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This Week's Stories

Facebook Bows Out Of Bidding War For Big-Time Sports -- For Now

May 4, 2017

Facebook is backing away from the high-priced market for big-time sports, setting the social network apart from other digital media companies and drawing a line in the sand for the major leagues.

Leagues like the NFL and Major League Baseball are increasingly looking to non-traditional broadcasters like Twitter, Amazon and Verizon to help reach viewers who don't subscribe to cable. Recently, Amazon agreed to pay \$50 million for the NFL's 10 Thursday night games, and Verizon will reportedly pay about \$21 million to stream an NFL game in London. Twitter recently showcased its sports content for media and advertising executives, including new shows and deals with the PGA and with the WNBA.

But Facebook executives emphasized that, while the social network may make some strategic investments in "anchor content," it is betting on long-form video. Chief Executive Officer Mark Zuckerberg said on an earnings call Wednesday that the company plans to pay for content by sharing advertising revenue. Traditionally, the major leagues have rejected that model, preferring to simply sell their rights for ever-higher fees.

"The long-term goal is actually not to be paying for specific content like that," Zuckerberg said.

Facebook, which has 1.94 billion monthly users, had made its pitch for such content. The company was one of four finalists for the NFL's 10-game Thursday night package, and earlier this year considered streaming one MLB game per week. In the past year, Facebook has streamed a variety of games featuring Major League Soccer, Mexico's professional soccer league and high school football. Facebook has long maintained that the platform is a natural complement to sports, and the company is continuing to experiment with smaller-scale sports partnerships.

The more popular -- and more expensive -- sports content, like the exclusive rights from the major U.S. leagues, are tied up for the next few years. Facebook, along with Twitter, Google, Amazon and others, had been expected to play a large role in those talks next time around.

"These giants, these money-laden giants, are just awakening to the promise of sports," former NBA Commissioner David Stern said last week on the Bloomberg Business of Sports radio show. "And they're going to awaken on a global basis."

bloomberg.com

Everyone's Getting Blasted With This Google Docs Scam

May 3, 2017

A sinister email is making the rounds in which the sender—someone you know, in some cases—invites you to click on a Google Docs link. People who click on the link can get pulled into a world of trouble so, first things first, do not click the link. Just delete the email.

Here is Google's follow-up statement:

“We realize people are concerned about their Google accounts, and we're now able to give a fuller explanation after further investigation. We have taken action to protect users against an email spam campaign impersonating Google Docs, which affected fewer than 0.1% of Gmail users. We protected users from this attack through a combination of automatic and manual actions, including removing the fake pages and applications, and pushing updates through Safe Browsing, Gmail, and other anti-abuse systems. We were able to stop the campaign within approximately one hour. While contact information was accessed and used by the campaign, our investigations show that no other data was exposed. There's no further action users need to take regarding this event; users who want to review third party apps connected to their account can visit Google Security Checkup.”

[fortune.com](#)

Products & Services

Roku's Twitter Channel Brings Livestreams To Your Living Room

May 4, 2017

Twitter just announced a slew of new live content earlier this week and now Roku is giving its users a way to watch it all in their living room. The set-top box company revealed today a dedicated channel for all of Twitter's live video on its range of streaming devices. This means that you'll be able to follow along just like you would on any other Roku channel rather than through Twitter on mobile or the desktop.

Of course, this means Roku owners now have the option to watch live coverage of sports, news, politics and more from their sofa and on the biggest screen in their house. Twitter's live video partners include *Bloomberg*, *BuzzFeed*, NBA, MLB, Live Nation and many more so there's a range of stuff to choose from. And that includes an upcoming 24-hour news option. In addition to streaming the live content, the Roku channel will also feature a Twitter timeline to keep you up to speed on the conversation surrounding whatever you're watching.

While the new channel will certainly come in handy, Roku is somewhat late to bring a dedicated option to its range of hardware. Apps for Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV and Xbox One added live Twitter streams to those devices back in September while Android TV tacked on the social network's content in November.

Live Twitter video on Roku is available to all owners of a current-gen streaming device today via the Roku Channel Store. What's more, you don't need a Twitter account to watch, so anyone with the proper gear can tune in.

[engadget.com](#)

Hulu Live TV Service Launches With 50 Channels For \$40 Monthly

May 3, 2017

Streaming-video provider inks Scripps Networks deal for live, VOD

Hulu has officially unleashed its horse in the crowded virtual pay-TV race.

