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## This Week's Stories

### Amazon Says It's Open To Pushing Content Through Cable Boxes

March 9, 2017

Amazon.com Inc., the e-commerce giant that's shaking up the entertainment industry, says it's open to pursuing deals to stream content through cable operators' set-top boxes, much like Netflix Inc. has done in the U.S. and Europe.

"Amazon is definitely open to those partnerships and to be fair, we haven't done as much there as Netflix have done," Alex Green, managing director of Amazon Video, said Thursday at the Cable Congress conference in Brussels. So far, Amazon has been more focused on growing its customers and building its own devices, he said. But "we do talk to all sorts of players in the cable industry."

Amazon, which won its first Academy Awards last month for movies "Manchester by the Sea," and "The Salesman," is challenging pay-TV providers and video-game developers as the Seattle-based company expands beyond its online retail roots with growing media ambitions. The rise of internet-based subscription services from the likes of Amazon Prime, Netflix, and Alphabet Inc.'s YouTube, have stoked analyst predictions that consumers will increasingly ditch cable and kill traditional TV.

Liberty Global Plc, billionaire John Malone's Europe-focused cable company, may be one operator to bring Amazon Prime onto its set-top boxes, which already offer more than 100 applications including for Netflix, YouTube and Videoland. Liberty last year agreed to expand a deal with Netflix in the U.K. to its other markets, and is evaluating whether to offer Amazon's video service, said Eric Tveter, chief executive officer of Liberty's Central Europe unit, earlier at the conference, according to a report by Digitaltveurope.net.

"We would partner with almost anybody, but our interests have to be aligned," Balan Nair, chief technology and innovation officer for London-based Liberty, said at the conference. "When our interests and Amazon's interests are aligned, you'll see them on it, but at this point there's a reason they're not on our box." Nair and Green declined to specifically comment on any discussions in subsequent interviews.

The traditional TV industry is divided on whether to welcome internet streaming and video-on-demand providers onto set-top boxes. Liberty Global believes offering Netflix has helped it hold onto subscribers by improving the ease with which they can access various subscription services, while Rupert Murdoch-backed satellite TV provider Sky Plc has steered clear of any deal with Netflix and boosted spending on its own content instead. Netflix and YouTube also have deals with Comcast Corp., the largest U.S. cable-TV provider. Amazon believes there's room for all in TV and "it's not a zero-sum game," Green said.

"Amazon, Netflix, other OTT services can easily co-exist with the cable industry, with pay-TV, as we do already," Green said, referring to so-called over-the-top providers that use internet to deliver content. "The overlaps are very high between subscribers to high-value pay-TV packages and to subscribers of Netflix and Amazon and other SVOD services," he said, referring to subscription video-on-demand.

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

## WikiLeaks: Here's How The CIA Hacks Your Phones, TVs And PCs

March 8, 2017

*"WikiLeaks said the CIA had also "hoarded" vulnerabilities in the software run by tech giants like Apple and Microsoft, staying quiet about exploits so the agency could retain backdoor access."*

WikiLeaks says it's released thousands of documents showing secret CIA hacking tools that the agency can use to break into our phones, cars, computers and smart TVs.

WikiLeaks, which has published everything from US diplomatic cables to emails addressed to Hillary Clinton's campaign chairman, posted the alleged CIA documents Tuesday under the name "Vault 7." The documents could potentially reveal the agency's most important hacking techniques used to penetrate systems around the world. CNET is unable to verify whether the documents are real or have been altered.

"We do not comment on the authenticity or content of purported intelligence documents," CIA spokesman Jonathan Liu said in an email.

If the documents are the real deal, the leaks provide a glimpse into just how much access the CIA has into your life -- thanks to the gadgets you carry around all day. The magnitude of the hacking tools is jaw-dropping; the documents suggest the agency was able to break into the underlying operating systems running iPhones, Android phones and Windows and Linux computers.

That means it had access to data stored on the device and even to encrypted messages sent through popular services like WhatsApp, Signal and Telegram. In other cases, the hacks can turn gadgets like a Samsung Smart TV into listening devices, WikiLeaks said.

