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## This Week's Stories

### How The NFL And NRG Stadium Are Preparing For Record-Breaking Data Usage During Super Bowl 51

February 2, 2017

Sunday's Patriots vs. Falcons contest could result in the largest data usage ever during an event, with fans streaming live video on social apps and watching Super Bowl commercials on the NFL's app.

Super Bowl 51 is on track to be a historic event, regardless of what happens on the playing field, with data usage records expected to top all previous levels when the New England Patriots go up against the Atlanta Falcons on Sunday.

Last year, Super Bowl 50 at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, Calif. resulted in 10.1 terabytes of data transferred over the stadium's Wi-Fi on game day. That was a 63% increase over Super Bowl 49 in Glendale, Ariz. in 2015.

This year's Super Bowl, at NRG Stadium in Houston, Texas, the regular-season home of the Houston Texans football team, will easily achieve record-shattering data usage numbers and simultaneous users to beat the numbers in 2016, according to Michelle McKenna-Doyle, CIO of the NFL.

"It's [data usage] doubled every year for the last five Super Bowls. Will it double this time? I don't know that it will necessarily double. I'm expecting a 25-30% increase, but we might be surprised again as more people create and upload their own video," McKenna-Doyle said.

#### How NRG Stadium prepared for Super Bowl 51

NRG Stadium was built in 2000, long before the NFL began requiring that stadiums include Wi-Fi to improve the fan experience. Wi-Fi had to be added as a retrofit for NRG.

"NRG is one of the largest stadiums in terms of its square footage footprint, as well as one of the busiest stadiums in the country. That, coupled with the fact that the Super Bowl was coming up, the engineering, the design, the timelines, the density—all of those were of the utmost importance. It was a serious undertaking to say the least," said Monnie McGaffigan, president of 5 Bars, which designed and installed the Wi-Fi for NRG.

The stadium has a 1.9 million square foot footprint, including the entrances, luxury suites, lounge areas, and press boxes, and the stadium typically holds 71,795, although capacity changes slightly for major events such as the Super Bowl.

Planning for Super Bowl 51 began in the fall of 2015, and the project began in earnest in early 2016.

"We had a pretty short runway when you consider a project of this size and magnitude," McGaffigan said.

5 Bars spent six months and 30,000 man hours to build the Wi-Fi system. There are 1,250 access points using Wave 2 802.11 AC and 105 switches with 70 miles of cable, including 58 miles of copper and 12 miles of fiber.

"This is arguably the most technologically advanced Wi-Fi installation in the country at this point, but I'm sure there's someone right behind us," McGaffigan said.



SEE: How the NFL and its stadiums became leaders in Wi-Fi, monetizing apps, and customer experience (TechRepublic free download)

McKenna-Doyle said it's complicated to install Wi-Fi for any stadium, but NRG had additional issues because of it being a retrofit. "We were very happy that the Texans made the playoffs because that gave us one more game to test [the network], and we were able to get the numbers [for network speed] where we wanted them to be."

The main concerns were "primarily around speed upload and download speed and getting a really strong signal," McKenna-Doyle said. "When you think about tuning, you've got access points up high that are shooting signals down, and you put some in the lower bowl like under seats and they're shooting upward and if you don't have the power tuned right they collide with each other and if you're a fan sitting in a zone where a collision is happening, you can't really connect to either one and keep a signal."

"You want the power tuned just right for each zone, and not bleed into the other zone," she said.

### **How Extreme Networks, Verizon, and AT&T prepared for Super Bowl 51**

It's not just Wi-Fi that fans will be using; the Distributed Antenna System (DAS) is what allows fans to access cellular data. Verizon customers attending Super Bowl 51 will be given a priority over customers of other cellular providers because Verizon installed and owns the DAS at NRG.

At last year's Super Bowl, 15.9TB of data was transferred via DAS, in addition to the 10.1TB that went over the stadium's Wi-Fi network. Verizon led this with 7TB of data on its cellular network, and AT&T had 5.2TB transferred over its network last year.