The streaming-video provider announced the beta launch of Hulu With Live TV, priced starting at \$39.99 monthly for around 50 channels. The service includes ABC, CBS, Fox, NBC programming —

“In addition to streaming the live content, the Roku channel will also feature a Twitter timeline to keep you up to speed on the conversation surrounding whatever you're watching.”

“By calling it a “beta,” Hulu is able to set a lower bar for customer expectations for the live TV offering — in the event that the service suffers some early hiccups.”

with the availability of local TV stations varying by market — and cable nets including ESPN, CNN, Fox News, TBS, TNT and Disney Channel. Showtime is available for \$9 extra.

Hulu, which broke the news at its upfront presentation Wednesday in New York City, also announced a new agreement with Scripps Networks Interactive to add networks including HGTV, Travel Channel and Food Network to both Hulu’s new live service and existing premium streaming offering. Under the pact, Hulu now offers full seasons of Scripps Networks series in the VOD service.

“Hulu can now be a viewer’s primary source of television,” said Hulu CEO Mike Hopkins. “It’s a natural extension of our business, and an exciting new chapter for Hulu.”

Also at its upfront, Hulu also announced the renewal of “The Handmaid’s Tale” for season 2 plus orders for Marvel’s “Runways” teen superhero series and Mars-mission drama “The First,” from “House of Cards” creator Beau Willimon.

In addition, Hulu will become the exclusive subscription streaming home to NBC’s hit primetime drama “This Is Us,” senior VP and head of content Craig Erwich announced. It also landed exclusive SVOD rights to FX’s breakout freshman comedy series “Atlanta,” starring Donald Glover.

Missing from Hulu’s live TV menu: HBO, AMC Networks, Viacom’s Comedy Central, Nickelodeon, MTV and other nets, Starz, and Discovery Communications channels. The company said additional premium network add-ons will become available soon.

Another catch: While local TV stations will be available in the service across the U.S., Hulu won’t offer all four major networks everywhere. Local ABC, CBS, Fox and NBC broadcast nets are available in L.A., New York, San Francisco, Philadelphia and Chicago. In other markets, Hulu With Live TV will have holes in the lineup; the company says it’s working to cut deals with station groups and will add more local channels over time.

By calling it a “beta,” Hulu is able to set a lower bar for customer expectations for the live TV offering — in the event that the service suffers some early hiccups. It’s currently available on Xbox One, Apple TV, Chromecast, iOS and Android devices, with more device support to come.

The Hulu With Live TV service includes content from the four major broadcast networks — ABC, CBS, Fox and NBC (again, local stations will vary) — and cable networks including ESPN, CNN, CNBC, Fox News, Fox Business, Fox Sports, MSNBC, CBS Sports, NBC Sports, TNT, Bravo, E!, Food Network, HGTV, Travel Channel, A&E, Cartoon Network/Adult Swim, Disney Channel, Freeform, FX, History, Lifetime, National Geographic, TBS, USA Network, and Viceland. It also carries regional sports networks from Comcast and Fox in several markets. (See the full channel lineup here.)

For Hulu, owned by Disney, 21st Century Fox, Comcast’s NBCUniversal and Time Warner, the move into the virtual pay-TV space is an attempt to capture dollars from consumers looking for a more affordable “skinny” bundle. But it now puts Hulu in direct competition with the cable, satellite and telco TV distributors that are its parent companies’ biggest customers.

Hulu With Live TV will compete against a slew of other internet-delivered packages, including Dish Network’s Sling TV, Sony’s PlayStation Vue, AT&T’s DirecTV Now and Google’s YouTube TV.

Hulu execs believe its over-the-top pay TV bundle can stand out with its slick new interface and personalization features. They also tout the value of Hulu’s existing premium streaming library: The \$40-per-month base live television package includes the 3,500-plus TV and movie titles in Hulu’s current \$7.99 monthly plan that includes commercials. (An ad-free option for the VOD library costs an additional \$4 per month.)

The live TV service lets customers create up to six personal profiles, with each member of the household able to pick their favorite TV shows, news channels and movies. As they watch more content, the service learns about their preferences to adjust recommendations based not only on the content they consume but also time of day and which device they're using.

One nifty feature: Sports fans can follow their favorite major pro and college teams — and Hulu will find and record those games live (subject to availability). Hulu also offers “Kids Mode,” parental controls to restrict a specified profile to only child-appropriate programming.

