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## This Week's Stories

### AOL Laying Off More Than 5% Of Workforce, Unrelated To Verizon's Yahoo Bid

November 17, 2016

Verizon-owned AOL said it will cut 500 jobs, or more than 5% of its global workforce, but said the layoffs are independent of the telco's proposed \$4.8 billion takeover of Yahoo.

An AOL rep confirmed the cutbacks, first reported by Re/code, but declined to comment further. When (or if) Verizon completes the Yahoo deal, additional layoffs are expected at both AOL and Yahoo.

AOL chief Tim Armstrong, in an interview with Re/code, said most of the layoffs will come in the internet media company's corporate units, and that the reorg is designed to bulk up staff in mobile, video and data groups.

In a memo to AOL employees Thursday, Armstrong positioned the cuts as a move to streamline the company after it added more than 1,500 employees over the past year through the acquisition of mobile-ad vendor Millennial Media and the bulk of Microsoft's advertising operations. "The changes we are making are about setting the company on a path to successfully operating in today and tomorrow's reality," Armstrong wrote in the memo, which was published by AOL-owned TechCrunch.

Verizon bought AOL for \$4.4 billion in 2015, with the strategy of combining ad tech and content (from properties like the Huffington Post, TechCrunch and Engadget) with its wireless, broadband and TV footprint.

This summer Verizon announced plans to buy Yahoo — aiming merge AOL and Yahoo to gain even greater advertising scale across mobile, web and video users.

But in September, Yahoo disclosed that a hack in late 2014 had resulted in the theft of data on more than 500 million user accounts. That breach, which Verizon's top lawyer said represented a material event, has led the telco to reevaluate the terms of the Yahoo deal and reportedly seek to lop \$1 billion off the price tag.

Last week, Yahoo disclosed in its quarterly filing with the SEC that employees knew about the hack when it occurred two years ago. That was after the company claimed in a proxy statement in September that it had no knowledge of any security breaches. Yahoo also said it recorded expenses of \$1 million related to the security incident for the third quarter of 2016.

The massive data theft has spawned 23 putative class-action lawsuits in U.S. federal and state courts and in foreign courts seeking monetary damages, according to Yahoo's 10-Q filed on Nov. 9.

[variety.com](#)



## A Closer Look At Trump On Tech And Wireless

November 15, 2016

*“Trump does not appear to have public positions on a number of issues critical to the wireless telecom industry, including 5G, patent reform, infrastructure investment, and spectrum policy.”*

Despite previous tangles with U.S. President-Elect Donald Trump on Twitter, T-Mobile CEO John Legere on Friday issued a statement encouraging the American people to come together and carry on in the wake of shocking election upset that has spurred protests across the country.

“During times of change we can either stand up, unite and support one another – or tear down and attack one another. I am asking you to unite,” Legere said. “This election stunned the world. But we are all citizens of one of the greatest countries in the world and the people here at T-Mobile are some of the best in America. If anyone can lead by example and support each other through this transition, it is all of you.”

Verizon CEO Lowell McAdam last week also called for unity, saying the country should focus on “building and rebuilding infrastructure and promoting the deployment of a digital superhighway to support game-changing innovation that makes lives better.”

But the path forward for the telecom industry appears murkier than most thanks to a dearth of information about Trump’s positions on technology and wireless.

As of June of this year, Trump had not released a detailed technology policy proposal on his campaign website. On Monday, however, the site did include a section on cybersecurity in which Trump said he would “order an immediate review of all U.S. cyber defenses and vulnerabilities, including critical infrastructure, by a Cyber Review Team of individuals from the military, law enforcement, and the private sector.”

But beyond cybersecurity, Trump does not appear to have public positions on a number of issues critical to the wireless telecom industry, including 5G, patent reform, infrastructure investment, and spectrum policy.

In an October 2015 interview with Breitbart Tech, Trump said he is a “big believer in technology” and “will be a strong supporter of expanding tech capabilities in the United States.” Trump, however, noted he thinks the “increased dependence and addiction to electronic devices is unhealthy,” but said he believes “we will find a balance” as technology trends continue to progress.

Since that time, there has been little update on Trump’s thoughts on tech.