This year, Verizon and Extreme Networks partnered to install equipment to improve connectivity at the Super Bowl Live area at Discovery Green where fans gather throughout the weekend, airports, and other transportation hubs, hotels, and popular tourist areas for Super Bowl fans in Houston. Extreme Networks is the official Wi-Fi and data analytics provider for Super Bowl 51.

Verizon's updates will result in a 450% increase in capacity at the stadium and in the surrounding fan areas, said Karen Schulz, Verizon spokesperson.

Verizon worked for nearly two years to prepare for Super Bowl 51. It built 23 new permanent cell sites, more than 220 permanent small cells, 24 Nodes on Wheels (NOWs) to increase 4G LTE capacity for heavy traffic areas that needed a boost, and three Cell on Wheels (COWs). Verizon also installed an antenna system for the lower stadium seats at NRG.

Extreme Networks also partnered with Verizon to provide the neutral host DAS at NRG. Neutral host means that customers for other cellular providers can access the DAS.

"The neutral host DAS will work for all of the cellular customers. Verizon clients will get a priority over an AT&T client. That's Verizon's prerogative since they're the ones who made the investment. This entire system is new, and it's a Verizon DAS system paired with our Wi-Fi system," said Norman Rice, executive vice president of global marketing, supply chain, and corporate development for Extreme Networks.

Leo Perrault, Verizon operations executive director for the south central US, said, "We have some priorities on the Wi-Fi network. When you think about carving up that network system, we have a certain amount reserved for our Verizon Wireless customers."

"It's always part of the negotiations as to how much access other carriers want. We built it very dense for our Verizon customers, and other carriers pick and choose to some degree which antennas they want access to," Perrault said.

To install the DAS, Verizon included antennas underneath the cupholders in the upper bowl of the stadium, to avoid bleed over into the lower seating areas. "We have been aggressively using the Texans home games and the Texans playoff games as our dry runs. We feel like we have a good handle on how the game will operate," Perrault said.

AT&T has spent \$40 million to ensure that its customers have cellular service during Super Bowl 51 and fan events around the city of Houston. It's added 100% more capacity to its DAS, and it's also bringing in its popular Giant Eyeball Antenna to boost connectivity, said Clark Bird, technical consulting engineer for AT&T.

"We've [added DAS antennas] to about 13 hotel locations, team hotels, event hotels. We've put DAS networks in those, and another 500-plus cell sites around the Houston area that we've beefed up with capacity and new antennas and things like that to make the network better," Bird said.

Both Verizon and AT&T will have engineers in "war rooms" ready to tackle any problems that erupt during the big game. The NFL said it will also have engineers on hand, ready to solve issues.

### **The NFL's Super Bowl 51 mobile app**

Mobile apps are valuable for teams, and for the NFL, as they can be easily monetized to sell merchandise, tickets, food, and drinks to fans. Apps also provide data about where a fan is within the stadium, so that targeted offers can be made based on where they're located.

This year, the NFL created its own app for Super Bowl 51. (Last year, it worked with VenueNext to create the app at Levi's Stadium.) The Super Bowl 51 app has new features such as allowing fans to watch Super Bowl commercials during the game, which is a first. In the past, commercials weren't on the app in order to avoid using too much bandwidth in the stadium.

"We built our app internally. I think early on with mobile apps we thought a lot about having replays in it. And while we will still see replays on it, we see that very few people look at replays on their phone, so we've really downplayed the use of replays. We've upped and integrated the app with more fun facts about teams and integration with NFL mobile so that there is a greater feeling of consistency for the game. You won't feel like you're using two separate apps as fans have in the past. You can ask for directions where to go, and what time things start, who will be where, what time the lines open up, and where's the shortest bathroom line," McKenna-Doyle said.

### **How social media will impact data usage**

It puts an obvious burden on any venue's network when there are tens of thousands of people uploading data at the same time. The stadium can handle up to 48,500 simultaneous users during Super Bowl 51, McGaffigan said. Last year, there was a peak of 19,223 concurrent users at Levi's Stadium during Super Bowl 50.

There will likely be far more concurrent users at Super Bowl 51 compared to the previous year. The NFL playoffs drew 38,000 people connected concurrently at NRG Stadium, Rice said.