The \$40 monthly Hulu With Live TV plan includes 50 hours of DVR recording storage, with up to six individual profiles and two simultaneous streams per account. In the baseline package, ad breaks in the DVR recordings aren't skippable. Also, Hulu will offer advertisers the ability to update their spots in DVR recordings dynamically, regardless of when the show was recorded, senior VP of ad sales Peter Naylor said.

It's angling to upsell customers who want more than that. Hulu's Enhanced Cloud DVR option (an extra \$14.99 per month) provides up to 200 hours of recording storage and more powerful cloud DVR capabilities, allowing them to record as many shows as they want to at the same time and watch from anywhere. The premium DVR add-on also lets users fast-forward through ads.

In addition, Hulu's Unlimited Screens option (also \$14.99 monthly) provides as many simultaneous streams as users' broadband connections will sustain, and three concurrent streams outside the home. For \$20 per month, Hulu is offering the Enhanced Cloud DVR and Unlimited Screens together (for a \$10 discount).

Initially, the service is accessible on Microsoft's Xbox One, Apple TV (fourth generation), iOS and Android mobile devices, and Google's Chromecast. Hulu says it will soon add support for other devices including Roku, Amazon Fire TV and Fire TV Stick, and Samsung Smart TVs.

In the pitch to advertising execs, Hulu said it now has more than 47 million total unique viewers, as measured by comScore — 32 million of which opt for ad-supported content. (Note: That's a measure of total viewers, not subscribers.) Meanwhile, under a new deal with Nielsen, Hulu said advertisers will have access to Nielsen's Digital Ad Ratings (DAR) across connected-TV devices starting in the fall of 2017, to provide a validated measurement solution across screens. Media buyers Magna, Horizon Media, and GroupM have all signed off on Nielsen's DAR, according to Naylor.

And the company pitched marketers on the new ad inventory it has with the OTT live TV service — the standard 2 minutes of local breaks per hour on cable networks that are available to pay-TV distributors.

Other news and notes from Hulu's upfront, held at the Theater at Madison Square Garden in midtown Manhattan:

- Hulu was eager to portray “The Handmaid's Tale,” the dystopian drama starring Elisabeth Moss it's bringing back for a second season, as a smash hit. Hopkins said it was Hulu's biggest-ever premiere, and Erwich gushed about it multiple times in his presentation. But neither exec offered any metrics to back up the claims of the popularity of the show, based on Margaret Atwood's bestseller.
- Hulu's subscriber base had a median age of 33 and average household income of \$84,000 — which SVP of sales Peter Naylor said gives it most affluent TV audience anywhere.
- Hulu will launch “T-commerce” interactive ads in partnership with BrightLine that will let subscribers purchase movie tickets through their connected TVs. The on-screen purchasing

capabilities will expand to other categories like retail and quick-serve restaurants in 2018, according to Naylor.

- Hulu's overall viewing metrics are up: Hours per subscribers have grown 20% year over year, while total streams have risen 50%, Hopkins said. Most Hulu viewing is on connected TVs — accounting for 75% of usage — with 16% on mobile devices and 9% on desktop PCs.
- Alec Baldwin is joining the cast of Hulu's "The Looming Tower" 9/11 drama, guest starring as CIA director of central intelligence George Tenet, Erwich announced.
- Sarah Silverman, whose "I Love You, America" comedy series from Funny or Die will hit Hulu this summer, told the crowd: "Folks, we did the research. Investing in this show is probably a terrible idea." She then added, "But f— it, all your decisions are kind of a gamble, right?"
- Seth Rogen, whose projects at Hulu include sci-fi comedy "Future Man," noted in a pre-recorded sizzle reel that advertisers pay only for ads that reach 100% completion, "which sounds kind of gross."

More info on Hulu With Live TV is available at hulu.com/live-tv.

variety.com

Emerging Technology

Epix Cast Offers An Easy Way For Viewers To Stream Movies To Their Connected TVs

May 4, 2017

Epix is launching a new feature that could make it easier than ever before to stream movies on your Internet-connected TV — Epix Cast, which allows you to find a movie in the mobile Epix app and then play it on your TV, even if the app hasn't been installed on that TV.

I saw a demo of Epix Cast last week. While there are other services that can turn your phone into a connected TV remote, I was impressed by the simplicity of the Epix Cast experience. When you find a movie that you like in the app, there's a "Tap to TV" option that will bring up a list of all the connected TVs and other media-streaming devices on your WiFi network. Select a device and your movie will start playing a few seconds later.

