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This Week's Stories

Yahoo Says Information On At Least 500 Million User Accounts Was Stolen

September 22, 2016

Internet company says it believes the 2014 hack was done by a state-sponsored actor; potentially the biggest data breach on record.

Yahoo Inc. is blaming "state-sponsored" hackers for what may be the largest-ever theft of personal user data.

The internet company, which has agreed to sell its core business to Verizon Communications Inc., said Thursday that hackers penetrated its network in late 2014 and stole personal data on more than 500 million users. The stolen data included names, email addresses, dates of birth, telephone numbers and encrypted passwords, Yahoo said.

Yahoo said it believes that the hackers are no longer in its corporate network. The company said it didn't believe that unprotected passwords, payment-card data or bank-account information had been affected.

Computer users have grown inured to notices that a tech company, retailer or other company with which they have done business had been hacked. But the Yahoo disclosure is significant because the company said it was the work of another nation, and because it raises questions about the fate of the \$4.8 billion Verizon deal, which was announced on July 25.

In July, Yahoo began investigating claims by hackers who were offering to sell what they said were 280 million Yahoo usernames and passwords. Yahoo said it concluded the information for sale wasn't legitimate, but the company decided to broaden its probe, eventually determining that it had been breached by "a state-sponsored actor."

In a proxy filing related to the Verizon deal on Sept. 9, Yahoo said it wasn't aware of any "security breaches" or "loss, theft, unauthorized access or acquisition" of user data. Yahoo declined to comment on the filing.

Yahoo didn't say how the hackers broke into its network or which country sponsored the attacks.

The intrusion, in late 2014, came during a period when many computer attacks, including on the federal Office of Personnel Management and health insurer Anthem Inc. were believed to be the work of China. More recent hacks, however, including of the Democratic National Committee earlier this year, have been blamed on Russia. Both countries have denied involvement in the hacks.

It isn't uncommon for data breaches to go unreported for years. In May, Myspace notified users of a 2013 breach; the same month, LinkedIn Corp. also notified users that a 2012 incident, thought to have affected just 6.5 million accounts, had actually compromised more than 100 million.

"The FBI is aware of the intrusion and investigating the matter," the Federal Bureau of Investigation said. "We take these types of breaches very seriously and will determine how this occurred and who is responsible."

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“The internet company...said Thursday that hackers penetrated its network in late 2014 and stole personal data on more than 500 million users. The stolen data included names, email addresses, dates of birth, telephone numbers and encrypted passwords, Yahoo said.”

Verizon said it was notified of the breach earlier this week. “We understand that Yahoo is conducting an active investigation of this matter, but we otherwise have limited information and understanding of the impact,” Verizon said in a statement. “We will evaluate as the investigation continues.”

B. Riley & Co. analyst Sameet Sinha said the breach is unlikely to affect terms of the Verizon deal.

“Data breaches have become part of doing business now,” he said, adding that Microsoft Corp. agreed to buy LinkedIn for \$26.2 billion in June, one month after LinkedIn notified users of the broader scope of its 2012 breach.

But Stephen S. Wu, a technology lawyer at the Silicon Valley Law Group, said the language assuring that no security breaches had occurred might give Verizon leverage to renegotiate the deal, or even to walk away.

The Yahoo breach appears to be the largest ever disclosed, based on the number of users affected, said Paul Stephens, director of policy and advocacy with Privacy Rights Clearing House, a not-for-profit group that compiles information on data breaches. Credit-card processor Heartland Payment Systems Inc. said roughly 130 million credit- and debit-card numbers had been stolen in a 2009 hack.

The Yahoo breach, and the timing of the disclosure, quickly reverberated in Washington. Sen. Mark Warner, D-Va., said in a statement, “I am perhaps most troubled by news that this breach occurred in 2014, and yet the public is only learning details of it today.”

Yahoo’s breach is the latest in a series of compromises that have put billions of consumer usernames and email addresses at risk. One website, called Leaked Source, sells a searchable list of more than two billion credentials.

While many other companies have disclosed large-scale breaches recently, the fact that Yahoo is linking its hack to state-sponsored hackers is noteworthy. U.S. intelligence officials have said China-based attacks have declined in recent months, following a 2015 agreement between the U.S. and China.

