ALTICE PLANS ALL-IN-ONE SET-TOP-BOX

EYING OTT STARTUPS, FOCUSING ON FIBER

It was certainly a first to have a cable company CEO address the NAB Show, but Altice USA’s Dexter Goel (pictured) wondered why his fellow cable execs have stayed away from rubbing shoulders with the broadcasters whose stations play such an important role in the video offerings of MVPDs. He called it a “great conference” and industry bellwether.

“Obviously the trends on price increases and our ability to pass any of those on to our customers are going in the wrong direction, but we are both focused on providing the same thing—which is a great customer experience and great product to our end users,” Goel said. But he insisted that Altice has a healthy relationship with the program providers and understand each other’s views.

As a new competitor in the U.S. MVPD market, but well established on the international front, Altice is hoping to bring some lessons learned elsewhere to this market. The company has already deployed Le Box (The Box) in France and plans to bring the new version of the set-top-box to the U.S. later this year—with a new name, Goel notes. It’s a combination of a traditional set-top-box with a new user interface, DVR, modem and router all in one. The WiFi portion is being tested at 1GB capability. “It will be something that drives less clutter into the home, a more efficient usage of power, a much better user experience,” he explained.

Goel says Altice remains committed to going 100% fiber in the U.S., without setting a deadline for that to take place. And while he’s well aware of the startup virtual MVPD competitors racing into the marketplace, Goel sees reason to keep investing in upgrading the network Altice now owns in the U.S. “Just today we remain in an environment where virtual MVPDs don’t necessarily deliver a radical product out there at a compelling price. I am certain that will evolve,” the Altice USA CEO said.

Goel also has no problem with putting OTT program services within Altice’s set-top-boxes as a convenience to the cable company’s subscribers. “Absolutely, the people can get them anyways. What’s the point of focusing too much on the fact that putting them within, in an integrated way, into your user experience, or not, is not necessarily the issue. The issue is that the customer wants to get the best products at the best price through the best technology and have the best user experience—and we want to provide that,” he said.

The cable visitor had plenty of folks to meet at the Vegas confab. The NAB reported a registered attendance of 103,443 for the 2017 NAB Show. The exhibition featured 1,806 companies.

ADVERTISER NEWS

The revival of Chipotle Mexican Grill has started—up against horrible numbers from last year after its food safety scare, it posted a better-than-expected 17.8% same-store sales increase for the first quarter. The chain is now launching its first-ever national TV campaign and also testing desserts in some units. One potential problem though: there are indications of a possible data breach……On the downside in the restaurant business, Fiesta Restaurant Group will close 30 more Pollo Tropical locations in Georgia, Tennessee and Texas, about 15% of remaining units. Preliminary quarterly same-store sales look to be down 6.7%……Brinker International quarterly profit fell by 14.0% as same-store sales at company-owned Chili’s were down 2.3% and comps at Maggianos fell 1.6%……Bloomberg reports Sportsman’s Warehouse is interested in possibly acquiring Gander Mountain in a deal that would keep about 80% of Gander’s stores open. Utah-based Sportsman’s has about 80 stores mostly in the West while Gander has about 160 concentrated in the East……The appliance business looks healthy: Whirlpool reported Q1 North America sales up 7% and sees full year industry unit shipments up 4-6% in the U.S……Coca-Cola revenue dropped 11% in the first quarter, impacted by refranchising of some bottling territories to other owners. Coke says it gained share in sparkling soft drinks, juice, dairy and plant-based beverages and tea and coffee. By brands there was some growth in Fanta, Sprite and Coca-Cola Zero, offset primarily by a mid-single digit decline in Diet Coke……Capital One profit fell by 20% partially due to increased losses in its credit card business and taking a bigger provision for future losses. With a big presence in the subprime credit card market, the CEO commented “We have been tightening our underwriting. We still see growth opportunities in our domestic card business, but our growth window is gradually getting smaller”……Supervalu’s wholesale business grew in its latest quarter, but its retail business (mostly Cub Foods and Hornbacher’s) struggled with a 5.8% drop in identical store sales. The COO noted the 22 Food Lion stores it acquired from Delhaize and converted to the Shop ‘n Save banner have been “a little below expectations”……As its major competitor Verizon did, AT&T lost wireless subscribers in Q1, down 348,000 mainstream customers, as The Wall Street Journal notes AT&T has focused on retaining its most profitable customers and avoiding promotional offers to gain share. It also reported a loss of 233,000 TV subs including DirecTV with U-verse. No subscriber figures were released for the newer DirecTV Now effort, although the WSJ reports there are plans to advertise it more heavily later this year.
NETWORK NEWS