Epix says the feature works with smart TV models from LG, Sony, Vizio and other manufacturers, as well as Google Chromecast and Sony's Internet-connected Blu-ray players. The company also plans to add support for Samsung smart TVs, Roku, Amazon Fire TV, TiVo and Xbox.

During the demo, we switched between multiple TVs, and each time, the movie picked up right where we'd left off. Epix Cast doesn't just mirror the video that's playing on your phone, but checks online to find the highest quality version that will work on your TV, said Chief Digital Officer Jon Dakss (who joined Epix from NBCUniversal last year).

The technology comes from Vizbee, a mostly under-the-radar startup that's been building a platform for this very purpose. Vizbee CEO Darren Feher (who, like Dakss, used to work at NBCUniversal) argued that while mobile apps can offer a great way to find content, they're not great for watching videos that are longer than a few minutes. So he wanted to create a seamless connection between the app and your TV.

"When you find a movie that you like in the app, there's a "Tap to TV" option that will bring up a list of all the connected TVs and other media-streaming devices on your WiFi network. Select a device and your movie will start playing a few seconds later."

Dakss added that this approach felt right for Epix, because while the network has started to experiment with its own original shows, the focus remains on big movies like *Star Trek Beyond* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Out of the Shadows* (to pick a couple of examples from the “most watched” section).

“It was a no-brainer, based on our content,” Dakss said. “We’ve got the biggest movies out there in Hollywood, and they’re intended to be enjoyed on the best premium experience in your house.”

He also noted that while Epix has built apps for a variety of devices (including Xbox, Playstation, iOS and Android), this gives the network a streaming presence on even more TVs without having to build for each platform. That doesn’t mean Epix is abandoning its native app strategy, but Dakss said, “This now enables us to be a lot more selective.”

Epix was created by Viacom, Lionsgate and MGM in 2009 — they recently reached a deal for MGM to take full ownership. As for whether the network might follow the lead of HBO and others by offering a standalone subscription, separate from the full cable package, Dakss was noncommittal, only saying, “It’s an area that we continue to explore and look at.”

techcrunch.com

Walmart Applies For A Patent To Rival Amazon Dash

May 4, 2017

Wal-Mart Stores Inc has applied for a patent to compete with Amazon.com Inc's wifi-connected, one-button ordering device, Amazon Dash, according to data provider CB Insights.

The patent, filed in October, would be the first of Wal-Mart's more than 800 patents and applications to focus on Internet of Things (IoT) and branches into shoppers' homes, CB Insights said.

Wal-Mart's system would require less effort than Amazon's, a CB Insights blog post said.

"While Dash buttons still require users to press a physical button separate from the product, Wal-Mart aims to integrate IoT into the products themselves for automatic re-ordering with no user input at all," the blog post said.

businessinsider.com

Mergers and Acquisitions

Whirlpool Acquires Yummly, The Recipe Search Engine Last Valued At \$100M

May 4, 2017

Some consolidation in the world of subject-specific search and social networks, as a legacy player from the world of white goods makes a play for a wider audience. The Whirlpool Corporation — the world’s largest home appliance maker, founded back in 1911 — has acquired Yummly, a visual and semantic recipe search engine and aggregator with 20 million users, which also let you create shopping lists and (in some locations) order food for delivery and equipment to make a meal.

Terms of the deal, which was announced without much fanfare earlier this week — were not disclosed. Publicly traded Whirlpool is a \$14 billion business with revenues last year of \$20.7 billion, and it said the deal would have no material impact.

For some context, Yummly was last valued at \$100 million when it last raised, \$15 million in 2015. Since being founded in 2009 by David Feller and Vadim Geshel, Yummly had raised just under \$23 million, according to CrunchBase, with investors including Bauer, First Round, Harrison Metal, Intel Capital, Physic Ventures and Unilever Ventures.

Yummly plans to stay in its offices in Redwood City, California, operating as a subsidiary of Whirlpool, after the deal closes later this month.

The deal is an interesting one for a couple of reasons. It shows how legacy, non-tech companies continue to snap up tech startups to help catapult themselves into the future. And it shows how smaller, but notable, startups focused on specific verticals may opt for these kinds of exits in the face of trying to grow their businesses as independents in a forest of larger trees (in Yummly's case, the likes of Google and Pinterest).

