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This Week's Stories

Verizon Seeking \$1B Discount In Yahoo Deal After Hack

October 7, 2016

U.S. wireless carrier Verizon is reportedly seeking a hefty discount from Yahoo after news of a massive data breach and government surveillance of user email accounts recently surfaced.

Several sources told the New York Post on Thursday Verizon is looking to shave \$1 billion from the \$4.83 billion it previously agreed to pay for the Internet giant's core assets, including its email service, content brands and advertising platform. The Post's sources said Yahoo is pushing back against Verizon's efforts, but discussions are ongoing.

Should Verizon secure the hoped-for \$1 billion discount, the sale price of \$3.83 billion would still be higher than at least one of the other base purchase prices offered by the five final contenders in the Yahoo bidding and in line with Verizon's original bid for the company.

According to Yahoo's proxy statement from the deal, the lowest final offer was for \$2.9 billion. Three other middling offers were for \$4.0 billion, \$4.05 billion and \$4.35 billion, while Verizon's final offer was the highest at \$4.825 billion.

The carrier, though, had originally submitted an interim offer of \$3.85 billion before revising that figure upward in its final proposal.

In addition to the \$1 billion discount, Verizon is also looking at setting aside another \$1 billion as a reserve against liabilities associated with the Yahoo hack, the Post's sources said.

The latter move will likely prove prudent given that Yahoo has already been hit with class action lawsuits over the breach, and could also face a probe from the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

Verizon and Yahoo both refused to comment to the New York Post, but the carrier has previously said it will "evaluate as the investigation continues through the lens of overall Verizon interests, including consumers, customers, shareholders and related communities."

The news that Verizon may be seeking a discount comes just a day after Yahoo's former CEO Ross Levinsohn suggested the carrier do just that in light of the hack and the lack of disclosure around it.

Last month, news broke that hackers stole sensitive information from at least 500 million Yahoo email accounts in a breach believed to be the largest hack of a single email provider. Just over a week later, another report surfaced indicating Yahoo agreed to modify its email security program to allow the U.S. government to scan incoming emails for a digital signature linked to a foreign terrorist group.

Verizon officials at the time said they were not informed of the email hack in advance and only learned of it when the report came to light.

In an interview with CNBC, Levinsohn said the idea that Yahoo didn't know about the hack before signing its deal with Verizon "just doesn't make any sense" given the Internet company had a team of employees specifically tasked with looking for system infiltrators.



"If I'm sitting at Verizon right now...just from a business standpoint, I'd probably reserve a bunch of money against the deal or go back to Yahoo and ask for a discount," Levinsohn said.

wirelessweek.com

Comcast's 1TB Data Caps Start To Roll Out Nationwide

October 6, 2016

Go over that amount and you could face overage charges. Unlimited data costs \$50 extra.

Comcast's data restrictions are going from testing to reality for most of its customers. Its 'XFINITY Terabyte Internet Data Usage Plan' is already in place in a number of places, and will roll out to 18 new markets (including California, Michigan, Florida and others listed on its FAQ) beginning November 1st. For its part, the ISP claims 99 percent of customers use less than 1TB of data per month, and that median use is just 75GB. Of course, with digitally delivered games and software, and streaming video that is increasingly coming in HD and 4K resolutions that could change rapidly.

So what happens if you go over 1TB per month? For the first two months in a 12 month period that it happens, nothing. Also, Comcast customers can adjust their settings for notifications via email, browser or text when they reach thresholds like 50, 70, 85 or 125 percent of the cap. The third time it's exceeded within a 12 month period, however, the "courtesy months" go away and users will be charged \$10 for an additional 50GB of data, which will continue happening to a limit of \$200 per month. If you want unlimited data access, you can buy it up front, for an additional \$50 per month over your current internet bill.

So what if you're like me, and you use a lot of data? Between downloading games on Xbox One and PS4, streaming in 4K and everything else, I used 1.2TB of data last month. Even for me, that's a bit extreme, but with games pushing out multi-gigabit updates and high-res video streaming available from more sources, eventually more of us will be nudging up against the limits. I have cable and do most of my TV viewing there, but for cord-cutters leaning on streaming from services like Sling TV or PlayStation Vue, the 1TB red line could be approaching even faster.

It's probably not a coincidence that this move is taking place at the same time Comcast is allowing Netflix streaming via its X1 cable boxes. In the first section of its FAQ, Comcast says this decision is about "fairness," but unless someone's internet usage is so extreme that it negatively impacts neighboring connections, that falls flat. Sure, it is also offering a "Flexible Data Option" for people at the other end of the spectrum, but they can only save \$5 by using less than 5GB per month. If people try to switch their news and entertainment consumption away from cable TV to internet sources, Comcast is going to charge them more. Just how fair that really is, depends on your perspective.