Over the past year, Russia has gradually taken China’s place as the primary suspect of attacks on U.S. systems. Two hacking groups—linked by security researchers and U.S. government officials to Russia—have published email messages belonging to public figures, including private Gmail messages belonging to former Secretary of State Colin Powell.

The Yahoo data could be used to obtain the personal correspondence of public figures. “For a government, the real value would be to look for people with real value,” said Matthew Green, a computer science professor at Johns Hopkins University. “Maybe you don’t get classified information, but some of those Colin Powell emails were very interesting.”

Yahoo said the stolen passwords were encrypted, but computer-security experts said a determined attacker could unscramble passwords—especially simple passwords—using commonly available “cracking” software. Once cracked, hackers could break into Yahoo accounts and—if the password happened to be reused on another web service—possibly other websites too.

Security experts recommend that consumers add a “second factor” of authentication to their online accounts. Typically this means receiving a short code via text message every time the user logs in from an unknown computer.

Yahoo says that its users should change their passwords and security questions, and avoid using the same password on multiple accounts.

wsj.com

You Can Now Exchange Your Recalled Samsung Galaxy Note 7

September 21, 2016

The new devices come after battery cell issues were discovered in the Note 7 earlier this month

Samsung has shipped more than 500,000 replacement units of the Galaxy Note 7 to carrier and retail stores in the U.S., the company recently announced. The new phones are available for exchange at retail stores as of Wednesday, nearly a week after the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission issued a voluntary recall of devices sold before Sept. 15.

The company is also launching a software update for the Note 7 that will help owners distinguish whether or not their Note 7 has been impacted by the recall. The software will display a green battery icon in the phone's status bar to indicate that the phone is unaffected.

Samsung stopped selling the Note 7 earlier this month due to a battery cell issue after reports of devices catching fire. On Sept. 9, the CPSC warned users to power down their devices and to stop using them. Still, usage among those who own the phone had remained the same since the day of the recall as of Sept. 13, according to data from Aptelligent. Samsung is also releasing a software update to recalled devices that causes a safety notice to appear each time the phone is powered on or charged.

Samsung's market value began to plummet after the incident, as shares fell to their lowest level in nearly two months last week.

[time.com](#)

Products & Services

Facebook Messenger Gets Polls And Now Encourages Peer-To-Peer Payments

September 22, 2016

"Facebook explains that 'it's often hard to get groups of people to make decisions and plans, from deciding what movie to go watch, what restaurants to eat at, which day to meet up for coffee, where to go on the next family vacation, and much more.'"

Facebook is rolling out two new features for its popular Messaging app, giving users in-chat polling and also testing out an intelligent way to detect when you want to send money. The latest changes will be available on both iOS and Android starting this week, but they're limited to the U.S., for now.

One of the benefits of using a messaging app is the convenience of group conversations. But extended group chats can get overly complex. This is where polling comes into play: Facebook explains that "it's often hard to get groups of people to make decisions and plans, from deciding what movie to go watch, what restaurants to eat at, which day to meet up for coffee, where to go on the next family vacation, and much more."

This feature is only usable in group conversations, meaning the chat must contain more than two people. Anyone in the group can tap on the Polls icon that appears in the composer, or tap the More icon and select Poll. From there, enter the question and a series of answer choices. Facebook said that polls don't have a time limit on them, so as long as you can find a poll, you can respond to it.

The company declined to disclose how many group conversations take place in Facebook Messenger, but it shared that this conversation type is something "people very much participate in."

In-app polling comes less than a year after Twitter brought the survey tool to its platform. However, this isn't the first time that polling been possible on a Facebook property — the social network had a polling feature at an earlier point.

Only those in the U.S. will have the ability to create a poll. Right now, the feature is limited to a small percentage of users in the country. If you're outside the U.S., you'll still be able to see the poll, but you'll be prevented from participating, for now.

The second new feature involves Facebook's Chat Assist feature, which has previously been used in Messenger's integration with Uber and KLM. This machine learning technology analyzes the meaning and intent of words used in conversations. Now, the social networking company is experimenting to see whether it'll help increase the amount of money exchanged within Messenger.

