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## This Week's Stories

### Comcast Offers Wireless Service But Only In Its Region

April 6, 2017

Comcast unveiled its wireless service on Thursday, bringing limited new competition to the market as the cable giant said it would offer plans only in its current regions.

After the cable industry's years of expensive stops and starts with wireless, Comcast's new service, dubbed Xfinity Mobile, includes just two basic plans, both with unlimited talk and texting. Unlimited data service will be \$65 per line or an a-la-carte plan will be \$12 per gigabyte. Subscribers will be able to switch from a la carte to unlimited and back at any time. Comcast didn't provide a launch date, however, saying only that the new service would be available "soon."

Compared to the plans from the major carriers, Comcast's pricing could be most appealing for people who use a lot of data on just one line or light data using families with multiple lines.

For a heavy user with one line, Comcast's unlimited pricing of \$65 per line is less than what most carriers charge now, but since Comcast doesn't discount the rate for multiple lines, it becomes less competitive in the marketplace at four or five lines.

"We get it," Dave Watson, Comcast's cable head, said on a call with analysts on Thursday introducing the service. "Wireless is a very hyper competitive marketplace."

Verizon's unlimited plan starts at \$80 for one unlimited line and rises to \$180 for four lines versus Comcast's \$65 to \$260 pricing. T-Mobile ranges from \$70 to \$160, and AT&T runs from \$90 to \$185, although it has a variety of video-related offers such as free HBO. Sprint unveiled new pricing just before Comcast's announcement, ranging from \$50 to \$120.

For multi-line accounts that don't use much data, Comcast's \$12 per GB price could be a real winner. A family of four sharing 5 GB per month would pay just \$60 on Comcast versus \$50 plus \$20 per phone, or \$130, at Verizon, for example.

"We're doing mobile differently by bringing our customers the best networks and a product designed to save them money in an increasingly data-driven world," Greg Butz, president of the new mobile effort, said in a statement.

Comcast's new plan will start without some features that other carriers offer. Customers won't be able to bring their own phone or smoothly switch voice calls from the mobile LTE network to a Wi-Fi connection. Those will come later.

Customers will be required to provide a credit card for automatic billing and Comcast said it will count all of a customer's wireless data usage and won't exempt its own apps or services, a controversial practice known as zero rating. The cable company also won't impose any separate limits on sharing a phone's wireless connection with a laptop or other device via tethering.

But Comcast may not pose as big a threat to the current wireless carriers as it might have, since the company will only offer service across its TV and Internet service areas in 39 states and Washington, D.C. That limits the target market to about 59 million people, including 29 million current Comcast customers, the company said. Subscribers' phones will work nationwide, of course.

Xfinity Mobile could attract as much as 10% of Comcast's current customer base, or about 2.5 million subscribers, in the next couple of years, analyst Jan Dawson of Jackdaw Research said. That would be "a nice boost to its revenues and profits, but will make only a tiny dent in the overall US wireless market," he said, noting that the big four wireless carriers added more 2.5 million customers in the last quarter alone.

T-Mobile CEO John Legere, who has predicted cable wireless services will "fail horribly, miserably," immediately took to Twitter on Thursday to unleash a torrent of criticism. "This is amazing, you can buy Verizon service for same \$ from equally or greater hated company... this is best news ever for @TMobile that is," Legere wrote in one tweet.

Comcast executives have said one goal is to convince its current Internet and cable TV customers to add the new wireless service to their current bundle. People are much less likely to drop service and switch to a competitor when they buy a bundle. So Internet customers who add Xfinity Mobile can get up to five lines without charge beyond the mobile data they use. And customers who already buy Comcast's best X1 premium cable TV packages will get a real deal, paying just \$45 per line for unlimited data.

Subscribers will also find that their Xfinity Mobile phones can automatically log-in to Comcast Wi-Fi hotspots and Comcast apps, like its Xfinity video streaming app.