WikiLeaks has a long track record of releasing top secret government documents, and experts who've started to sift through the material said it appears legitimate, CBS News reported. Yet it's unclear whether these programs are still running and whether they affect the latest versions of each operating system.

### 'Untold Value'

If the tools are currently in use, "that has untold value," said Paul Rosenzweig, founder of cybersecurity company Redbranch Consulting and the former deputy assistant secretary for policy at the US Department of Homeland Security. "If Samsung TV is inside Vladimir Putin's home, this is a good thing [for the CIA]."

On the other hand, Rosenzweig said it's unlikely the CIA is the only group that knows about the holes that let these hacking tools crack into phones and other devices. "There's no reason to think these vulnerabilities are not also known to the Chinese, the Russians," he said.

These leaks come after more than a year of debate over government investigators accessing consumer devices. Frustrated at not being able to access encrypted information -- which is scrambled and unreadable without a password -- the government can get around encryption by buying or developing its own hacking tools that unlock devices.

The debate took off when the US Department of Justice sought to require Apple to help it open an encrypted iPhone belonging to one of the San Bernardino shooters. After Apple fought back in court, the FBI said it had obtained another way to access the phone.

If the CIA could break into a phone's operating system, it wouldn't have to break the encryption; it would simply gain the same access to messages and data that regular users would have when unlocking a phone or computer.

White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer declined to comment on the leaks.

Google and Motorola declined to comment on WikiLeaks' claims. Samsung said it was investigating the CIA's hacking tools.

"Protecting consumers' privacy and the security of our devices is a top priority at Samsung. We are aware of the report in question and are urgently looking into the matter," Samsung said in a statement.

Apple said late Tuesday that it had already addressed many issues described in the documents released by WikiLeaks.

"While our initial analysis indicates that many of the issues leaked today were already patched in the latest iOS, we will continue work to rapidly address any identified vulnerabilities," Apple said in a statement. "We always urge customers to download the latest iOS to make sure they have the most recent security updates."

For LG, the episode underscores the need for strong product security.

"Digital privacy isn't just an LG concern, it's an industry-wide issue that needs to be tackled by everyone who has a stake in the system, which is why we are completely committed to working with other industry players to make sure that consumers are protected to the fullest extent that today's technology will allow," LG said in a statement.

"We're aware of the report and are looking into it," a Microsoft spokesman said in an email.

### **Who Can You Trust?**

Alex Rice, an executive at HackerOne who focuses on helping tech companies find and fix bugs in their systems, said the revelations will likely further strain the relationship between tech companies and the US government. Why? They make it harder for regular people to trust their devices, which is bad for the tech companies' bottom lines.

"The US economy relies significantly on the trust of its consumers, and if consumers can't trust US-made tech products, this harms competitiveness," Rice said in an email.

Signal said the takeaway from the WikiLeaks documents isn't about messaging apps.

"The CIA-WikiLeaks story today is about getting malware onto phones, none of the exploits are in Signal or break Signal Protocol encryption," said Moxie Marlinspike, the founder of Signal. "This story isn't about Signal or WhatsApp, but to the extent that it is, we see it as confirmation that what we're doing is working."

Telegram said on its website that the problem lies with operating systems, not encrypted messaging apps, and that naming specific encrypted services is "misleading." WhatsApp declined to comment.

Edward Snowden, the former NSA contractor who leaked documents detailing NSA spy programs to journalists in 2013, wrote about the WikiLeaks documents Tuesday on Twitter. He said hacking the operating system is actually "worse" than hacking encrypted messaging services like WhatsApp.

### **Pokémon And Hoarding**

The hacking tools described by WikiLeaks go beyond merely opening encrypted devices. The WikiLeaks press release says the documents show the CIA developed tools to turn smart TVs into

listening devices with a tool called "Weeping Angel" and sought to find ways to hack the control systems in internet-connected cars.

Like something out of a spy movie, other colorful code names include "Brutal Kangaroo," a system to hide data images, and "Hammer Drill," which infects software distributed on CDs or DVDs. Other code names include references to Pokémon.