Netflix has called on the FCC to fix "unreasonable" caps, but it referenced limits of just 300GB per month. The commission is looking into caps and zero rating, but at least for now, this is the reality for the majority of Comcast's home internet customers.

XFINITY Internet customers in the following locations have the Terabyte Internet Data Usage Plan:

- Alabama (excluding the Dothan market)
- Arizona
- Arkansas
- Florida (Fort Lauderdale, the Keys, and Miami)
- Georgia (excluding Southeastern Georgia)
- Illinois
- Northern Indiana
- Kentucky
- Louisiana

"Its 'XFINITY Terabyte Internet Data Usage Plan' is already in place in a number of places, and will roll out to 18 new markets beginning November 1st."

- Maine
- Southwestern Michigan
- Mississippi
- Tennessee
- Eastern Texas
- South Carolina
- Southwest Virginia

Effective November 1, 2016:

- Alabama (Dothan)
- California
- Colorado
- Florida (North Florida, Southwest Florida and West Palm)
- Southeastern Georgia
- Idaho
- Indiana (Indianapolis and Central Indiana; Fort Wayne and Eastern Indiana)
- Kansas
- Michigan (Grand Rapids/Lansing, Detroit, and Eastern Michigan)
- Minnesota
- Missouri
- New Mexico
- Western Ohio
- Oregon
- Texas (Houston)
- Utah
- Washington
- Wisconsin

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Products & Services

As Facebook At Work Prepares For Launch, Microsoft Pushes Yammer And Office Closer Together

October 7, 2016

Microsoft-owned enterprise social network Yammer is introducing a handful of updates today, as rival Facebook prepares to launch its very own Facebook at Work service on Monday.

Among the new Yammer updates is the ability to create and co-author Microsoft Office documents — including Excel, Office, and PowerPoint — and share them with specific teams within Yammer.

It's worth noting here that Yammer already offered Office editing functions, with users able to upload files into Yammer and preview and edit the documents. Now the integration has been ramped up a notch, and users are now able to do everything within Yammer itself.

Collaboration has emerged as a key tool as document-editing software has increasingly shifted online. Google Docs helped popularize it, and Microsoft followed suit with its own online version of Office. But being able to work on Office documents with colleagues and view version history without leaving Yammer is a potentially useful feature.

“Microsoft revealed that some big changes were coming to Yammer, a process that kicked off with the integration of Office 365 Groups ... Yammer will effectively cease to exist as a standalone service from January 2017, with customers encouraged to move to an Office 365 Enterprise plan instead.”

Other updates rolling out today include the ability to browse and share SharePoint and OneDrive files without leaving Yammer, and links and attachments will now render more attractively in the app.

“This focus on enabling employees to get work done through deeper integration into the Office 365 suite has led to the fastest annual user growth in Yammer’s history,” the company said, in a blog post. “These new features start rolling out today and will be available to all Yammer users in the coming weeks.”

Today’s news comes a little over a week after Microsoft revealed that some big changes were coming to Yammer, a process that kicked off with the integration of Office 365 Groups. In the long-term, the Yammer Enterprise plan is being killed off. Yammer will effectively cease to exist as a standalone service from January 2017, with customers encouraged to move to an Office 365 Enterprise plan instead.

So while we already knew that Yammer and Office were being pushed closer together, the timing of today’s roll-out — three days before Facebook at Work officially launches — is notable. Facebook’s enterprise edition already garnered some big-name signups during its beta, and it will be gunning for more. But Facebook doesn’t have the same grip on the workplace as Microsoft, so tightly aligning Yammer with Office makes a great deal of sense.

venturebeat.com

AT&T Steps Up Its Pursuit Of The IoT With New Prepaid Data Plans For Developers

October 5, 2016

AT&T stepped up its pursuit of the IoT, announcing new prepaid data plans for developers and businesses and plans for a pilot launch of LTE-M technology in San Francisco later this year.

The three new data plans are aimed at helping smaller developers and businesses looking to tap the burgeoning IoT market. They start at \$25 a month for 1 GB that can be used over 12 months and 500 text messages, and top out at \$100 for 5 GB valid up to 24 months and 1,500 text messages.

The data can be used to power up to 1,000 devices on AT&T’s network.

