulman said of Pennsylvania's legislature. "There need to be checks and balances. That's what's driving a lot of enthusiasm." – **Philadelphia Daily News**