The service will offer top selling phones, including the iPhone 7 and Samsung's new Galaxy S8. Comcast doesn't own its own wireless airwave licenses, so subscribers will actually be connected over Verizon's network. Supplemental coverage, which should help reduce customers' wireless data usage, will come from Comcast's 16 million Wi-Fi hotspots.

Like the other carriers, Comcast added an important caveat to its unlimited plan, saying customers' download speeds would be reduced if they used more than 20 GB per line. That's less than the 22-GB threshold used by Verizon and AT&T, 23 GB by Sprint and 30 GB from T-Mobile. And the other carriers say the slowdown only occurs in busy or congested areas.

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

## YouTube's Streaming TV Service Is Finally Live

April 5, 2017

YouTube TV is here.

Google's YouTube officially launched its new live TV streaming service, YouTube TV, on Wednesday. The \$35-per-month service is available in New York, Los Angeles, the San Francisco Bay Area, Chicago and Philadelphia to start with. The company says it will be adding more cities soon.

The service is targeted at those who don't want to pay for traditional cable packages. YouTube says its service is less than half the cost of an average cable subscription and can be canceled at any time.

The bundle includes shows from the major networks, as well as Bravo, FX, ESPN and Fox Sports. Users can also watch shows previously only accessible on YouTube Red, the company's ad-free subscription service, which also has original series and movies.

Google said that AMC, BBC America, IFC, Sundance TV, WE tv and BBC World News will soon be included in the service as well.

You can watch YouTube TV on your TV, phone, tablet or computer. It also has a cloud DVR with no storage limits and six accounts are included with the service.

*"You can watch YouTube TV on your TV, phone, tablet or computer. It also has a cloud DVR with no storage limits and six accounts are included with the service."*

YouTube TV will compete with other streaming TV services like Sling TV and AT&T's (T, Tech30) DirectTV Now.

In February, YouTube CEO Susan Wojcicki said consumers around the world watch one billion hours of YouTube every day and younger people don't want to watch TV through traditional channels.

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

## Products & Services

### Clips, The Coolest, Most Fun Thing Apple Has Done In A Long While

April 6, 2017

A few days ago when Apple launched a trio of iPhones and a highly affordable iPad, one simultaneous announcement went largely unreported.

It was for Clips, an Apple-made app which aims to take advantage of the current fad for sharing quick, fun videos, whether on Instagram Stories, Snapchat or Facebook.

The app is just about to go live on the App Store and I've been testing it out.

It's not unusual that Apple isn't first to a party – it always prizes doing it right above doing it first. So you'd expect Clips to be super-easy to use and highly effective.

Well, that's what it is.

When you launch Clips, the screen automatically shows the front-facing camera's viewpoint – you, in other words. The principle is that this app should ensure making a video of yourself painless and fast.

Along the top of the screen are four icons in the centre plus a musical note at the right.

The first icon is Live Titles. Tap it and a microphone icon and red bar appear. Press the bar to record and as you speak, your words appear on screen. That's pretty cool. But look more closely and you spot that the words appear as you speak them – pause for a second and the words continue on a new line.

This succeeds brilliantly and, if you time it right, makes your words look like poetry, or song lyrics. I even tried it with Shakespeare's 18th sonnet and it worked a treat.

The second icon is filters and here Clips resembles Prisma, for instance. There are eight filters altogether, including Comic Book, Noir and, my favorite, Ink. I look good in Ink, I think.

You can add the filters to images or video you shoot on the front or rear cameras.

The third icon is Overlays. There are 18 of these and they consist of captions in different fonts which once used you can swipe around the screen until they're where you want them.

Finally, there's Posters. Twelve options here of end cards in different styles with text you can configure. For both Overlays and Posters you must type in your text, not speak it.

Tap the music icon over on the right and you can add a soundtrack, which is smart enough to know the length of your video clip and work to that length.