If you're having a conversation and use the phrase "IOU," for example, Facebook claims chat assist may display a link below the message that, when tapped, facilitates payments between you and whomever you're chatting with. The company added peer-to-peer payments in March, and now the app has become a bit more intelligent in sensing the right time to enable these transactions. The idea is that users can quickly complete payment without leaving the app.

This system isn't limited to one phrase, you can use something like "I'll reimburse you \$66" or "I need to send you 30 for the tickets" to activate this payment feature.

Although chat assist reviews conversations — something that has previously resulted in controversy for Facebook — it's done by a computer, not by human beings. The company declined to disclose how many people make payments through Messenger, but this update can be construed as an effort to increase adoption. Facebook doesn't charge a transaction fee — for now — and in-app payments are another demonstration of how integrated the app has become in our daily lives.

Like the polling feature, Facebook's payment test is only available to those in the U.S.

Users need to update to the latest version of Facebook Messenger in order to take advantage of these two features.

venturebeat.com

Allo Brings Google's 'Assistant' To Your Phone Today

September 21, 2016

If you're going to unveil a new messaging app, it had better do something unique. At this point, finding a place amongst entrenched options like Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp and iMessage is not an easy task. Google didn't quite pull it off with Hangouts when it launched in 2013. Sure, it's installed on basically every Android phone out there and anyone with a Gmail account has probably tried it, but Google's messaging strategy never quite came together in a compelling or clear way.

So Google is rebooting yet again with Allo, a mobile-only messaging app that leverages the company's biggest strengths in an effort to stand out from the pack. That strength is the vast amount of knowledge Google has about you and the world around you. It shows up in the app via the Google Assistant, a conversational chatbot that provides you and your friends with contextual info based on your chat history. The bot will show up across multiple Google products, including Google Home, but this is our first look at it in action.

It's an outgrowth of what Google's been doing for a long time with the Knowledge Graph and the info it serves you in things like Google Now, and that really is something no other app can do. I've been playing with Allo for about a week to see just how much the app can do -- and where it still falls flat.

Getting set up is a simple affair: Once the app is installed, you create a profile linked to your phone number and Google account. From there, you'll be able to see who in your phone's contact list is using Allo to initiate a chat; you can also invite friends who don't have the app to give it a shot. Then

"Probably the best way to sum up the Assistant is that it lets you bring info from around the internet right into your conversations without having to jump back and forth between apps."

you can start a one-on-one chat, a group chat, an encrypted "incognito chat" or talk directly to the Google Assistant.

The Assistant is what really sets Allo apart from other chat apps, and it can provide you with a host of info depending on whether you're in a private chat with it or bringing it into a conversation with other human beings. Probably the best way to sum up the Assistant is that it lets you bring info from around the internet right into your conversations without having to jump back and forth between apps.

If you're planning dinner, for example, you can ask it to show you nearby Indian restaurants, and then tap on a specific result to get more details. Results from the Google Assistant typically have "chips" below them to prompt you to continue getting more info; you can pull up a map, call the location, see pictures inside and more with one tap. And because it understands natural language, you can follow up your query about Indian restaurants by saying "What about Chinese?" and it'll know you're interested in food, not the language.

This can be genuinely useful -- it's easy to share things like flight status, local weather and nearby points of interest with groups of people just by asking Google. And there's lots of silly fun to be had as well. Google built in some games like "emoji movies," where you have to guess the name of a film based on a series of emojis. You can also have it pull up pictures and GIFs from Google images, so it's pretty easy to drop cute cat pictures to your group on the fly.

The downside to the Google Assistant is that it doesn't quite live up to the promise of letting you do everything in the app, through the bot. Many times, tapping on various items will bounce you out to your browser, and while I can look up a bunch of restaurants with my friends, I can't actually book one through OpenTable right in the app, for example. The Assistant doesn't yet work with third-party services, so I can't say "get us a table for four at 8PM." That'll come down the line, though.

When it can't complete a task itself, you get bounced out to the web. Sometimes that makes sense -- seeing a restaurant's full menu is better in a browser than in a chat app, and getting directions to a location is a lot better in the proper Google Maps app. But the experience occasionally felt a bit more disjointed than I'd like. Google says the Assistant is considered only a "preview" right now, so it should become smarter and better integrated in time.