Live streaming through social media will play a large role in the additional data usage, as well as fantasy sports games. This will be the first Super Bowl where the NFL allows live streaming, Rice said.

Verizon anticipates Facebook Live, Periscope and other live streaming applications accounting for much of the data usage that will go over the DAS, Schulz said.

*"AT&T has spent \$40 million to ensure that its customers have cellular service during Super Bowl 51 and fan events around the city of Houston."*

"The halftime show will be the number one Facebook Live video feed that day in the world. That's going to all happen at the same time. And that's really hard if everybody decides to use it at the same time. They do it at halftime and kickoff and at the end when it's over and the celebration is happening. We definitely have peak moments," McKenna-Doyle said.

"We've done a lot of work with Twitter. We streamed a game live on Twitter, and it was very successful. I think the partnership is really important between us and all the social media outlets," McKenna-Doyle said.

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

## Google Tops Apple As The World's Most Valuable Brand

February 2, 2017

Google is now the world's most valuable brand, according to a new study, snagging the No. 1 spot from Apple which has been the incumbent since 2011.

The annual ranking from Brand Finance says Google's monetary value increased to \$109.5 billion last year, representing a 24% increase overall. By contrast, Apple's monetary value fell from \$145.9 billion in the previous year to \$107.1 billion, according to the study. The decrease allowed Google to snag the top spot by about \$2.4 billion.

The news of its No. 2 spot comes as "Apple has failed to maintain its technological advantage and has repeatedly disillusioned its advocates with tweaks when material changes were expected," the study's authors wrote, who further explained that the tech-giant has "over-exploited the goodwill" of its customers, namely because of its failure to generate significant revenues from products like the Apple Watch, and its inability to "demonstrate that genuinely innovative technologies desired by consumers are in the pipeline."

As for Google, the company "remains largely unchallenged in its core search business, which is the mainstay of its advertising income," Brand Finance wrote in the report.

Though Google has largely benefited from increased revenues (parent company Alphabet recently reported better-than-expected fourth-quarter revenue) its brand strength score is also a factor in its success. According to the study, Google's brand strength score was up by two points, indicating "underlying brand equity."

In other words, the better the brand equity is for a tech business, the more likely it is to retain customers, or "even command a price premium that its products and services might not be worth," Brand Finance reports.

Out of the 500 brands analyzed, Amazon was deemed third most valuable, at \$106.4 billion. Snagging the No. 4 spot was AT&T at \$87 billion, which was followed by No. 5 Microsoft at \$76.3 billion and No. 6 Samsung at \$66.2 billion. Verizon was No. 7 at \$65.9 billion. Walmart, Facebook, and ICBC snagged the last three spots in the top ten, at \$62.2 billion, \$61.9 billion, and \$47.8 billion, respectively.

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

## Products & Services

### Uber Eyes Facebook Data To Help You Befriend Riders

February 3, 2017

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*"...the Mac is fitting customers' needs, despite the relative lack of updates over the past 18 months."*

A patent application published online Thursday hints that Uber is interested in using social media information to connect users with UberPool riders with similar interests.

Uber riders would receive an alert through the Uber app that a fellow passenger attended the same school, grew up in the same town or was a friend of a friend on Facebook. Other commonalities, such as country of origin or birthplace, could also be shared.

The feature would function as a social lubricant, making riders feel more comfortable sitting in a vehicle with a stranger.

The patent application describes solving a problem of "semi-social gatherings," where the circumstances don't lend themselves to asking a bunch of questions about someone and seeing if you have anything in common.

Many UberPool and LyftLine customers today sit in silence together in the backseat, not knowing that they have a meaningful connection to their other rider.

The patent application describes how riders could also have the option of only riding with other passengers whom they share something in common with. This may entice more people to use UberPool.

Uber continues to look for ways to change the way people get around cities.

"The kind of impact [Uber] is going to have on our cities — 95 or 98% of it is still yet to happen," said Uber CEO Travis Kalanick in *The Upstarts*, a new book published this week. "What if I said there's going to be no traffic in any major city in the U.S. in five years? ... I think that might happen."