The documents describe a vast CIA hacking operation covertly based in the US consulate in Frankfurt and covering Europe, the Middle East and Africa. The documents include instructions to help officers on temporary duty get through German immigration easily and get euros, and a reminder not to leave electronics or sensitive items unattended in hotel rooms.

"Paranoid, yes," the document reads, "but better safe than sorry."

WikiLeaks said the CIA had also "hoarded" vulnerabilities in the software run by tech giants like Apple and Microsoft, staying quiet about exploits so the agency could retain backdoor access.

The leaks came from a high-security CIA network in Langley, Virginia, according to WikiLeaks. The US spy agency appears to have targeted computers, phones and smart TVs, according to CBS News.

In a tweet, WikiLeaks said that the CIA showed "negligence" in not protecting the information WikiLeaks was publishing.

Ed McAndrew, a former federal cybercrime prosecutor who now practices privacy law at Ballard Spahr, said that if the leaked hacking tools have found their way to groups other than WikiLeaks, that could leave everyone vulnerable to them.

"Once this stuff is released into the wild of the internet, there's no getting it back," McAndrew said. "It's pretty stunning, if legitimate, that this type of trove could be stolen and disseminated."

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

## Products & Services

### A Look Back At Nintendo Switch's First Week

March 10, 2017

*"While Nintendo hasn't shared exact sales figures, the company did say this week that Switch sales in its first two days were better than those for any other Nintendo console's first two days of availability."*

One week after its release, the Nintendo Switch video game console looks like a hit.

The console, which sells for \$300, lets users play games from their television and while on the go, and is nearly impossible to find in stores. People who have been able to buy a console are generally impressed by its features and games. Simply put, Nintendo has had a great week.

Here's a brief recap of the Nintendo Switch's first week:

#### A Successful Launch

The Nintendo Switch's launch couldn't have been better for the iconic game company.

In the days leading up to the Switch's release on March 3, the console earned positive reviews. Meanwhile, Nintendo gave demonstrations of the Switch in stores across the U.S. that attracted a large crowds.

On launch day, some retailers opened their doors at midnight to throngs of customers. And by the afternoon, the Switch was sold out, leaving those who didn't get a chance to preorder the device with two options: wait for available stock or buy the device for hundreds of dollars on top of the list price through eBay.

While Nintendo hasn't shared exact sales figures, the company did say this week that Switch sales in its first two days were better than those for any other Nintendo console's first two days of availability.

Here's a handy tool to help you find out where new units are available.

### **A Strong Game Lineup**

Part of the Switch's success so far can be attributed to the games for it that debuted at the same time. And chief among those games was *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*.

Some reviewers have called *Zelda* the best installment of the game franchise since the 1990s hit *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*. According to Metacritic, a site that collects reviews about video games, critics gave *Breath of the Wild* a score of 98 out of 100 from critics. Meanwhile, regular players gave it only positive reviews on Metacritic.

But *Zelda* is not alone. Another new Switch game, *Shovel Knight: Treasure Trove*, has earned a score of 88 out of 100. Three others—*Blaster Master Zero*, *Snipperclips*, and *Fast RMX*—have earned Metacritic scores of 80 or better.

### **Customers Praise Switch's Features**

New Switch owners have generally praised the console on social media for its gameplay. They particularly like the ability to place the Switch in its dock to play on their televisions, or remove it from there and play on the go without losing game progress. On Amazon, the device's customer ratings are at about 4.7 out of 5, and the console has earned similarly strong reviews on other retailer sites.

Granted, many of those customers are early adopters and they may not reflect the average customer. But in the past, initial excitement for new consoles has generally translated into strong sales over the long term.

### **A Look Ahead**

The Switch's popularity is expected to continue, and availability will be limited. But it's still too early to tell whether it'll mirror the Nintendo Wii's early days in 2006, when people waited in line every weekend for the small number of consoles available.

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

## Facebook Messenger's 'Day' Becomes Third Clone Of Snapchat Stories

March 9, 2017

Facebook Inc. isn't done copying Snap Inc., its younger, newly public rival.

In the social media giant's mobile chat app, Messenger, users can now post to a feature called Day to broadcast annotated photos and videos of their life that disappear in 24 hours. That's the same way the Snapchat app's popular Stories tool works.