Chatting directly with the Google Assistant (rather than interacting with it in a chat with other humans) opens up more functionality. For the sake of privacy, it can do certain things only in private chat -- you can ask it to get you directions to work, show you emails from yesterday, pull up your calendar agenda and more things based on your personal Google account. You can even have it pull images from Google Photos using natural language like "show me my pictures of dogs."

The app also lets you set reminders and alarms as well as sign up for recurring "subscriptions." You can search for a particular news item (I tried "Red Sox news") and it'll pop up every day at the time you specify. This is all well and good, but I don't think a chatbot is the best place for a lot of these interactions. In fact, in a lot of cases, it's easier to just say "OK Google" and ask your Android phone for this sort of help or info. Siri also does a lot of this on the iPhone at this point, as does the Google iOS app. Don't get me wrong, the Google Assistant can be quite knowledgeable and useful, but in a lot of ways it's just replicating things you can already do in Google search.

Beyond the Assistant, Allo has the messaging basics covered, but there are few surprises here. You can tap and hold the "send" button and then scroll up and down to increase or decrease the size of text -- Google calls this "yelling" or "whispering." It's quite similar to the "loud" and "gentle" settings Apple added to iMessage in iOS 10, if you've checked that out. Google has also added in the "smart reply" feature that originated in Inbox. It'll analyze the content of your chats or photos and offer suggestions. I found it to be pretty hit-or-miss; it's handy to have it offer up a quick yes or no reply, but deeper replies don't usually work out terribly well.

Naturally, Allo also has stickers; there are 29 different sets you can download, for starters, some of which are animated. They're nice, and Google notes the name of the artist who created each set, but they're not wildly different from what's out there already. And as of yet, there isn't a way to add more third-party options.

You can share your location or photos in Allo, but I ran into one surprising omission during my testing: On Android, you can't see content from Google Photos and add them to a chat -- you can access only images you've shot directly on your phone or downloaded to storage. There are work-arounds -- you can go to Google Photos directly and share a photo to Allo from there -- but it still seems like a strange omission. On Android, you can add text to photos and draw on top of them (a la Snapchat), a feature that'll be coming to iOS down the line.

Allo also offers end-to-end encryption in "incognito" chats. The Google Assistant isn't allowed here, and the participants in the chat can decide how long they want the messages to stick around for. You can set the chat expiration time as long as a week or as short as five seconds (you can also make it so messages don't disappear). Most users probably won't bother with this feature, but apps like Telegram made highly secure chat a feature of note, so it makes sense to see it pop up here.

Overall, there's not a lot to make Allo stand out from the competition beyond the Google Assistant. And unfortunately, the Assistant feels a bit like it's under construction, still. The breadth of information that Google has access to, both about a user as well as the world around him, is stunning and it's great to tap into. But Google has already given us a plethora of ways to do that; Allo is just another. The difference is that Allo makes it easy to bring that data into a conversation with other humans.

That's the killer feature. But it's not a simple one to explain, and it's not something that becomes immediately useful. Some co-workers and I goofed around with Allo for several days, but the Assistant never elevated itself to a must-have feature. It was fun to show off and experiment with, but it didn't feel like enough to keep any of us conversing in the app over the many other options we already have available to us. I'd like to keep giving it a shot, because it feels like it could be useful under the right circumstances. The trick is getting your friends to use it long enough for those situations to arise.

engadget.com

Emerging Technology

iHeartRadio Is Finally Getting Into On-Demand Streaming

September 23, 2016

"The other new innovation on its way is called iHeartRadio All Access, and it appears to be the company's version of all-you-can-stream, choose-what-you-will on-demand options like Spotify and Apple Music, which are dominating the marketplace in many regards."

After much speculation in the media, iHeartRadio is finally willing to admit that it is stepping into the highly competitive world of on-demand streaming with not one but two new products.