“Making data plans available for developers and innovators lowers the barrier to entry,” said Chris Penrose, senior vice president of AT&T’s IoT Solutions, in a press release. “After these initial plans are deployed, we help them scale their solution beyond a thousand SIMs and provide connectivity as they grow their business.”

The new plans, which will be available later this month, follow July’s launch of a \$99 starter kit from AT&T to help developers build IoT offerings. That project is aimed at enabling customers to buy combined technologies from AT&T and IBM in a single build.

While forecasts for the worldwide IoT market vary greatly, analysts agree the burgeoning space is teeming with potential. Gartner predicted in November that 6.4 billion connected devices will be in use by the end of this year, with 20.8 billion such gadgets coming online by 2020. And an IDC forecast pegs the worldwide IoT market at \$1.3 trillion in 2019.

The operator also said it will launch LTE-M in San Francisco in November with the aim of launching the technology across its LTE network next year. AT&T said LTE-M will deliver better coverage for IoT devices underground and deep inside buildings; enable battery life of up to 10 years; and be more affordable than current technologies.

The technology is designed to connect devices such as utility meters, vending machines, alarm systems, transportation fleets, industrial equipment and healthcare devices. Participants in the pilot will include PepsiCo, Samsung and Capstone Metering.

Cellular technologies aren't the only means by which IoT devices will be connected, of course. ON World this week said the market for Low Power Wide Area Network (LPWAN) technologies "are blindsiding existing wireless sensor network technologies," predicting that the market for LPWAN services will reach \$75 billion by 2025.

"After a decade of technology advances such as low power wireless radios, MEMS and cloud platforms, LPWANs represent a new gold rush for Internet of Things investors and developers," ON World Research Director Mareca Hatler said in a prepared statement. "The simplicity and accessibility of LPWANs is drawing new entrants and innovative IoT services that will contribute billions of dollars to the global economy."

fiercewireless.com

Emerging Technology

New York Will Use Facial Recognition To Catch Terrorists

October 7, 2016

New York governor Andrew Cuomo wants to give the state's bridges and tunnels a high-tech makeover, starting with the installation of cameras, sensors and facial recognition equipment. Under his initiative, crossings, airports and other strategic locations will be equipped with facial recognition systems as an anti-terrorism measure. Facial recognition still isn't perfect and has issues recognizing people of color, but the state does have some experience with the technology. Its DMV, for instance, uses a facial recognition system that has led to over a hundred arrests since it was upgraded in January this year.

Cuomo also plans to incorporate auto-tolling systems to save you hours of driving time. You won't have to stop and pay your toll anymore -- New York will suspend cameras that can detect your identity through your plate number over its highways. If you have an E-ZPass, it will be charged automatically. If you don't, then you'll receive a bill in the mail.

Besides the cameras and sensors, the project also includes giving New York's bridges a seismic upgrade to make them more resilient and to protect them from earthquakes. The governor plans to cover tunnels and bridges with LEDs that will brighten New York's nights with light shows, as well. Governor Cuomo's office explained the New York Crossings Project on his website in detail -- check it out if you want to read more about the changes he plans to make.

engadget.com

Google Unveils Its Pixel Smartphone And VR Headset

October 4, 2016

It's a big day for Google.

Looking to drum up consumer excitement, the tech company hosted an event in San Francisco on Tuesday to unveil a series of products, including two new phones, a virtual reality headset and the Chromecast Ultra.

"Facial recognition still isn't perfect and has issues recognizing people of color, but the state does have some experience with the technology. Its DMV, for instance, uses a facial recognition system that has led to over a hundred arrests since it was upgraded in January this year."

The flagship announcement was the introduction of Pixel, the first Google phone to carry exclusively Google branding. The company called it the "first phone made by Google inside and out."

The device is poised to take on the iPhone with a built-in artificially intelligent assistant, 4K video and other bells and whistles.

Here's a closer look at everything you need to know:

Pixel smartphones

Google announced a new Pixel line of phones -- the 5-inch Pixel (\$649) and 5.5-inch Pixel XL (\$769). The prices are the same as the iPhone 7 and the iPhone 7 Plus.

The devices boast 4GB of RAM, a Qualcomm Snapdragon 821 processor, a fingerprint sensor and a 12MP rear-facing camera.

The phones drop its existing Nexus branding in favor of "Pixel," a nod to Google's existing tablet and Chromebook line. Both run on Android 7.1 Nougat, Google's most recent mobile operating system.

The devices come with a built-in AI assistant, Google Assistant. The company demonstrated how the AI software can make a reservation for you right from the device and complete other tasks.