According to a recent report from the Information Technology & Innovation Foundation (ITIF), Trump has not put forth any position on wireless spectrum, 5G, or the Communications Act update. On Title II and Net neutrality, ITIF found Trump has not put forth a proposal, but has in the past criticized the FCC’s Net neutrality order on Twitter as “another top down power grab.” ITIF also found Trump has expressed opinions in favor of forcing companies to help crack encrypted devices as when the FBI asked Apple for help accessing the San Bernardino shooter’s iPhone.

Wells Fargo Senior Analyst Jennifer Fritzsche in a note to investors last week said much of the future for telecom under a Trump administration hinges on who he appoints to head the FCC.

“If the rhetoric of those surrounding Trump’s campaign rings true, we can expect a Republican FCC to make a big push to roll back some of the regulations put in place under President Obama such as the Title II/Net Neutrality rules,” Fritzsche wrote. “There may also be a push to roll back some or all of what the FCC just did on privacy. It’s unclear whether Chairman Wheeler will be able to act on the open items related to Business Data Services or set-top box reform before he departs and if he does not, some suggest a Republican FCC will reverse course on these two items.”

While Fritzsche said Trump's presidency also raises questions about some big transactions – like the AT&T-Time Warner hookup and the Level 3-CenturyLink deal – one thing that shouldn't be too much in the air is spectrum policy.

“Spectrum policy is generally bipartisan whereby both parties agree that more spectrum is needed to support growing network usage,” Fritzsche wrote. “We believe that regulators no matter their party affiliation believe that 5G is a game changing technology and will do what it takes to support that evolution. We expect there will be an even greater focus among a Republican House, Senate and White House to raise more general revenues through spectrum auctions; however, it's unclear whether the industry's efforts to pry higher band spectrum away from government users will be more or less difficult under a Republican administration.”

[wirelessweek.com](http://wirelessweek.com)

## Products & Services

### AT&T Launches Texting With Amazon's Alexa On Echo

November 17, 2016

*“AT&T is the first carrier to bring this unique skill to a product already known for innovation. We're always working to bring simple solutions for our customers to stay in touch.”*

AT&T on Thursday unveiled a new capability for customers using Amazon's Echo smart home hub: texting.

Starting tomorrow, the carrier said AT&T customers will be able to send a text message to up to ten frequent contacts using only voice commands given to Alexa, Echo's virtual assistant. AT&T said it is the first carrier to offer the capability to Amazon Echo users.

“Amazon Echo is ahead of the curve in terms of voice recognition technology and functionality,” AT&T's Senior Vice President of Device and Network Services Marketing Jeff Bradley said. “AT&T is the first carrier to bring this unique skill to a product already known for innovation. We're always working to bring simple solutions for our customers to stay in touch. In the tradition of NumberSync, another solution that was introduced at AT&T first, the Send Message Skill gives our customers another easy and convenient way to communicate.”

The new capability tacks one more on to the list of Alexa's existing repertoire, which also includes the ability to play music and provide information on news, sports scores, and the weather.

The standard Amazon Echo device is currently available for \$179, while a pint-sized version – the Echo Dot – can be had for \$49.

[wirelessweek.com](http://wirelessweek.com)

## Apple Will Reportedly Cut App Store Fees In Half For Video Services

November 16, 2016

Apple plans to cut its 30 percent App Store fee down to 15 percent for video services, according to a report from Bloomberg. The move follows a drastic shift, announced back in June that altered how Apple collects revenue from third-party subscription services on its platform. That rule change made it so companies could knock App Store fees down to 15 percent after a customer had been paying for a year. Now, it appears video services will be granted the 15 percent exemption from the onset.

According to the report, Apple's only stipulation is that the video provider integrates with its upcoming TV app. That software, unveiled in October and set to be released next month, acts as a

one-stop-shop for iOS and Apple TV users to browse shows and movies across a wide variety of apps, through an interface Apple controls using data it collects from participating partners. Notably, Netflix disagreed with Apple's data-collection policy, choosing not to integrate with its TV app at launch. It's unclear if Netflix will now agree to work with Apple in exchange for the reduction in App Store fees.