To reduce traffic congestion, transportation experts say we'll have to spend less time riding alone and more time riding with other passengers. This will help use road space more efficiently and cut down on the number of cars needed.

Uber's latest patent application, filed last summer, could encourage more users to carpool. Although it has not yet been granted by the U.S. Patent & Trademark Office -- and there's no guarantee Uber will incorporate the concept -- it teases Uber's vision for the future.

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

### Apple's 'Polarizing' New Products Are Paying Off

February 2, 2017

Despite lots of hand-wringing about the iPhone 7 and MacBook Pro, Apple is doing just fine.

Throughout much of 2016, it seemed like lots of Apple fans were unhappy. The year brought few updates to the Mac (and the one big change was quite polarizing), a barely redesigned iPhone with no headphone jack, AirPods that shipped two months late and a new Apple Watch that was a modest improvement to a product still seen as nonessential.

But it's time to accept that the complainers on the internet (including those of us in the media) might not have our fingers on the pulse of Apple fandom. Case in point: Apple just reported a massively successful quarter. According to CEO Tim Cook, both iPhone and Apple Watch sales hit records for both unit sales and revenue. In the case of the iPhone, that reversed three consecutive quarters of declining sales. The iPhone turnaround had to be a huge relief for Apple: The product is the company's biggest revenue source by far.

Mac sales also generated record revenue, despite the fact that the new MacBook Pro was limited in supply and the rest of Apple's computer lineup hasn't been updated in a long time. Meanwhile, Apple's services business (iCloud, Apple Music, Apple Pay and so on) increased 18 percent over last year. Tim Cook has been talking up the company's services for a year now and says the goal is to double its size over the next four years. The one weak spot in Apple's quarter was the iPad, which is facing three years of declining sales and had the second-worst holiday quarter in its history. (The worst holiday quarter for the iPad was in 2010, when the original iPad was less than a year old and just carving out a place in the market.)

The iPad's ongoing struggles aside, this quarter suggests Apple might actually be giving customers what they want. Or, more cynically, customers who've become locked into the Apple ecosystem decided that now was the best time to upgrade, not jump ship to another platform. The truth is likely somewhere in the middle. While power users might miss the MacBook Pro's full-size USB ports and longer battery life and those with great headphones might be annoyed at having to use a dongle with the iPhone 7, it seems the majority of "normal" consumers out there are not rejecting Apple's new products en masse because of these changes.

The iPhone's strength was particularly surprising when you consider how many viewed the iPhone 7 as an iterative update. It has essentially the same design as the iPhone 6 and 6S, and many believe that Apple is saving a radically redesigned smartphone for later this year, the iPhone's 10th anniversary. But dismissing the iPhone 7 because of its looks does the phone a disservice. The dual camera and portrait photo mode in the 7 Plus are huge steps forward in mobile photography, and they appear to resonate with customers. Tim Cook specifically called out unexpectedly high demand for Apple's larger phone in this week's earnings call.

Waterproofing and the expected battery and performance improvements make for less-dramatic but nonetheless welcome updates. And when you figure it's been two years since Apple's positively massive quarter that accompanied the iPhone 6 launch, it stands to reason plenty of people were in the market for a new phone.

It's a little harder to explain the Mac's successful quarter. But the simple answer is that the Mac is fitting customers' needs, despite the relative lack of updates over the past 18 months. Indeed, last year's tech is more than enough for the average consumer at this point. Pros might bristle about not having the latest Intel processor, but for those who aren't rendering video or dealing with massive Photoshop files, the Macs out there are more than capable. That plus a bump from the new MacBook Pro was enough to put the Mac back in the black.

A year of iterative updates that were nonetheless successful with consumers last quarter speaks to an industry-wide trend of modest improvement in both PCs and smartphones. These product categories are extremely polished at this point, and there are simply not going to be sweeping, massive changes every year anymore. That might be a bummer for those of us who breathlessly await new products from the tech industry's biggest companies. But you can currently buy a Mac or iPhone and rest assured that it'll last you years, even if it doesn't have a shiny new form factor or the latest Intel processors in it. For the average consumer who just wants to buy something that works well with minimal fuss, that maturity is a good thing.