The internet and terrestrial radiogiant is gearing up to launch two new on-demand streaming tiers: Plus and All Access. From what the company is willing to share at this time, the pair of platforms will be noticeably different from one another, though details about what exactly both of them will look like, as well as the features available or missing from one or both aren't entirely clear just yet. While iHeart was willing to divulge the names of the programs and that they are expected in January 2017, not much else is being shared publicly.

iHeartRadio Plus sounds, for better or worse, quite like a brand new offering announced just last week from internet radio rival Pandora. Plus, which is set to go by the exact same name that Pandora is using as well, will add some on-demand functionality on top of the traditional experience that the company has already mastered.

The other new innovation on its way is called iHeartRadio All Access, and it appears to be the company's version of all-you-can-stream, choose-what-you-will on-demand options like Spotify and Apple Music, which are dominating the marketplace in many regards. While it might be venturing into previously unknown territory, that doesn't mean iHeart is ditching radio. Instead, even All Access will somehow be directly tied into the radio experience that already exists, though how exactly remains to be seen.

During a meeting to discuss these upcoming new offerings, executives from the company were unwilling to disclose some important information about the new products, such as price, an exact launch date, or any limitations that might come with signing up. Those kinks are likely still being worked out, which would explain the 2017 starting time. iHeart CEO Bob Pittman explained that the company had been considering an on-demand tier since the digital platform launched a few years ago, but at the time, it was felt that it was "way too early" for most people.

Pittman emphasized and reemphasized that these new products are going to change the music business because up until now, no company has been able to "bridge the gap," a phrase he used more than once, between the traditional radio listening experience and digital, on-demand functionality. Millions of Americans still turn on the radio every single day, and many of them end up on an iHeartRadio station eventually, as the company owns over 850 radio stations across the country. Many of those people are still just warming up to the idea of streaming, but they might not be ready to jump in head first and become Spotify aficionados. There aren't many offerings at the moment for people who consume most of their music via radio stations to begin experimenting with the capabilities of streaming, which is where iHeart seems to want to make its mark.

Of all the companies in the radio business, iHeart seems like it is in the best position to attempt a new venture like this. The company claims to have just passed 90 million registered users a little over a month ago, though how many of those are active accounts isn't clear. iHeart is different from competitors like Pandora (despite the similarities of their new products) in that it is a company working on connecting a wide range of terrestrial radio stations with an online experience, both of which seem to attract different audiences and are vastly different listening experiences.

forbes.com

AT&T Said To Plan Web Streaming As Primary TV Platform By 2020

September 22, 2016

"Initially, DirecTV Now will be aimed at budget-minded consumers, and will stream free for AT&T wireless subscribers."

AT&T Inc.'s online streaming TV service, DirecTV Now, will become the company's primary video platform in three to five years, according to people familiar with the plans.

The largest U.S. pay-TV provider has been working for more than a year to build a video-delivery system that can carry multiple live feeds to broadband-connected homes, said the people. Such a platform would eliminate the need for a cable hookup or satellite dish in five years or less, the people said.

DirecTV Now, set to be introduced by the end of this year, will try to appeal to a national audience of so-called cord-nevers -- some 20 million households that have no cable or satellite service -- with 100-plus channels and a choice of streaming to one or two devices simultaneously.

"This is exclusively an over-the-top product," Chief Executive Officer Randall Stephenson said at the Goldman Sachs Communacopia conference in New York Wednesday. "This is no set-top box; this is no truck roll; this is a customer pulling down an app, getting a very robust platform."

AT&T has been looking for ways to respond to online-only TV competitors like Netflix Inc. and Amazon.com Inc., which have been luring its customers away with lower-priced alternatives. AT&T acquired satellite-TV operator DirecTV for \$48.5 billion last year, and so far in 2016 it's lost more than 100,000 TV customers.

Initially, DirecTV Now will be aimed at budget-minded consumers, and will stream free for AT&T wireless subscribers. The price of the service has yet to be finalized. If AT&T can get customers to sign up online on their own, it will reduce customer service costs and allow the company to offer the service at a price competitive with Sony Corp., said the people, who asked not to be identified discussing non-public information. Sony's PlayStation Vue starts at \$39.99 for 60 channels and runs as high as \$54.99 for more than 100 channels.

DirecTV Now will also compete directly with other web-streaming services like Dish Network Corp.'s Sling TV, which starts at \$20 for the 28-channel base price and runs as high as \$40 for a 48-channel multi-screen package.