Powerless, the superhero comedy on NBC, has been pulled from the schedule by the network. The series starring Vanessa Hudgens, Danny Pudi and Alan Tudyk still had three episodes remaining. Though the move by NBC is not an official cancellation, it’s clearly a bad sign for the D.C. Universe series. Powerless has only averaged 2.9 million total viewers since it launched as a mid-season replacement in February. Ross Butler, who plays iconic Archie Comics bully Reggie, will not return for the second season of Riverdale. The producers of the CW series were happy with Butler’s performance, but the actor was too busy with other projects. Butler is also starring in the Netflix drama 13 Reasons Why. “We love what Ross did with the role of Reggie, but because of his commitments to other projects, we couldn’t use him nearly as much as we would have liked,” series creator Roberto Aquirre-Sacasa said in a statement to TVLine. Grammy-winning country music star Darius Rucker is scheduled to appear incognito in an upcoming episode of Undercover Boss on CBS. Rucker will show off his undercover skills in a special celebrity edition of the show as he travels to Austin, Texas on a mission to discover some underground musical talent. The celebrity edition of Undercover Boss: Darius Rucker will air on CBS Friday, May 12th at 8 PM (ET). The eighth season of Undercover Boss premieres this Friday with Taco Bueno CEO Michael Roper going undercover at his restaurants…….The networks have their schedule for the upcoming Upfronts coming next month in New York. On Monday, May 15th at 11 AM (ET) NBC makes their presentation at Radio City Music Hall. FOX follows on the same day at 4 PM (ET) from the Beacon Theater. ABC’s presentation is on Tuesday, May 16th at 4 PM at Lincoln Center’s David Geffen Hall, while CBS presents on Wednesday, May 17th at 4 PM (ET) in Carnegie Hall. The CW wraps up the presentations on Thursday, May 18th at 11 AM (ET) at New York City Center…….Bob Greenblatt, NBC’s entertainment chairman, is giving part credit to the digital virality of Saturday Night Live for the long running show’s current upswing. Greenblatt, speaking this week at the NAB Show in Las Vegas, said, “SNL is unique this year with the election – we know what happened there.” He went on to say, “This show is as relevant as it’s ever been, talking about the political world we live in.” Greenblatt appeared at NAB in the keynote conversation with Chris Hardwick, host of NBC’s The Wall and the upcoming The Awesome Show.

ECONOMIC NEWS

The Conference Board’s Consumer Confidence Index declined a little on this month’s study, but remains at what is seen as a strong level. The April numbers came in at 120.3, down from March’s 124.9 with the Present Situation aspect still very high (140.6) but the Expectations aspect down from 112.3 to 106.7…….Commerce Department figures showed new home sales were at the best pace in eight months at a seasonally-adjusted 621,000 level. That was 5.8% better than the February pace had been and 15.6% higher than a year ago.

AVAILS

Gray Television seeks a dynamic General Sales Manager to join our award-winning team in Omaha, NE. The GSM is responsible for the revenue goals of the television station including Local, Regional, Digital and Internet revenue. The GSM supervises the LSM, sales staff and sales assistants in order to meet or exceed the department quota. The ideal candidate has strong communication and presentation skills, management experience in broadcast sales, and a bachelor’s degree in business administration with an emphasis in marketing, advertising or speech.

CLICK HERE to apply. EOE.

WKMG-TV/News 6 Getting Results is seeking a Research Director to join the Graham Media Group owned CBS Affiliate in Orlando, FL. The Research/Marketing Director will work with WKMG departments and play a key leadership role in utilizing research to grow and develop ideas for sales, news, marketing and promotions. Join a team in a Top 20 Market that has consistent population growth, vibrant communities and a growing economy! CLICK HERE for more info or to apply now. Equal Opportunity Employer.