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

## Emerging Technology

### This Wearable Device Can Turn Any Surface Into A Keyboard

February 2, 2017

*"The team at Tap Systems Inc. has invented a new wearable called Tap Strap, which essentially lets you turn the world into a giant keyboard."*

There are a lot of gimmicky takes on the classic QWERTY keyboard — from colorful devices that look like old-school typewriters to a foldable thing that converts into a stick. But a wearable device that can eliminate keyboards entirely? That's something else.

The team at Tap Systems Inc. has invented a new wearable called Tap Strap, which essentially lets you turn the world into a giant keyboard.

The strap has five holes that you put your fingers through, and it's embedded with sensors that track information about your hands and fingers.

The wearable can be connected to almost any device, just as long as it has Bluetooth. You then tap your fingers on any surface, and those taps are turned into commands and characters.

Tapping one finger will give you a vowel, and tapping a combination will give you other letters of the alphabet.

The device was made available to beta testers in May 2016, and since then the team has been collecting responses and making iterations to the product.

David Schick, one of Tap's creators, said the feedback has led to two new significant changes — the addition of mouse functionality and a "fabric-like" design.

They've also added a haptic feedback element to make it easier for users who can't see their hands when they're tapping.

"The people who need this the most are people in a virtual reality environment," said Schick.

One thing that might present a barrier to prospective users is the learning curve involved in using the strap. It takes a while to memorize the finger tapping combination and how those correspond to different letters of the alphabet.

According to Tap, playing a game on their TapGenius app for an hour will get you comfortable with the method. Still, if you're used to typing a way on a QWERTY keyboard, getting used to tapping might take you longer than that.

Schick insists that it's not Tap's goal to convert skeptics to their device.

"There are a lot of reasons to learn how to tap and get into this technology, but it's different for different people," he said.

Schick also hinted that the company may look at extending Tap's functionality beyond text-entry in the future, and it's currently working to release the product in languages other than English.

The Tap Strap should hit the shelves around August this year, Schick says. In the meantime, interested users can join the waitlist by signing up on Tap's website.

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

## Apple, IBM, And United Airlines Are Teaming Up To Improve Your Flying Experience

February 2, 2017

Apple, IBM, and United Airlines are teaming up to develop a new generation of mobile apps for the carrier's employees. The new collaborative effort, announced Thursday, is aimed at creating greater levels of functionality for the more than 50,000 Apple iPhones and iPads that United has issued to its flight attendants, gate agents, and other front-line employees.

"A partnership with Apple and IBM gives our app-development enterprise scale, reusability, and — most importantly — speed," United Airlines chief information officer Linda Jojo told Business Insider in an interview at the company's Global Leadership Conference in Chicago.

"We're going to be able to deliver more tools and technologies faster to our front line than we could if we were building it all ourselves."

According to United's top executive in charge of technology, the airline is seeking the input of its front-line employees to determine which functions and features to include in coming apps.

"Last week, we had flight attendants and gate agents in Cupertino with our technical team, with IBM, and with Apple," Jojo told us. She added that they were working on software she said would "allow flight attendants to communicate maintenance items discovered on the plane back to the maintenance teams."

Rather than be limited by the number of computers at a workstation, the airline can now call in as many people as it needs with these mobile devices in tow to help ease congestion during emergencies and periods of high traffic.

"Our employees are now mobile — they're not stuck behind a desk anymore," Jojo said. "At the gate, we now have an agent that can close out a flight, or if there's some kind of problem, they can actually issue boarding passes and bag tags right from a printer that's on their hip, and it's all done from a mobile device."

The United Airlines announcement is the latest development in the partnership IBM and Apple entered into in 2014 seeking to revolutionize enterprise mobile apps. "We wanted to have the best devices in the hands of our employees," Jojo said regarding the decision to equip customer-service representatives with Apple iPhones. In fact, it was one of the first decisions the executive made after joining the airline as CIO in 2014.