Pixel has a pretty sweet perk for photo fans, too: Users will get free unlimited storage of photos and videos -- something Apple would be wise to consider in the future.

The devices, which are available for pre-sale starting on Tuesday, come in three colors: quite black, very silver and really blue.

Chromecast Ultra

Google unveiled its next-generation content streaming device, the Chromecast Ultra. The gadget, which has sold 30 million units to date, supports 4K streaming. Chromecast Ultra will be available for \$69 this fall.

Google's popular Chromecast device plugs into your TV through an HDMI port and can stream content from your computer or mobile device.

Daydream

Google also showed off its new virtual reality headset for mobile devices, Daydream View. The viewer holds a smartphone, while the user has a hand-held remote to control what's happening on screen.

The Pixel phones are the first Daydream-ready devices. But there are a lot more on the way from partners, according to Google's Clay Bavor.

It will be available in slate, snow and crimson colors, and cost \$79 when it launches in November.

Daydream is launching with over 50 partners and a slew of games. The company is also working with Warner Brothers to bring immersive environments to the device, and the headset will support Netflix, HBO and Hulu.

Google isn't necessarily trying to compete with Oculus' VR hardware (\$599) or the HTC Vive (\$799). Both of those systems, favored by gamers and early VR adopters, are for immersive VR experiences and require PCs.

Instead, the company will target casual VR consumers who have -- or will buy -- Android smartphones running Nougat. Its closest competitor could be the Samsung Gear VR headset (\$99), built for Samsung Galaxy devices and powered by Oculus.

Google Wi-Fi

Google is also touting a new router and Wi-Fi manager to adjust the internet connection in the home. Google Wi-Fi automatically finds the strongest Wi-Fi point if you move around in your home. It also comes with an app, so you can -- for example -- turn Wi-Fi off when it's time for dinner.

Google Home

We got a sneak peek at Google Home -- Google's voice-controlled smart speaker -- back in May, but Google has finally shared more details about the gadget.

To start, the device is priced at \$129 -- about \$50 cheaper than the Amazon Echo. It has a slight leg up from Amazon's speaker too: Google Home pulls from the 70 billion facts the company has logged throughout the years.

It comes loaded with Google Assistant -- the company's software that searches for answers, schedules meetings, adjusts your calendar and controls smart home devices such as Philips Hue lights and Nest thermostats (both companies are launch partners).

To activate Google Home, you'll need to say "OK, Google" -- the same keyword that activates Google Now on Android.

It's available for pre-order in the U.S. now and will launch with a free six-month trial of YouTube Red.

cnn.com

Mergers and Acquisitions

Samsung Joins Digital Assistant Race With Acquisition Of Viv

October 6, 2016

Samsung Electronics is joining the race to create the smartest digital assistant by acquiring Viv, a Silicon Valley startup launched by the same entrepreneurs who sold Siri to Apple.

The deal announced Wednesday provides Samsung with technology to compete against Google, Amazon.com, Microsoft and Apple in the increasingly important field of programming computers to learn and respond as if they were human.

The specialty, also known as artificial intelligence, has hatched a flock of voice-activated digital concierges including Siri, Amazon's Alexa, Microsoft's Cortana and Google's Assistant that work in personal computers, smartphones and internet-connected speakers.

Samsung plans to implant Viv into phones, televisions and a wide range of other devices. The South Korean company didn't disclose how much it paid for Viv, which is Latin for "life."

The name is meant to underscore Viv's mission to "breathe life into inanimate objects," according to Dag Kittlaus, the CEO and co-founder of the San Jose, California, startup.

Kittlaus started Viv in 2012, shortly after leaving his job as director of iPhone apps. He joined Apple after the iPhone maker bought Siri in 2010. Apple began including Siri in iPhones five years ago, spurring other companies to develop their own assistants.

"We see a future that is decidedly beyond apps, where you can get what you need quickly and easily no matter where you are, or what device you are near," Kittlaus said.

Besides Kittlaus, fellow Viv co-founder Chris Brigham also formerly worked on Siri.

mobile-tech-today.com

Nokia Acquires Eta Devices To Boost Base Station Energy Efficiency

October 5, 2016

Nokia has struck a deal to acquire Eta Devices, a move that the company said will help enhance base station energy efficiency even beyond its current "Zero Emission" solution.

In a Wednesday announcement, Nokia noted that the Massachusetts-based startup offers a power management technology called ETAdvanced that allows base stations to reduce heat waste drastically. As a result, it has achieved 70 percent efficiency in base stations, a big improvement over current base stations that typically fall between 20 and 45 percent efficiency.