This is a critical move on Apple's part to urge video providers like Netflix, Amazon, and HBO to work with Apple on its entertainment ambitions. The iPhone maker has reportedly had trouble hammering out deals with cable channels and broadcast networks in its efforts to launch an over-the-top cable bundle similar to Sling TV and PlayStation Vue. So Apple's TV app is its next best shot at maintaining control over how users of its devices consume video.

By cutting fees for video services, the company is hoping it will entice major providers that have long complained about the cost of operating in the App Store. Some companies have even raised the price of subscribing through the App Store, or in some cases urged customers to sign up online instead, so as to make up for Apple's revenue share or avoid it altogether.

[theverge.com](http://theverge.com)

## Emerging Technology

### Instagram Sees Shopping As The Next Step In Its Evolution

November 17, 2016

Gone are the days when Instagram's scope was clear-cut. For better or worse, the app is no longer just about sharing photos with other users or scrolling through a river of images with hundreds of digital likes. Since being acquired by Facebook in 2012, Instagram has left behind its roots as an unambiguous social network in favor of becoming a more robust platform. Whether to monetize or to enhance the experience for people, newly minted features like Stories have catapulted Instagram beyond being a simple photo-sharing app. And it's not finished yet.

A couple of weeks ago, the company rolled out support for shopping tags, which gives users the ability to buy products they see in ads in their feed. Rather than a brand telling you to click a link in the bio, you now hit a tap-to-view button on an image to learn more about any item you're interested in. Once you're ready to buy the goods, companies have the option to send you to their website or app to complete the checkout process. The idea, naturally, is to keep people glued to Instagram for longer periods and, most importantly, make shopping an integral part of the app's design.

Right now Instagram is only making this tool available to 20 fashion brands, such as Warby Parker and Kate Spade, as well as online retailers like JackThreads. But the feature, which is only viewable by iOS users in the US at launch, could expand to other countries in the near future. Android support is expected down the road too. According to Instagram, that'll happen once it's comfortable with how partners display and recommend products without affecting the core experience. Eventually, users will also have the option to bookmark products they'd like to buy at a later time, in what's going to be an obvious move to challenge Pinterest.

Surprisingly, Instagram isn't earning revenue based on how many people use shopping tags to make a purchase. Instead, the company hopes brands see the feature's potential and spend more money advertising on its platform. That strategy could pay major dividends, especially if things continue to go as smoothly as they have during this trial period. The challenge for Instagram, however, will be ensuring this doesn't become obtrusive, which wouldn't be good for either the user or the brand advertising.

"We're really kind of focused on being very craft oriented and doing the simple things first," says Vishal Shah, director of product management at Instagram. He points to the feature being

aesthetically similar to when you see someone tagged in a photo, with an icon on the lower left corner indicating that you can go deeper than viewing or liking the picture. When asked about feedback from consumers, Shah said it is too early to know, though he noted that brands and retailers are excited about the possibilities.

For Instagram's partners, having access to shopping tags allows them to further engage with consumers. Most importantly, it sets up another platform where they can sell products with ease. Dave Gilboa, co-founder and co-CEO of Warby Parker, says this new feature won't be replacing its website or apps anytime soon. That's not only because you can't shop directly through Instagram (yet) but also because he sees it as a complement, not a replacement, to his company's current marketing strategy.

"We don't view this as anything that extreme," he says, "but it does remove friction." Gilboa notes that a lot of Warby Parker customers are already discovering products on Instagram, but up until now there wasn't a simple way for them to capitalize on that engagement. Naturally, Instagram is hoping to alleviate that problem with shopping tags and other recently launched business-focused tools. In August, for example, Instagram started letting business profiles add a "contact" button to their account, which made it simple for followers to call, email or text them without having to search for that information on Google or elsewhere.

While Instagram is now making an official push to keep shoppers glued to its app, some of its actual users (read: not businesses) have been two steps ahead. In recent years, Instagram has become a platform for streetwear resellers, who post anything from Yeezys to highly coveted Air Jordans and sell them directly to anyone interested. "Andre," a reseller whom we interviewed about his unconventional marketplace, said he chose Instagram over eBay because of the one-to-one aspect of it.

Andre isn't the only one doing this either. There are thousands of users mirroring what he does through his Sole Street Sneaker Co account. To some extent, what Instagram is hoping to accomplish with brands and retailers feels a kin to that -- namely the direct-to-consumer approach. "There's a lot of different kind of ways we're thinking about this to expand to," says Shah about whether smaller players could ever get access to shopping tags. "Right now we're really only focused on retailers."