The company said earlier this week that it had reached programming agreements with 90 percent of its content partners. That process has included conventional TV and online-streaming rights deals like one reached Thursday with Scripps Networks Interactive, which includes the Travel Channel, Food Network and the Cooking Channel, according to a statement.

While DirecTV Now could siphon subscribers away from the satellite-TV service, the two-stream limit may not appeal to bigger-spending viewers with multiple TVs, tablets and phones. Depending on DirecTV Now's success, AT&T could expand the service to include as many as 10 streams offering the kind of full-package that could replace conventional pay-TV. Eric Ryan, an AT&T spokesman, declined to comment.

bloomberg.com

Mergers and Acquisitions

Apple Keeps Buying Companies In This Space

September 23, 2016

Tuplejump is the second machine learning company Apple has bought in recent months. Apple is really pushing into this machine learning thing. A month after it came out that the company had bought Turi, it is now reported to have bought another company in the space, called Tuplejump.

Tuplejump was (its website has vanished) an Indian-U.S. company with technology for managing large amounts of data, or "big data" as the jargon has it.

TechCrunch, which reported the acquisition, said Apple was likely interested in an open-source Tuplejump project called FiloDB, which uses machine learning techniques to analyze fast-streaming data.

Machine learning involves teaching computers how to learn from the data they are presented, so they can make predictions based on those learnings.

For Apple, it's important for making the firm's Siri virtual assistant smarter and better at voice recognition. Machine learning could also improve how the App Store recommends apps.

Other companies such as Google use such technology for everything from detecting spam to image recognition to developing self-driving cars. Ultimately, machine learning is a building block of so-

called artificial intelligence. Last year, Apple bought a company in the field called Perceptio, with a view to improving its phone AI.

fortune.com

These Major Tech Companies Are Interested In Acquiring Twitter

September 23, 2016

Some of the technology industry's most prominent companies are interested in acquiring Twitter this year, according to a new report.

Internet giant Google and customer relationship management company Salesforce are among the tech companies expressing interest in bidding for Twitter, CNBC is reporting, citing sources. While no deal is imminent, talks between the companies are reportedly intensifying, and a bid and subsequent agreement could be signed by the end of 2016.

Twitter's shares are soaring on the news, up 20.5% in early trading on Friday. Both Google and Salesforce shares are down 0.21% and 3.7%, respectively, suggesting their investors aren't as excited about a possible Twitter buyout.

Talk of a potential Twitter buyout has intensified in recent quarters as the company's turnaround efforts have largely fallen short. Twitter has yet to turn a profit despite growing revenue, and investors are concerned that its slowing user growth could be a liability as Internet users increasingly turn to photo-sharing app Instagram or social service Snapchat to communicate with friends. Celebrities, which have long been central to Twitter's appeal, are also increasingly using Instagram and Snapchat, creating even more concern.

Meanwhile, Twitter has pinned its future on Jack Dorsey, the company's co-founder who took the reins last year and has since served as chief executive for both Twitter and Square. In March, several current and former executives spoke to Fortune about Dorsey's turnaround plans. While Dorsey himself wasn't made available for the interview, the company argued that if anyone could fix Twitter, it would be Dorsey. He's hoping to address Twitter's major problems by enhancing its service, curbing abuse, making video a more important component in its offering, and increase its reach through apps, among other plans.

Recently, Twitter made an important change to its service by loosening its restrictions on the 140-character limit that has defined its social network for the last decade. Now, photos, videos, animated GIFs, and polls attached to a tweet will not count towards the 140-character limit.

Still, despite those changes and several others over the last year, Dorsey has done little to move the needle. In Twitter's last-reported quarter ended June 30, the company's revenue grew by \$100 million to \$602 million. However, it posted a \$107 million loss. In the last year, even with Friday's surge, Twitter's shares are down 15.6% to \$22.65. The periodic jumps in recent months have come when Twitter has acknowledged it would be willing to sell for the right price.

fortune.com

Industry Reports

Comcast Confirms Plans To Launch Mobile Phone Service In 2017

September 20, 2016

“CEO Brian Roberts revealed that the Comcast “network” will launch by mid-2017 and put a large focus on Wi-Fi hotspots — similar to Google’s Project Fi.”