.....  
*"The principle is that this app should ensure making a video of yourself painless and fast."*

Some basic editing is possible, but this is definitely a quick solution, not the in-depth program which is iMovie. You can edit the order of your clips and stills, adjust how long they run for and so on. You can use Clips for up to 60 minutes at a go, though the longest possible time for any individual video is 30 minutes.

You can share clips to Facebook, Instagram, Mail and more and the sharing tab also has a new way to share with particular people appearing. If you start the video saying, "Hello, George" and there's a George in your address book, he'll be a suggested recipient.

Let's be clear, this is dazzling fun. But it's also an exceptionally easy tool which will have more serious uses, like journalists reporting from product launches. Don't know why that jumped into my mind.

It's out now, downloadable from the App Store and it's free. You need an iPhone 5s or more recent, running iOS 10.3 or later. It also works on the new iPad, all iPad Air and iPad Pro models and iPad mini 2 and later.

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

## Twitter Unveils Low-Data 'Lite' Service

April 6, 2017

Twitter is rolling out a faster, data-friendly version of its service. Twitter Lite is a new, mobile-only version that uses less data, loads more quickly on slow connections and takes up less than one megabyte of space.

The service is available by default at [mobile.twitter.com](http://mobile.twitter.com) globally, rather than through an app. But Twitter said Lite is particularly aimed at people in emerging markets such as Asia Pacific, Latin America and Africa, where mobile data is expensive.

Twitter said the new service announced Thursday has up to 30% faster launch times compared with the original. Lite also offers faster navigation to key Twitter features like the main timeline, direct messages and notifications.

Users can reduce data usage even more by turning on data saver mode, which among other features provides a preview of images and videos to allow users to choose which ones to load fully. The data-saver mode can reduce usage by up to 70%, Twitter said.

Twitter also partnered with Vodafone in India, a telecom operator with more than 200 million subscribers, to promote the service to their customers to get live sports updates on Indian Premier League matches. The company plans to ink more partnerships with entities in emerging markets in the future.

Reaching emerging markets has been a big focus in the tech industry recently. Last month, chipmaker Qualcomm unveiled a new mobile platform that brings 4G LTE connectivity to entry-level (or "dumb") phones. It's designed for phone makers whose target customers don't have access to affordable smartphones.

On Tuesday Google officially launched the beta version of YouTube Go in India, which was announced last September. The app saves data and allows offline viewing.

In 2015 Facebook released its own Lite app, which works quickly even on slow mobile networks in emerging nations.

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

*"Users can reduce data usage even more by turning on data saver mode, which among other features provides a preview of images and videos to allow users to choose which ones to load fully."*

## Emerging Technology

### Google's Fact Check Feature Goes Global And Comes To Google Search

April 7, 2017

*"In practice, this means that if you are looking for facts in Google Search (maybe to make sure it's not fake), you will now regularly see information from sites like PolitiFact or Snopes that will prominently appear on the page."*

We live in the age of fake news — both the really fake news that's simply fake and the kind of news that some people like to call "fake" only because they don't like hard facts. As long as there's money to be made from fake news (or political gain to be had), the problem isn't likely to go away. And while there are plenty of fact-checking organizations, unless you are looking for their data, you aren't likely to see it.

Over the last few months, Google started working with these fact-checking groups to include links to their posts in Google News' story clusters. That was a relatively limited program, though, and only available in the U.S. and U.K. Starting today, though, the company is going to cast a far wider net: fact check is now available globally and, in addition to Google News, it's coming to Google's search results pages.

In Google News, articles that include a fact check are marked with the "fact check" label.

In practice, this means that if you are looking for facts in Google Search (maybe to make sure it's not fake), you will now regularly see information from sites like PolitiFact or Snopes that will prominently appear on the page. Google will present a link to those sites' fact checks, together with a bit of additional information about the claim and, of course, whether this organization rated it as true or false (or somewhere in the middle).