"This translates to savings for operators that can be invested as 4.9G and 5G approach. Eta Devices' technology reduces the need for backup power, translating into smaller base station cabinets and reduced equipment breakdown rates, and supporting Nokia's target to continuously strengthen the base station power efficiency of its products," Nokia said in a release.

Of course, Nokia already offers such a solution. Its so-called "Zero Emission" base station solution reduces site energy consumption and CO2 emissions by up to 70 percent.

That being said, Nokia did not elaborate on the distinctions between the two solutions, so it's certainly conceivable that their innovations don't overlap much.

This isn't Nokia's first base station innovation this year. In June, the company announced that it had created a miniaturized base station, promising that the kit would be the size of a backpack.

The announcement did not contain financial details of the acquisition, but it did note that the deal includes fixed assets, employees, intellectual property rights as well as lease and supplier agreements.

Eta Devices is a private startup founded in 2010. It is headquartered in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with a research and development office in Stockholm, Sweden. It currently employs around 20 people.

fiercewireless.com

"Nokia noted that the Massachusetts-based startup offers a power management technology called ETAdvanced that allows base stations to reduce heat waste drastically."

Industry Reports

Mobile Advertisers Are Spreading Their Ad Budgets To Android

October 7, 2016

The company's estimated profit grew 5.6 percent from last year.

Samsung might spend as much as \$1.8 billion recalling and replacing 2.5 million Galaxy Note 7s, but it still expects a 5.6 percent operating profit growth for the third quarter. According to the Korean chaebol, its profit will likely reach 7.8 trillion won (\$7 billion) for July to September, up 400 billion won from the same period last year and 400 billion more than forecasts predicted. See, despite its Note 7 issues, the company's chip and display business has been doing very well -- it might even be this quarter's top earner, knocking Samsung's mobile division off its perch.

Apple's iOS remains the more competitive platform for mobile ads, but advertisers are willing to pay higher mobile ad prices across both platforms now.

Fiksu's new indexes, launched today, measure cost per thousand impressions (CPM) and cost per purchaser (CPP) across a wide range of mobile real-time bidding (RTB) traffic. The data shows that Android is maturing; while iOS used to be the gold standard, now there is significant opportunity for advertisers in Android, Fiksu said.

"It's clear looking at these metrics that among advertisers, Android is no longer an afterthought. Marketers know what to expect from iOS, including what they'll earn and what they have to pay per user, so costs have settled into a more stable range," said Micah Adler, CEO and founder of Fiksu DSP, in a statement. "Now, monetization levels on Android are proving that it can be as effective as iOS in terms of bottom line dollars, which is sending a signal to developers, publishers and marketers that they should be putting more effort and money into their Android apps."

The company is introducing these two new indices, built using data reported via the Fiksu software development kit (SDK), to align with its focus on real-time bidding and to illustrate the open nature of RTB, which helps reduce the influence of "walled garden" advertising channels.

The CPM index, measuring the cost per thousand ad impressions across a wide range of exchanges (including Mopub, Ad-X, Nexage, OMAX, and more) and ad formats (display, interstitial, native, video,

venturebeat.com

Samsung's Quarterly Earnings Weren't Affected By The Note 7 Recall

October 7, 2016

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Young Woo Kim, an analyst for SK Securities that's owned by Korean conglomerate SK Group, told AP that Samsung's chip and display business might have generated nearly half of its income. The company is the world's foremost manufacturer of computer chips, after all, and is also a leading producer of OLED screens. It helps that Samsung uses the screens it makes for its Galaxy S7 phones whose sales apparently haven't been affected by the company's Note 7 problems. Kim believes,

"...despite its Note 7 issues, the company's chip and display business has been doing very well -- it might even be this quarter's top earner, knocking Samsung's mobile division off its perch."

however, that its mobile business plunged to its lowest level within the past three quarters this July to September.

Samsung started recalling its latest plus-sized handset in early September, after it received several reports of units burning and exploding due to faulty batteries. The number of cases only grew after that initial notice, and airlines, subways and other locations started banning their use. The US and the Canadian government followed up with official recalls of their own. It doesn't look like the company's problems are over, though: A passenger aboard a Southwest flight recently reported that his replacement Note 7, which was supposed to be safe, overheated on board.

Now, this quarter's earnings aren't all roses for the tech titan: its sales fell 5 percent from a year earlier. Analysts believe its profit will only continue to grow these coming quarters, though, thanks to its computer chips and OLED screens. The company will release a more detailed report of its earnings later this month, so keep an eye out if you want to see exactly how it's doing.

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