It will run on Verizon airwaves and also lean on Wi-Fi.

Comcast just solidified long-rumored plans to launch its own MVNO cellular service. Speaking at an investor conference moments ago, CEO Brian Roberts revealed that the Comcast “network” will launch by mid-2017 and put a large focus on Wi-Fi hotspots — similar to Google’s Project Fi. When away from Wi-Fi connections, Comcast’s service will run on the Verizon Wireless network.

Roberts didn’t announce pricing or more detailed rollout plans, only saying that Comcast will aim the mobile solution at its existing base of cable customers. That plan would give Comcast its own answer to the one-two punch that AT&T offers through its DirecTV satellite service. In AT&T’s case, customers who subscribe to DirecTV get access to an unlimited AT&T mobile data plan that’s unavailable to other customers.

Comcast says there are over 14 million Xfinity Wi-Fi hotspots nationwide, a massive footprint that the company would lean on as part of the upcoming mobile service. Some of those are public hotspots — coffee shops, parks, etc. — and others are actually powered by the routers in customer homes and an optional “guest mode” that shares those internet connections with people nearby.

Back in July, Comcast promoted executive Greg Butz to lead the freshly created Comcast Mobile division. The company has also signaled interest in the FCC’s 600MHz auction. The Verizon-Comcast partnership runs all the way back to a deal reached in 2012, and Comcast alerted Verizon last October of its plans to sell mobile service that operating on Verizon’s airwaves.

theverge.com

T-Mobile Q3 Results Preview Shows Un-carrier Reeling In Customers From AT&T, Verizon

September 20, 2016

T-Mobile on Tuesday provided a glimpse into its third quarter results that showed sustained momentum for the Un-carrier in pre- and postpaid net additions.

As of the first half of September, T-Mobile said it has raked in a total of 753,000 branded postpaid phone net additions as well as 650,000 prepaid net customer additions. Both figures were improved from T-Mobile’s recorded totals of 646,000 postpaid phone net additions and 476,000 branded prepaid net additions in the second quarter.

T-Mobile said postpaid porting ratios were also up over the previous quarter.

“All three wireless carriers tried to match Un-carrier signature moves this quarter, like getting rid of overages and introducing unlimited data plans, but as usual, they came up short,” CEO John Legere said in a statement. “Our Q3 results so far have surpassed Q2 in postpaid phone and prepaid nets, and we are adding customers from ALL of the other guys at an increasing rate.”

The Un-carrier said the vast majority of its customer additions came from rival carriers, including 250,000 postpaid phone and prepaid net customers from Verizon, 300,000 customers from Sprint

and nearly 400,000 customers from AT&T. T-Mobile said it also continues to see “strong flows” of first time customers coming to market, customers adding new lines to their existing accounts and “to a lesser extent” switching from brands other than the three tier-1 carriers.

With the second half of the month – and that post-iPhone launch with a major promotion and a new unlimited plan on the table – ahead of it, T-Mobile could very well reach or surpass its first quarter 2016 totals of 877,000 postpaid phone net additions and 807,000 prepaid net additions. Legere has already said on Twitter overall porting ratios have surpassed first quarter figures.

According to T-Mobile, much of its success in gaining new customers has come from its ability to simultaneously push for industry change while building up its own network to offer customers a viable alternative.

T-Mobile on Tuesday declared the end of Verizon and AT&T’s coverage advantage, claiming it now reaches 99.7 percent of the consumers Verizon does and offers more spectrum and cell sites per customer than either rival. The Un-carrier said it has:

“I’m calling it. Verizon’s coverage advantage is gone,” T-Mobile CTO Neville Ray said in a statement. “Now, Verizon’s rebranding their older, slower network as ‘LTE Advanced,’ highlighting technology we launched two years ago. Even with their ‘new’ technology T-Mobile’s LTE network is still faster – just ask OpenSignal, Ookla or the FCC.”

T-Mobile said all of the figures offered in Tuesday’s release are subject to change ahead of its end of October third quarter earnings call. However, the company said it was maintaining its current financial guidance and full year outlook.

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