Nevertheless, only time will tell how this test plays out for Instagram. Both Shah and Gilboa emphasize that they won't find out if shopping tags are a success until later, but they're confident users will be fond of what this feature and others like it bring to the table. One thing is certain: Instagram is evolving, which may be a hard pill to swallow for people who don't appreciate change and want the app to stay true to its simple roots.

At the end of the day, Shah claims everything Instagram does is with the user in mind first and foremost. Although business partners may play a major role in how the app is shaped, he says it's not the main one. "If it feels really good for the consumer," he adds, "it's going to be good for the brand." You can be the judge of that.

[engadget.com](http://engadget.com)

## Qualcomm Quick Charge To Give Phones 5-Hour Charge In 5 Minutes

November 17, 2016

*“Compared to Quick Charge 3.0, the version coming out in 2017 will speed up charging of compatible devices by as much as 20 percent and improve efficiency by up to 30 percent.”*

Starting next year, some smartphone owners could begin using quick-charging technology that will give their devices a five-hour energy boost in just five minutes, according to Qualcomm Technologies. The newly unveiled Quick Charge 4 will arrive on the market in the first half of 2017, the same time that new devices start coming out with Qualcomm's next-generation Snapdragon 835 processor.

Qualcomm released the first version of Quick Charge in early 2013, eight months after its acquisition of circuit-maker Summit Microelectronics, which developed the technology. The 3.0 version of its quick-charging technology is currently incorporated into more than three dozen smartphones, including the Asus ZenFone 3, the HTC 10 and the LG V20, and many more devices support Quick Charge 2.0.

Compared to Quick Charge 3.0, the version coming out in 2017 will speed up charging of compatible devices by as much as 20 percent and improve efficiency by up to 30 percent, Qualcomm said. The company added that Quick Charge 4 will also improve safety by preventing battery overcharging and overheating, with charging temperatures that are up to 5 degrees Celsius cooler.

"Think of all the times you only had five minutes to charge, but that didn't give your phone enough juice to get to the next charge," Geoff Gorgon, staff manager for product marketing, wrote today on Qualcomm's Snapdragon blog. "Five extra hours of battery life can get you there and further. Have more time? Quick Charge 4 is engineered to charge a typical smartphone from zero to 50 percent in about 15 minutes or less."

Gordon cited a study done earlier this year by the Chinese market research firm Si no-MR that found 60 percent of smartphone buyers take fast-charging capabilities into account when shopping for their next devices. He added that similar research by Qualcomm found that more than one-fourth of consumers believe it currently takes too long to charge their phones. "Qualcomm Quick Charge is specifically engineered to solve this problem," Gordon said.

Among the improvements arriving with Quick Charge 4 will be support for both USB Type-C and higher-power USB Power Delivery connectors, an assortment of advanced Battery Saver safety features and dual charge via a second integrated circuit for power management that improves thermal balancing and efficiency, Gordon said. The new Quick Charge will also feature version three of Qualcomm's Intelligent Negotiation for Optimum Voltage that helps to optimize power transfers.

The Snapdragon 835 processor set to hit the market next year will be produced with the help of a new manufacturing technology from Samsung. Announced last month, the technology is an industry-first that allows mass production of system-on-chip (SoC) products with 10-nanometer processing, according to Samsung.

"Using the new 10nm process node is expected to allow our premium tier Snapdragon 835 processor to deliver greater power efficiency and increase performance while also allowing us to add a number of new capabilities that can improve the user experience of tomorrow's mobile devices," Keith Kressin, Qualcomm's senior vice president of product management, said today in a statement.

Samsung's new 10-nanometer process uses a technology called FinFET (Fin Field Effect Transistor) to minimize the typical performance-versus-power tradeoff in processor manufacturing. Compared to a similar process used to produce its previous 14-nanometer SoCs, the 10-nanometer process increases area efficiency by as much as 30 percent while either boosting performance by up to 27 percent or reducing power consumption by as much as 40 percent.

"This collaboration is an important milestone for our foundry business as it signifies confidence in Samsung's leading chip process technology," Jong Shik Yoon, executive vice president and head of Samsung's foundry business, said in a statement.