Occasionally, of course, different groups may have come to different conclusions. Some of these claims can be a bit fuzzy, after all. Google says it will present those different opinions to its users. "Even though differing conclusions may be presented, we think it's still helpful for people to understand the degree of consensus around a particular claim and have clear information on which sources agree," the company writes in today's announcement. "As we make fact checks more visible in Search results, we believe people will have an easier time reviewing and assessing these fact checks, and making their own informed opinions."

On its help pages, Google notes that it is obviously not doing these fact checks itself ("If you disagree with a fact check, contact the website owner that published it"). Organizations that want to add their fact checks to Google Search must follow Google's relatively stringent guidelines (the last thing Google wants, after all, is to unwittingly include fake news that masquerades as a fact check...). At the end of the day, though, it's an algorithm that decides whether the source of a fact check is trusted — and chances are, somebody is going to find a way around this sooner or later.

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

### Sources: Amazon Wins Rights To Live-Stream Thursday Night Football

April 5, 2017

Amazon is getting into the live sports broadcasting business. The retailing giant, which has spent hundreds of millions of dollars acquiring content for its subscription video business, has won the rights to stream "Thursday Night Football" games for this upcoming season.

Sources confirmed to ESPN that the deal to stream the games, which will be simulcast on the NFL Network and either CBS or NBC, is worth \$50 million, up from the \$10 million that Twitter paid for the streaming in the deal last season.

The Wall Street Journal and the Sports Business Journal broke the story.

Unlike with Twitter, where anyone who logged on could see the games, only Amazon customers who pay for its Prime service will have access. Another revenue stream will come to Amazon through some ad inventory, though the \$50 million price is relatively less of a spend for Amazon than \$10 million was for Twitter.

Twitter executives were publicly thrilled with the integration of Thursday Night Football games into their platform, but when it came time for renewal, the company was not well positioned financially against the other serious bidders. Joining Twitter with bigger offers this time were Amazon and Facebook, two of the top seven most valuable companies in the U.S.

Amazon, which accounts for more than half of every new dollar spent online in America, according to The Economist, charges \$99 per year, or \$10.99 a month, for its Prime service.

The company bought video game streaming site Twitch, popular among esports enthusiasts, for \$970 million in 2014.

This is the second year of a two-year deal to simulcast the NFL Network's broadcast of TNF. Both CBS and NBC pay \$225 million a piece per year to broadcast five Thursday night games a season.

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

## Mergers and Acquisitions

### Adblock Plus Parent Buys Content-Funding Startup Flattr

April 5, 2017

Eyeo GmbH, the parent of online ad-blocking software Adblock Plus, is buying Flattr, a company that lets users make payments to websites for individual articles they read.

The transaction comes after the two companies joined last year to bring the micro-payment service to Adblock Plus users. Financial terms of the deal weren't disclosed.

Flattr's latest product allows readers to specify how much money they want to pay every month for content, which is then divided automatically among the websites that users visit. The system is designed to reward websites for engagement and not just clicks.

As consumers continue to adopt tools that block many online ads, some media companies have started using software designed to counteract the effects of ad-blocking.

Flattr says that its micropayment model could provide a new revenue stream for websites and is better suited for how users consume content today, which occurs across a wide variety of sources.

The Sweden-based startup, launched in 2010 by Peter Sunde and Linus Olsson, said several thousand euros have been paid through its system in the past year but mainly from longstanding users of an older version of its software.

The company is working to fully build and launch the new, automatic version of Flattr, but little revenue has been generated so far.

Publishers lost \$24 billion in revenue globally because of ad-blocking in 2015, according to estimates by London-based research and consulting firm Ovum.

London-based venture-capital firm Passion Capital was among FlatTr's investors.