In the past few months, features that resemble Stories have been unveiled for Facebook's WhatsApp, where it's called Status, and Instagram, where it's also called Stories. Facebook, based in Menlo Park, California, is also testing a version of the product in its flagship social network.

Facebook is mimicking the way people communicate on Snapchat across all its properties as it works to keep up with what users might want -- and to prevent them from shifting their attention to its competitor's app. Part of Snapchat's initial allure was its disappearing messages, which offered users relief from having to carefully curate their public personas -- unlike regular Facebook or Instagram posts that might be seen by a future employer or a judgmental acquaintance.

Los Angeles-based Snap, the owner of Snapchat, held an initial public offering last week, and now has a market value of more than \$25 billion. The IPO also brought up questions about the company's growth potential, with investors raising concerns that copycatting by Facebook might prevent Snapchat from expanding its user base.

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

## Emerging Technology

### Facebook Will Stream Live MLS Soccer Matches This Season

March 10, 2017

Expect at least 22 regular-season games on the social network starting March 18th.

Liga MX isn't the only pro soccer league you'll be able to watch on Facebook this season. The social network has signed another deal with Univision to stream at least 22 live Major League Soccer (MLS) matches in 2017. In addition to action on the pitch the league will produce over 40 "Matchday Live" analysis shows that will be exclusively available on Facebook.

Just like with the Liga MX deal that was announced last month, live games will be available on the Univision Deportes page on Facebook. That analysis show will be streamed live on the MLS page. The move also follows reports late last year that the social network was planning to prime its video push with sports and scripted shows. Rumblings surfaced last month that Facebook was "in advanced talks" to stream live Major League Baseball games this year as well.

With soccer season already started in both Mexico and the MLS, Facebook has nabbed rights to select games from the two biggest leagues in North America. Of course, 22 matches doesn't come close to the full slate of games. Like Twitter did with the NFL and Thursday Night Football, this is much more of a "game of the week" situation. Weekend MLS action is typically available to stream through both Fox Sports Go and WatchESPN, however both of those apps require a cable subscription. The league also has its own streaming option, MLS Live, that's priced at \$80/year or \$15/month.

*"Just like with the Liga MX deal that was announced last month, live games will be available on the Univision Deportes page on Facebook. That analysis show will be streamed live on the MLS page."*

The first match available on Facebook will be Chicago Fire at Atlanta United FC at 4PM ET on Match 18th. A pilot episode of "Matchday Live" debuted on the opening weekend, but there will be a new installment this Saturday, March 11th at 4PM ET.

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

## Twitter Tests A Feature That Warns Users Of Profiles With 'Potentially Sensitive Content'

March 9, 2017

*"Twitter tells us the new feature works similarly to how other sensitive content on Twitter gets flagged, based on users' settings."*

Twitter confirmed it's testing a new feature that flags users' profiles as potentially including "sensitive content." When you click on one of these profiles from a link on Twitter, or if you visit the profile's web page directly, you won't be immediately shown the users' tweets. Instead, a warning message displays, reading "Caution: This profile may include sensitive content."

When you click a link to the profile on Twitter, the message appears in a pop-up window. And if you visit the profile directly, the warning message is all that displays until you agree to view the content by clicking the "Yes, view profile" button.

A reporter at Mashable first spotted the feature when trying to view the profile of technology analyst Justin Warren, but could not determine how the content was flagged.

That's fairly difficult to do in this case — after all, Warren's tweets seem fairly innocuous, except for a little swearing at times.

Twitter tells us the new feature works similarly to how other sensitive content on Twitter gets flagged, based on users' settings.

Currently, the company permits content that contains violence or nudity, but it draws the line at "pornography or excessive violence in live video, or in your profile image or header image," according to its page on sensitive media. It doesn't mention profanity, racism, bigotry and other types of offenses, however. But sensitive content is not limited to "violence or nudity," we're told.

Users can choose to mark themselves as someone who tweets sensitive content through their "Privacy and Safety" settings.