The partnership also offers a bright spot for Samsung in the wake of this year's disastrous Galaxy Note 7 release, recall and manufacturing halt. Launched with great acclaim in August, the Note 7 was quickly linked to numerous battery-related fires and could ultimately hurt Samsung's bottom line by more than \$5 billion.

[mobile-tech-today.com](http://mobile-tech-today.com)

## Mergers and Acquisitions

### DraftKings And FanDuel Agree To Merge, Creating A Fantasy Sports Giant

November 18, 2016

*"A tie-up could reduce legal costs for the two companies, which have had to defend themselves as well as lobby for legislation to make the games legal in several states that have declared them illegal gambling operations."*

After tussling for years to win customers, the two biggest U.S. companies in fantasy sports, DraftKings and FanDuel, said on Friday they are teaming up in a merger that will cut down on legal bills and advertising spending.

Financial terms of the deal were not disclosed. In earlier funding rounds before regulators such as New York's Attorney General Eric Schneiderman cracked down on the industry, the companies had each been valued at over \$1 billion.

Fantasy sports have surged in popularity as websites have made it easier to create fictional teams of athletes from sports leagues, and to monitor their statistics competitively.

Daily fantasy sports, a turbocharged version of the season-long game, has boomed over the past decade, creating a multibillion dollar industry. Players draft teams in games played in just one evening, which has enabled fans to spend money on the contests with a frequency that critics say is akin to sports betting.

The deal will be structured as a merger of equals with DraftKings chief executive and founder, Jason Robins, taking the CEO post, and Nigel Eccles, FanDuel's CEO, becoming chairman. Each company will receive three board seats and there will be one independent director.

A tie-up could reduce legal costs for the two companies, which have had to defend themselves as well as lobby for legislation to make the games legal in several states that have declared them illegal gambling operations.

The announcement comes a few weeks after the companies' \$12 million settlement over false advertising claims with the New York Attorney General.

The agreement will "help the combined company accelerate its path to profitability," the companies said in a statement.

The deal is also expected to lower advertising budgets. Both have spent aggressively on TV and online in the past few years as they battled for market share against each other.

The merger, which is subject to regulatory approval, is likely to attract the attention of antitrust authorities since it will combine two market leaders.

FanDuel's CEO Eccles told Reuters last year that he had heard investors compare a potential deal to the 2008 merger between Sirius and XM Radio, when two unprofitable upstarts merged to create No. 1 satellite radio provider Sirius XM Radio Inc. (SIRI.O).

High-profile investors have so far backed both companies, including Fox Sports, Major League Baseball, the National Hockey League, KKR & Co LP, Raine Group, Google Capital and the venture arms of Time Warner Inc. and Comcast Corp.

[venturebeat.com](http://venturebeat.com)

## AT&T Teams Up With NASA To Develop Drone Traffic Management System

November 16, 2016

U.S. wireless operator AT&T announced it is teaming up with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to develop a traffic management system for drones.

In a press release, AT&T said the goal of the collaboration is the creation of an Unmanned Aircraft System Traffic Management (UTM) solution that will support the safe and secure operation of drones in national airspace.

"Working with NASA and others, we are designing the management system for a new frontier in aviation," AT&T's Vice President of Global Public Sector Solutions Mike Leff said. "Drones are already used in agriculture, public safety, construction, utilities, real estate, and TV. This research can help support the commercial and private use of drones nationwide."

AT&T said its role in the project is to bring to the table expertise on networking, the Internet of Things (IoT), the cloud, identity management, and cybersecurity. The carrier said cybersecurity is a particular concern surrounding drones because easy access to the vehicles and their many potential uses could increase the risk of cyberattacks.

The move to team up with NASA is AT&T's latest action in the drone space. The carrier previously announced it is using drones to inspect cell towers and tested the use of drones on its LTE network. Additionally, AT&T President of Internet of Things Solutions Chris Penrose was named to the FAA's Drone Advisory Committee earlier this year. That group identifies and advises actions to support the safe introduction of unmanned aircraft systems into U.S. national airspace, AT&T said.

AT&T rival Verizon has also stepped up action in the drone space with its own trials of drones on its LTE network and use of the aircraft to inspect cell towers and venues.