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

## Yelp Acquires Wi-Fi Marketing Company Turnstyle Analytics For \$20 Million

April 4, 2017

*“With Turnstyle, Yelp aims to give its small-to-medium sized business customers a means of connecting with [the 93%] offline customers.”*

Yelp this morning announced it has paid \$20 million in cash to acquire the Wi-Fi marketing company, Turnstyle Analytics, which offers a service that allows businesses to connect with their customers over a freely provided Wi-Fi network. The move, Yelp explains, is aimed at expanding the types of business marketing services Yelp already offers beyond those that are focused on customer acquisition, to also include those that help businesses with customer retention and loyalty.

Toronto-based Turnstyle was founded in 2012 that today supports nearly 3,500 businesses, primarily across the U.S. and Canada. According to the logos on its website, these customers include Back Alley Burger, Burger King, Broncos Slider Bar, Subway, and others.

Turnstyle is a paid service for its business customers, based on scale that offers insights into customer behavior, visits and more, gained from the free guest Wi-Fi logins.

Customers who agree to use the free Wi-Fi provide their email address, which then allows the business to build out a target customer contact lists. The businesses can also take advantage of analytics tools that provide additional insight into visits – tracking things like frequency, to identify their most loyal customers, and duration, among other factors.

Yelp explains that the average consumer today spend more than five hours per day online, but still makes approximately 93 percent of their purchases offline. With Turnstyle, Yelp aims to give its small-to-medium sized business customers a means of connecting with those offline customers.

In addition, it points out that free Wi-Fi has been shown to increase foot traffic and sales figures. 62 percent of customers spend more time in places that provide free Wi-Fi and 50 percent of those customers spend more money on services and products as a result of the extra time spend in the establishment, Yelp noted, pointing to a Small Biz Trends survey.

Businesses using Turnstyle are able to send out emails to customers, as well as offer them other incentives and rewards to encourage their repeat visits. It lets businesses automate their marketing, as well, doing things like scheduling message delivery for days, weeks, or months in advance, or sending out digital coupons in email or SMS campaigns.

Those campaigns can be customized, by changing the incentives to meet various metrics. For example, it can trigger offers when customers enter or exit the venue, after they've visited a certain number of times, or it can reach those who haven't visited in a certain period of time, offer incentives to first-time customers, send out birthday rewards, and more.

The product is currently used by a number of clients, including restaurants, cafes, retail stores, auto dealers, spas, salons and others – basically, anywhere a consumer may be spending time and lingering around, and expects there to be free Wi-Fi.

Turnstyle's clients will continue to be supported, and won't have any change in either their service offering or pricing as the company begins its integration with Yelp.

Meanwhile, the 30 employees located at Turnstyle's headquarters in Toronto will also be joining Yelp. No layoffs are expected, Yelp says. The brand name "Turnstyle" will remain for the time being, though that could change in time.

Yelp says that although Turnstyle is supported outside the U.S. and Canada, its focus with the product will be on the North American market.

"We're excited to expand our product offering for local businesses through this acquisition. Turnstyle helps connect businesses to consumers through free public Wi-Fi, and is an effective retention and loyalty program that helps businesses be more successful," said Jeremy Stoppelman, Yelp co-founder and chief executive officer, in a statement about the acquisition.

The company will share more information about the Turnstyle revenue model during its Q2 earnings call, but declined today to speak about its financial information, like revenue and growth rate. However, it says that it's not adjusting guidance as a result of the acquisition.

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

## Industry Reports

### How Sprint Is Making Its Unlimited Data Plans Cheaper For The Long-Term

April 6, 2017

*"Sprint said that starting on April 7, it would only offer its unlimited data plan that also includes unlimited talk and texting."*

With competition getting even tougher in the wireless market, Sprint on Thursday reduced the long-term price of its unlimited data plan and eliminated all its offerings with data allowances.

The announcement came just minutes before cable giant Comcast was to unveil its new wireless service and after months of price chopping and advertising battles over unlimited plans from AT&T, Verizon, and T-Mobile.