Since then, the airline's internal tech team has been hard at work building tools for the devices. United understands that it can always use some extra workers and expertise. That's where the tech firm formerly known as "Big Blue" steps in.

"While we are quite good" at app development, Jojo said, "it takes time."

"And IBM really understands how to build systems at scale and for enterprises," she said.

In 2011, the airline's flight crews received iPads to serve as digital maps, charts, and navigation tools — replacing clunky pilot bags that weighed as much as 45 pounds. United issued iPhones to flight attendants and gate agents in 2014 and 2015.

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

# Mergers and Acquisitions

## Salesforce Acquires Sequence To Build Out Its UX Design Services

February 2, 2017

Salesforce has made another acquisition that underscores how the CRM and cloud software giant is looking to sell more services to its customers that complement the software they are already buying. It has acquired Sequence, a user experience design agency based out of San Francisco and New York that works with brands like Best Buy, Peets, Apple, Google and many more.

The news was announced by Sequence itself on its blog quietly about a week ago, but the acquisition actually closed only today. It was also confirmed to us directly by Salesforce, which pointed us to the blog post.

Sequence's CEO Jojo Roy says in the blog post that his team — which also includes Seth Bain (who founded the company and is the lead on key accounts like Apple) as president — will work on experience design services for customers, "helping companies use the power of design to better connect with their customers in entirely new ways."

The financial terms of the deal are not being disclosed, but in any case Sequence had raised less than \$1 million in its 12 years as an independent company.

Sequence's work focuses on building interactive experiences and consultancy for companies across both digital and physical environments, rethinking mobile apps and web sites, but also retail locations and bigger branding concepts.

UX services have become a cornerstone in the modern business world, which always wants to try out new things to connect with customers better, and looks to UX people to help implement that. Other prominent agencies that have been snapped up in this space include frog design (now part of Aricent) and Fjord (now part of Accenture).

Salesforce already has an experience design practice that it sells as part of its "Add-Ons" consultancy services, alongside other things like marketing cloud services and its strategic advisory business. These are not the core of what Salesforce does as a business, but they position the company as a one-stop shop for businesses that may already be considering other Salesforce products.

That's a strategy that other IT giants have followed to increase its touch points with customers. Last year, IBM, in fact, scooped up three design agencies in the space of a week.

Salesforce itself has also made other acquisitions recently to boost their design talent, but for different ends.

Earlier this month, Quip, a cloud-document collaboration startup Salesforce acquired last year, made an acquisition of its own, of Unity and Variety — a startup co-founded by two ex-Facebook designers who had overhauled its Messenger app, among other things. However, it looks like that acquisition is not to boost Salesforce's design practice, but to bolster Quip itself, by developing more productivity apps.

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

*"Salesforce itself has also made other acquisitions recently to boost their design talent, but for different ends."*

## Kickstarter Acquires Video-Streaming Community Platform Huzza, Opens First Office Outside The U.S.

February 1, 2017

Kickstarter has made a rare foray into acquisition land today with the news that it has snapped up Vancouver-based video-streaming startup Huzza. Terms of the deal were not disclosed.

Founded in 2015, Huzza helps bands and musicians connect with their fans using live video. Through the platform, artists can schedule a live video event and make it public or offer it exclusively to select fans. Additionally, artists can chat with fans and answer questions through the platform.

Kickstarter actually partnered with Huzza late last year for the launch of Kickstarter Live, a new tool that enables creators to livestream demos of their products to the world. It seems the tie-up worked out well, as Kickstarter elected to buy the platform outright three months later.

“When we first experienced the product they built, it immediately struck a chord,” explained Bridget Best, operations SVP at Kickstarter. “It was intimate, it inspired personal connection, and it was clear how it would strengthen the best parts of Kickstarter while bringing our community to life in new ways.”

Given that Huzza is based in Canada, Kickstarter is opening its first international office outside the U.S. with a new office in the Gastown neighborhood of Vancouver. Huzza’s two founders, Justin Womersley and Nick Smit, will now work on developing Kickstarter Live and building out a team to help grow the product.