In addition, other Twitter users can report tweets to the Twitter team for review. In this case, if the tweet is determined to be potentially sensitive, Twitter will label the content appropriately — or remove it, if it's a live video. It may also adjust your account setting for you, so your future tweets are marked accordingly, if it deems it necessary.

For repeat violations, Twitter may permanently adjust that setting on your behalf, it says.

The process for marking entire profiles as sensitive follows a similar set of guidelines and processes, including the fact that Twitter can take an active role in identifying these accounts, based on the content of the account's tweets.

The feature is still in testing, and not widely rolled out at this time.

A Twitter spokesperson confirmed the new feature, saying "this is something we're testing as part of our broader efforts to make Twitter safer."

In recent days, Twitter has taken a number of steps to address the issues of safety and abuse on its network. It has rolled out new filters for hiding harassing content, safer search results, a “time out” feature for bullies, user interface tweaks to hide low-quality and abusive tweets, a better Mute option, more transparency around abuse reporting and smarter algorithms for identifying and handling abusive content, as well as those that prevent abusers from coming back after it bans using new accounts.

Warning users about select individuals is not necessarily another change aimed at quelling abuse, but rather making the network feel more friendly. It’s not exactly a novel idea, of course. Plenty of networks flag content that’s not appropriate for all to see — like YouTube’s warnings on age-restricted content or Facebook’s warnings about graphic content, for example.

As with other new anti-abuse features, some people seem genuinely baffled as to why they were flagged, not seemingly able to connect the dots between their tweets and their consequences.

Twitter did not say when the new feature would be more broadly available.

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

## Mergers and Acquisitions

### New Bidder Emerges For Time Inc., Report Says

March 9, 2017

A group that includes Jahm Najafi, chief executive of the Phoenix-based investment firm Najafi Companies, and private-equity firm Pamplona Capital Management has emerged as a bidder for Time Inc, the Wall Street Journal reported, citing people familiar with the matter.

Reuters reported on Thursday that an investor group led by former music executive Edgar Bronfman Jr dropped out of bidding for Time, according to a source familiar with the matter.

Time, the publisher of People, Sports Illustrated, and Fortune magazines, could not be immediately reached for comment.

The presence of Najafi and Pamplona indicates the process is still competitive, even after the Bronfman-led investment group scrapped its bid.

Time, which was spun off from Time Warner two and a half years ago, has been exploring its strategic alternatives in recent weeks and has been working with investment banks on fielding indications of interest from potential buyers.

The company has struggled like many publishers to offset declines in print ad sales as advertisers spend more on other media.

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



## Pinterest Acquires Twitter Cofounder's Social Media Flop, Jelly

March 8, 2017

*"The move is intended to propel Pinterest's visual search and recommendation technology."*

Pinterest on Wednesday said it has acquired Jelly Industries, maker of the question-and-answer app Jelly, led by Twitter cofounder Biz Stone. The move is intended to propel Pinterest's visual search and recommendation technology.

Jelly CEO Stone, a cofounder of Twitter and Medium, will join Pinterest as a special advisor to Pinterest cofounder and chief product officer Evan Sharp. Also as part of the deal, Jelly CTO Ben Finkel will join Pinterest's growth product team. Pinterest said it will benefit from Jelly's artificial intelligence and search technology, which pairs users with experts who can answer their questions.

In a Medium post on Wednesday, Stone said he cofounded Jelly four years ago with the goal of building a "human-powered search engine." Jelly experimented with allowing users to search with questions and featured playful visual and sound effects. However, the app never took off among consumers. Pinterest did not disclose the terms of the deal. Not all of Jelly's technology is part of the acquisition, a Pinterest spokesperson said.

"The Jelly team's approach to an exploratory search powered by a mix of technology and human curation is closely aligned with our own vision," Pinterest's Sharp said in a statement. "The addition of Biz Stone, who's one of the great product thinkers and creators of our time, will move us closer to our mission of building a product that helps people around the world discover and do what they love."