[wirelessweek.com](http://wirelessweek.com)

## Verizon Acquires Space Age Wi-Fi Kiosk Maker LQD

November 16, 2016

Carrier expanding 'smart cities' effort

Verizon has ramped up its effort to create more connected cities by buying a maker of wireless hot spot kiosks for urban areas.

*"AT&T said its role in the project is to bring to the table expertise on networking, the Internet of Things (IoT), the cloud, identity management, and cybersecurity. The carrier said cybersecurity is a particular concern surrounding drones because easy access to the vehicles and their many potential uses could increase the risk of cyberattacks."*

LQD Wi-Fi, acquired by the telecom giant on Monday, sells futuristic 15-foot-tall towers that can be placed on city sidewalks, in parks or elsewhere to provide Wi-Fi to people nearby along with large screens that passersby can use to look at maps, learn about tourist attractions, and get safety warnings like news of an approaching hurricane. The company is still at an early stage, but it has a deal with New Rochelle, NY to install a total of 160 of its kiosks around the city starting next spring.

Terms of the acquisition weren't disclosed.

Verizon has been looking for new growth opportunities as its core wired and wireless telecommunications markets slow. One promising area is the growing use of connected devices, also known as the Internet of things, which includes everything from traffic sensing street lamps to self-driving cars. Still, Verizon reported only slightly more than \$600 million of IoT revenue in the first nine months of the year, less than 1% of its total revenue.

Verizon said it planned to expand LQD's kiosks, initially created by design firm Frog Design, beyond city street deployments to schools, entertainment venues and privately run spaces. The screens can also display advertising or other promotional content.

The goal is "to deploy elegant and engaging community technology hubs that connect, inform, inspire and support people where they live, work and play," Mike Lanman, who oversees Verizon's enterprise products and Internet of things businesses, said in a statement.

New Rochelle plans to use its kiosks to promote parks, cultural events and job opportunities, in addition to providing free high-speed Internet connections, city manager Charles Strome said. The kiosks will also be used to broadcast emergency messages.

Competing urban kiosks with a greater number of features have run into controversy. New York City replaced hundreds of pay phones with Wi-Fi hubs from LinkNYC this year. But the company had to disable an Internet browsing feature after some people used the hubs to watch pornography.

Verizon's smart cities effort includes many other components, such as selling smart street lamps that vary the amount of light based on how many people are nearby, security cameras that can trigger alerts on their own when they detect abnormal behavior, and traffic sensors to help ease congestion.

[fortune.com](http://fortune.com)

## Industry Reports

### Samsung Still No. 1 Smartphone Maker Despite Note 7 Woes

November 17, 2016

Samsung is still No. 1 in smartphones, but Chinese manufacturers are gaining ground.

The Korean electronics giant saw phone sales in the third quarter decline by 14 percent year over year, its worst performance ever, according to research published Thursday by Gartner. The slump is due in part to battery problems that caused some of Samsung's Galaxy Note 7 phones to explode or catch fire.

Samsung was forced to recall the Note 7 twice and eventually decided to cease production of the phone.

"The decision to withdraw the Galaxy Note 7 was correct, but the damage to Samsung's brand will make it harder for the company to increase its smartphone sales in the short term," said Gartner analyst Anshul Gupta in a statement.

*"Overall, shipments of smartphones increased by 5.4 percent to 373 million units in the third quarter of 2016, up from 354 million in the same quarter last year."*

Still, Samsung held on to the top spot. The company sold 71.7 million smartphones in the third quarter of 2016.

Apple, which earned the No. 2 spot, sold 43 million smartphones in the quarter. Apple released its iPhone 7 this year, but the company still experienced a 6.6 percent decline in the quarter with its biggest loss of sales occurring in China, according to Gartner.

Overall, shipments of smartphones increased by 5.4 percent to 373 million units in the third quarter of 2016, up from 354 million in the same quarter last year. Only Chinese manufacturers Huawei, Oppo and BBK Communication Equipment experienced growth.

Huawei is now the third most popular smartphone manufacturer in the world, though 80 percent of its sales are confined to China. Gartner also noted that Google's Android software is the most prominent smartphone operating system with nearly 88 percent of the total market.

[cnet.com](http://cnet.com)



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