Founded in 2009, Kickstarter is arguably the poster child for the crowdfunding industry, having helped creators raise billions of dollars to build products. The New York-based company has what it calls a “F\*\*k the monoculture” philosophy, proclaiming that it prioritizes cultural ideology over profits. Indeed, it has raised very little VC funding, and in 2015 Kickstarter Inc. was replaced by Kickstarter PBC, a public benefit corporation.

Today’s news comes almost a year after Kickstarter made its first ever acquisition, snapping up music fan community Drip shortly before it was due to close.

As these two acquisitions show, Kickstarter seems pretty committed to building the community facet of its business — connecting those who make things with those who buy and consume them.

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

## Industry Reports

### AT&T Takes Top Ranking In J.D. Power Customer Care Full-Service Study

February 2, 2017

AT&T outsourced other full-service wireless providers for the top ranking in the J.D. Power 2017 U.S. Wireless Customer Care Full-Service Performance Study<sup>SM</sup> Volume 1, released today.

AT&T scored higher than the full-service industry average — by 13 points — and increased our overall score by 7 points over the 6-month period, according to the study.

The study took place from July to December 2016, with 8,135 U.S. wireless customers participating.

"There are a lot of so-called awards and surveys out there. But J.D. Power is the most respected and most significant," said Glenn Lurie, president & CEO, AT&T Consumer and Mobility Operations. "The customer comes first with us. And we constantly work behind the scenes to give our reps the tools and training to give our customers the best experience. This is a demonstration of our great people and the hard work they put in each and every day."

*"AT&T has earned the top score in 5 of the last 8 studies since 2013 and never scored less than second in that same period. J.D. Power presents the award twice a year."*

AT&T has earned the top score in 5 of the last 8 studies since 2013 and never scored less than second in that same period. J.D. Power presents the award twice a year.

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

## Snap: Everything We Learned Ahead Of The Most-Anticipated Tech IPO Of 2017

February 2, 2017

Snap today filed its S-1 paperwork with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), triggering the process to go public. The company aims to raise \$3 billion in the initial public offering (IPO) and will subsequently trade on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol SNAP.

Today's filing shows that Snap came through with a \$514.6 million net loss on \$404 million in revenue in the year that ended on December 31, 2016. Revenue for that period was up nearly 500 percent from the prior year. Snapchat had 1,859 employees as of December 31, according to the filing.

Snap confidentially filed for its IPO in October and has enlisted the help of bankers Morgan Stanley, Goldman Sachs, J.P. Morgan, Deutsche Bank, Barclays, Credit Suisse, and Allen & Co. to lead this effort. At its current size, this will be the largest technology IPO since Alibaba in 2014, said Renaissance Capital.

Formerly known as Snapchat, Snap is the first high-profile tech company to enter the public market this year, but it will join recent entrants including Coupa, Line, Nutanix, SecureWorks, Square, and Twilio.

### More Than Messaging

When it was first launched, Snapchat was a messaging app with a simple premise: Chat with your friends and messages will disappear in 24 hours. It stood out starkly against Facebook Messenger, Twitter, Skype, Google Hangouts, and other chat apps, whose conversations were permanent until you manually erased them.

Since then, Snap has made strides to evolve itself, shifting its app to be a place to consume premium content from content providers like NBCUniversal, launching careers of influencers, and improving discovery of events nearby powered by its Vurb acquisition.

Much of this was apparent just by looking at the company's rebranding from Snapchat to Snap and its description changing to label it a camera company. Its first hardware device, Spectacles, reflects the scale of founder Evan Spiegel's vision for the company.

### Facebook: Vindication Or Destruction?

Facebook's failed attempt to buy Snapchat back in 2013 is a recurring story for Snap. Spiegel refused to sell the company for \$3 billion, an amount that would have ranked among the most expensive

purchases Facebook ever made — the social networking company paid \$1 billion for Instagram, \$2 billion for Oculus VR, and \$19 billion for WhatsApp.