Pinterest, which calls itself a digital catalog of ideas, recently expanded its suite of visual search tools with the launch of Lens, which allows users to use their smartphone cameras to search on Pinterest. Stone said in a statement that it was clear in his first meeting with Sharp that they shared the same interest in search and an "aspiration for technology to enhance humanity." The future of Jelly's apps, which could run separately from Pinterest or be integrated, is currently "unknown," Stone said in his blog post.

"Pinterest has built a service of incredible value which also happens to be useful and a joy to use," said Stone, who is an early Pinterest investor. "In joining Pinterest, Jelly has the satisfaction of following our dream of people powered search and discovery at a massive scale with a stellar team."

Pinterest reportedly generated about \$100 million in revenue in 2015 and about \$300 million last year. The six-year-old company was most recently valued by investors at \$11 billion and has raised \$1.3 billion in funding to date from investors such as Goldman Sachs and venture-capital firms Andreessen Horowitz and FirstMark Capital. Pinterest most recently said it has 150 million monthly users.

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

## Industry Reports

### T-Mobile Just Improved Its Unlimited Data Plan Again

March 9, 2017

T-Mobile said it would let customers on its unlimited data plans use 7% more data per month before hitting slower download speeds, as the battle to attract mobile phone subscribers remains heated.

T-Mobile customers on the carrier's unlimited plan, which starts at \$70 for one line, can use 30 GB of data per month, up from 28 GB previously, before facing potentially slower speeds. Other carriers

have set the level of potentially slowing data lower: 23 GB at Sprint and 22 GB on at Verizon and AT&T.

With the total number of wireless subscribers nearing a saturation point in the U.S. market, the four major carriers have gotten increasingly competitive with their plans. Sprint and T-Mobile first offered the low-priced unlimited plans last summer. Verizon followed last month, while AT&T cut the price of its plan and opened it to all customers in recent weeks.

Now the carriers are battling with even lower prices and improved terms. In January, T-Mobile stopped adding extra fees and taxes onto customers' bills. Sprint is offering up to five lines of unlimited data for only \$90 a month for a year. And all of the carriers have started to allow high-definition video streaming at no extra charge after Verizon included that feature as part of its plan.

Though all of the new unlimited plans do away with limited monthly data allowances, and the hated overage fees they can bring, the carriers have all imposed a more subtle data speed limit. If a customer hits the monthly data threshold, downloads can be slowed dramatically for the rest of the month—but only in areas where the mobile network is busy or congested.

T-Mobile on Thursday took pains to explain that the 30 GB slow down level threshold was not a data cap, like in the old allowance-based plans.

"Customers can continue to use unlimited amounts of data," the company said in a statement. And, "customers continue to get the fastest available speeds and may only notice a relative speed difference compared to other users during rare times and places of high demand."

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

## Samsung To Expand In U.S., Shift Some Manufacturing From Mexico: WSJ

March 8, 2017

*"The South Korean company's move comes amid criticism from U.S. President Donald Trump about companies manufacturing abroad for U.S. consumers."*

Samsung Electronics Co Ltd is planning to expand its U.S. production facilities, shifting some manufacturing from Mexico, the Wall Street Journal reported on Wednesday, citing people familiar with the matter.

The company is in early talks to open a new home appliance-making facility in the United States, a Samsung spokesperson said in a statement on Wednesday, adding that Samsung began reviewing manufacturing operations "early last fall." Samsung declined to comment on whether it would move manufacturing from Mexico.

Samsung's initial capital investment is expected to be about \$300 million, the Journal reported, citing people familiar with the matter.

An executive at Samsung in Mexico, who asked not to be named, said: "Whatever happens in the future is really a decision made by our headquarters, it's not an internal decision of ours."

Reuters reported early in February that Samsung may build a U.S. plant for its home appliances business.

The South Korean company's move comes amid criticism from U.S. President Donald Trump about companies manufacturing abroad for U.S. consumers.

The Trump administration has threatened an import tax, while Trump has attacked some of the world's biggest companies, prompting some to make promises to invest more in the United States.

Samsung's move follows a similar investment from rival LG Electronics Inc, which said last month it would spend \$250 million to build a home appliance factory in the United States.

At least five U.S. states are in talks with Samsung, and the move could generate around 500 jobs, the Journal reported.

[reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com)



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