Sprint said that starting on April 7, it would only offer its unlimited data plan that also includes unlimited talk and texting. Download rates can be slowed if a customer uses more than 23 GB on one line in a month. The plan will start at \$50 for one line, \$80 for two lines, \$90 for three lines and \$120 for four lines. That's cheaper than any of Sprint's competitors, though the carrier did end its promotion of \$90 for up to five lines for one year.

Sprint said it eliminated its remaining plans with a data allowances because more than 90% of customers were opting for the unlimited plan.

Unlimited data plans have appealed to wireless customers sick of worrying about whether they had enough data remaining and wary of overage charges that accrued when they exceeded their allowances. Sprint and T-Mobile kicked off the industry's shift to cheaper unlimited plans last summer and AT&T and Verizon have sought to catch up with new plans this year.

The deals for customers may not be so great for investors in the stock of Sprint and its competitors. All of the price cutting will cut into profits of the four major carriers, Jefferies analyst Mike McCormack noted this week, as he cut his earnings estimates.

Comcast is expected to offer both limited and unlimited plans for its wireless service. The cable giant is leasing airwaves from Verizon to carry its customers' wireless traffic.

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

## Samsung Tips Best Quarterly Profit In Over Three Years As Chips Soar

April 6, 2017

*"Investors and analysts expect Samsung to report its best-ever quarterly profit in April-June, with the Galaxy S8 smartphone hitting the market on April 21 in Samsung's first premium device launch since the Note 7's withdrawal in October."*

Samsung Electronics forecast on Friday its best quarterly profit in more than three years in the January-March period, beating expectations and putting it on track for record annual earnings on the back of a memory chip super-cycle.

The Apple rival has rapidly recovered from last year's costly failure of its fire-prone Galaxy Note 7 device, despite a political scandal involving Vice Chairman Jay Y. Lee who appeared in a Seoul court on Friday facing charges including bribing ousted president Park Geun-hye.

The global memory chip leader said first-quarter operating profit was likely \$8.8 billion, compared with an average forecast of \$8.29 billion from a Thomson Reuters survey of 18 analysts. Revenue rose 0.4% to \$44.1 billion, just ahead of analysts' forecasts.

"The semiconductor business was likely the main driver for earnings," said Heungkuk Securities analyst Lee Min-hee, adding that sales of mid-to-low tier smartphones also helped the mobile business remain profitable.

Samsung shares touched a record high of \$1,882.2 in late March on expectations of record annual profit in 2017, as the South Korean tech giant bounced back from the embarrassing withdrawal of its Note 7 devices due to combustible batteries.

Investors and analysts expect Samsung to report its best-ever quarterly profit in April-June, with the Galaxy S8 smartphone hitting the market on April 21 in Samsung's first premium device launch since the Note 7's withdrawal in October.

Some researchers forecast the S8, which sports the largest screens for Samsung high-end smartphones to date, to set a new first-year sales record.

"Samsung will look to recover market share they lost last year and pump up volumes even if they have to spend more to do so," IBK's Kim said.

All this is happening amid management upheaval at South Korea's biggest family-run conglomerate, with third-generation leader Lee embroiled in a scandal that has already led to Park's removal from office for allegedly receiving bribes.

Lee was arrested in February over his alleged role in a corruption scandal. He denies any wrongdoing. **Chips Sizzle**

While Samsung will not provide detailed earnings results until the end of April, analysts tipped its chip division to earn a record \$5.12 billion in January-March and propel the firm to its best overall operating profit since the third quarter of 2013.

Favourable memory market conditions will likely persist throughout 2017 due to diminishing production gains on investments and careful capacity management among chipmakers.

Growing demand for more firepower from devices such as smartphones and servers have also helped push up margins for Samsung and its rivals in recent quarters.

Samsung shares were down 1.2% in early Friday trade, underperforming a 0.2% fall for the broader market on profit-taking pressures.

The stock rose 14% in January-March, its strongest gain since the first quarter of 2012.

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



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