Nexstar Media Group / WRBL-TV 3 in Columbus, GA, WRBL.com and Tactive Powered by Lin Digital are in search of a dynamic Digital Media Manager to take our digital revenue initiatives to the next level. The Digital Media Manager is responsible for directing digital sales efforts for all core digital and digital marketing services. Strong communication skills, digital sales experience, a strong desire to succeed and the ability to lead are a must. All Candidates must apply Online @ www.Nexstar.tv/careers. EOE M/F/D/V

TUESDAY NIELSEN RATINGS - LIVE + SAME DAY

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**APRIL AUTO SALES PROJECTIONS**

The J.D. Power/LMC Automotive projection of where final April automotive sales results will end up says sales will be almost the same as last year, but incentives paid by the factories to dealers and buyers will “rise considerably.” Power and LMC estimate dealers will sell 1.169 million units, down from 1.199 million last year, and total industry sales (including fleet sales) will be 1.476 million, less than a 2% decline. The average new-vehicle transaction price will be $31,380, a record for April, but the average incentive will be $3,499, also a record.

Edmunds forecasts total industry sales of 1.431 million, down 4% from last year with every major manufacturer seeing a decline, from a low of -0.1% at Nissan (which has been aggressively expanding rental car sales) to the highest decline at Honda, down 6.7%. GM is seen as down 3.7%, Ford off by 5.8%, Toyota down 4.8% and Fiat Chrysler down 4.5%.

Kelley Blue Book (KBB) is predicting a 3% decline to 1.45 million total units and a SAAR of 17.1 million. KBB also sees elevated incentive spending by manufacturers and high inventory levels, signaling overproduction following last year’s sales peak. “After a weaker-than-expected March, it’s becoming more likely that 2017 will be the first down year for the industry since 2009,” said KBB analyst Tim Fleming. KBB is now forecasting 2017 full year sales in a range of 16.8 million to 17.3 million, which would be a decline of 1-4% from 2016.

**TWITTER WANTS TO BE AN OTT CHANNEL**

In an interview with BuzzFeed, Twitter COO Anthony Noto made it clear that last season’s streaming of NFL games was just the beginning—Twitter’s goal is to have live programming streaming 24/7. Despite the loss of the NFL package, after being outbid by Amazon, Noto said Twitter has much more programming in the pipeline. “We will definitely have 24/7 [video] content on Twitter,” Noto said. He did not, however, indicate a timeline to achieve that streaming goal.

Twitter’s NewFront event is set for next week and it will introduce a handful of new shows to ad buyers. The COO declined to spill the beans on what’s coming. But he did indicate that live video is already paying off for Twitter—helping it draw spending by advertisers for :15 and :30 unskippable video ads.

**BUSINESS BYTES**

In what might been seen as a self-serving survey, the Consumer Technology Association says the propensity for people to spend on consumer electronics products is rising. The group says the latest monthly index to measure CE desire is up 1.6 points over March and 2.4 points over April, 2016.

Tesla’s Model S and Model X have been downgraded by Consumer Reports because they are not equipped with an automatic emergency braking safety feature that CR says should be standard. Tesla says it is working on a software upgrade.

**AVAILS**

NBC Connecticut is searching for a Vice President of Sales. This position oversees entire sales and marketing department employees, and provides strategic input to setting and maintaining sales targets and new business development opportunities for the sales managers and their teams. Minimum 7 years’ prior experience in a TV, broadcast, digital sales or marketing managerial role and a bachelor’s degree required. Master’s degree in Business Administration, Marketing or related field and/or equivalent experience preferred. CLICK HERE for more information or to apply now. EOE.

WIVB News 4 (CBS) and CW 23 in Buffalo, NY is looking for a Director of Sales to lead its Broadcast and Digital sales operations. We are seeking a “game changer” and proven leader who can communicate a vision, while developing a management and sales team to generate extraordinary growth. Our DOS has direct responsibility for national sales efforts. Bachelor’s degree and a minimum five years’ experience in television sales management required. CLICK HERE for additional info or to apply now. EOE/M/V/F/D

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**MEN ARE PUSHING THE GROCERY CART**

How important are men in grocery shopping? Very important. The latest Grocery Shopper Impact MegaStudy from VideoMining finds men now account for 49% of grocery shopping, and their spending is just $2.73 per shopping trip less than the average female shopping trip. Other interesting data from the study is that 68% of shopping trips are relatively small (10 items or fewer) and that about 20% of shoppers just go through perimeter departments, avoiding “center store” items entirely.