Although its advances were rejected, Facebook has not shied away from pursuing efforts to unapologetically copy the best features of the ephemeral messaging app. One perspective is that Facebook might want to put a dent in Snap's public debut, perhaps still upset about how an acquisition talks went. Another is that Facebook sees millennials and young people using Snapchat more and thinks copying those features and applying them to Messenger, Instagram, and other Facebook properties could win this demographic back.

2016 was an active year for Facebook; it seemed to have found its groove in mimicking Snap. The social networking company moved into creative lenses and filters with the acquisition of MSQRD and additional functions on Messenger. It has also added scannable Snapchat-like QR codes to its messaging app; launched a Story mode in not only on Instagram, but also Messenger; and developed geofilters and masks for live video.

One could say that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, right?

With 150 million people consuming stories on Instagram daily, Facebook could certainly cause some potential shareholders to second-guess about the long-term investment in Snap. In fact, it would be surprising if Spiegel's team doesn't include the social network giant as a significant risk to its future.

### The Land Grab For Advertisers

Investors are eager to understand Snap's benefit to advertisers, a key revenue driver for the company. Over the years, Snap's flagship app has evolved from charging \$750,000 so brands can market their wares across the app to opening up its Discover offering to companies like Comedy Central, Food Network, CNN, National Geographic, Vice, Yahoo, and Warner Music Group, to create their own Stories.

With more than 150 million daily active users, Snap appears to have a product that brands think they'll be able to capitalize on for the next few years which could divert marketing dollars away from Google and Facebook. To whet the appetite of marketers more, Snap this week introduced the latest incarnation of its ad platform, opening it up to third-party providers like Kenshoo, Kinetic Social, AdParlor, HyFn, Adglow, and Videology. It doubles down on efforts to show the potential of advertising on Snapchat — an Ads application programming interface (API) was launched in October. The company has essentially taken a page straight from Facebook's playbook.

Snap is also bringing in money through custom geo-filters, which became available last year. Previously, users relied on the good graces of Snapchat to launch geofilters around large events such as the Olympics, World Cup, parades, marches, and other activities. Now there's on-demand geofilters where anyone can design their own for a price starting at \$5, and they also support Bitmojis.

Snap has never released data around the traction it has seen for on-demand geofilters. Will this be material to the company in the long term?

### A Long Road Of Funding

Snap's funding history is a convoluted one. The Venice, California-based startup raised a \$485,000 seed round from Lightspeed Venture Partners in 2012 after partner Barry Eggers learned that his daughter was using it with her high school friends.

The subsequent \$13.5 million round, led by Benchmark, has a similar origin. Benchmark partner Mitch Lasky decided to invest in the photo-sharing app after hearing about it from his teenage

*“With more than 150 million daily active users, Snap appears to have a product that brands think they'll be able to capitalize on for the next few years which could divert marketing dollars away from Google and Facebook.”*

daughter. Benchmark was also an investor in Instagram, which Facebook bought for \$1 billion in 2012.

A few months later, Snapchat announced another round totaling \$60 million and led by Institutional Venture Partners (IVP). General Catalyst, SV Angel, and others also joined. The rebuffed Facebook acquisition offer followed shortly thereafter, and just after that Snapchat took \$50 million from Coatue Management.

Naturally 2014 was like a rollercoaster ride — rumors of new investors pouring hundreds of millions of dollars spread across media outlets, spiking curiosity all around. A Form D filing dated December 31, 2014, revealed that the startup raised \$485 million from 23 investors in yet another round of funding. New investors included Yahoo, Alibaba, and Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers.

A few months later, Snapchat announced another staggering fundraising, totaling \$537.6 million. At that point, the startup had built up to 100 million daily active users. Its series F round was announced about a year later. Despite concerns that the ephemeral photo-sharing app was struggling to attract advertisers, it still managed to raise a whopping \$1.81 billion. Investors in this round included General Atlantic, Sequoia Capital, T. Rowe Price, Lone Pine, Glade Brook Capital, IVP, and Fidelity, among others.

With its \$3 billion IPO, Snap must prove to investors that it's not a one-trick pony. It can do that by launching larger-scale hardware projects or by expanding its advertising reach with new apps. But today, the company is showing that it has already made a lot of progress since its 2011 origins.

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