For Whirlpool, the acquisition is one of many steps that the company has taken over the years to place itself into the current and next-generation of how consumers cook. If you have ever attended or read about the massive Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, you will have probably heard about some of the company's many efforts in the connected kitchen.

Whirlpool threw its hat into the ring with Samsung, LG and others early on with slightly gimmicky things like fridges with digital photo frames and iPod docks.

But more recently, it's been making appliances to fill out the kitchen of the future: including smart sensors that can detect what item you put on a counter to tell you what to do with it, cook it for you, and then clean up the dirty dishes you leave in the sink. It's also been an early partner of companies like Amazon and IBM as they, too, have sought more endpoints for their own IoT and connected home technologies.

"We are committed to introducing new products to market that remove complexity from the day-to-day lives of consumers. Increasingly, these products will be defined by both physical and digital experiences. Yummly brings an outstanding platform on which to begin building our digital product offering," said Brett Dibkey, vice president, Integrated Business Units for Whirlpool Corporation, in a statement.

Yummly basically can help extend the kinds of services that Whirlpool can offer in that context: it can more recipes and other suggestions for your food items; Yummly has created a lot of specific parameters for recipe searches which help make results more specific to what users need.

But it's also a potential standalone sales channel. Whirlpool owns brands like KitchenAid, and given that Yummly has already made moves to sell cookware (via Amazon), it becomes an obvious place to market blenders and more.

"We look forward to the many possibilities to create value for our consumers with this acquisition," said Joe Liotine, president of Whirlpool North America.

As for Yummly... it's not completely clear why the startup chose to sell up right now to Whirlpool, but my guess is that Whirlpool's interest, but also Yummly's own business fortunes, might be connected to the Pinterest effect.

The image-based search and discovery network last reported 150 million monthly active users and counts food and cooking among some of its most popular categories for users. That points both to direct competition for Yummly, but also the market opportunity for Whirlpool. Yummly, again, has 20 million registered users. A spokesperson said that the number of registered users was 1.7 million. (In 2014 it had 14 million unique visitors but no longer breaks out that metric, which makes sense if it's now focusing more on a base that visits more frequently.)

On top of Pinterest's size, Pinterest is investing in innovation: the company, which was last valued at \$11 billion (back in 2015), has raised about \$1.3 billion in funding, and it has been working on various features to improve how people use its services. These include Lens, the company's visual search engine, which now integrates with your phone's camera as well to detect items and provide Pinterest-based results for them.

Tying up with Whirlpool gives Yummly an avenue and budget to also explore ways of evolving its service, too.

"We are extremely excited about the opportunities and innovations we can create with Whirlpool Corporation," said Brian Witlin, CEO of Yummly, said in a statement. "Whirlpool's purposeful and consumer-centric approach to innovation aligns perfectly with what we do, who we are, and what we seek to create for consumers as the kitchen becomes ever-more digitally connected."

techcrunch.com

Twitter Pairs Up With Bloomberg To Get Into The 24/7 Streaming News Game

May 1, 2017

"According to the Wall Street Journal, the new network venture between Twitter and Bloomberg will launch this fall and tentatively be a mix of expanded Bloomberg TV network programming and curated user content."

If you haven't watched any streaming video on Twitter then you've probably had your eyes removed in some sort of strange social media voodoo ritual. Streaming video has become just as integral to the platform as one-liner from @robdelaney. Twitter's earnings report revealed that 800 hours of live video were eyeballed by 45 million viewers in the first quarter of 2017. Live video works and might give Twitter that profitability it's been searching for. So partnering with Bloomberg to stream 24/7 news seems like a inevitability.

Twitter has been streaming a few Bloomberg programs since the two media companies inked a deal last year. Going 24/7 with news seems like a better deal for Twitter, rather than relying on a terrible Thursday night NFL game to bring in more users to the platform. Thankfully Twitter lost that sweet NFL contract to Amazon earlier this year. Twitter has also worked with BuzzFeed, the PGA and is working on original content.

This news couldn't come at a better time for Twitter. Back in February, the company was looking at another round of layoffs as it struggles to find its footing. Twitter needs new eyeballs, preferably ones that aren't bots or random trolls that come out of Twitter retirement just to attack your political opinions. Twitter needs people who are going to use the platform to consume, rather than think they have the power to contribute.

"It's been hard, it will continue to be hard, but it's all worth it," Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey said on a conference call with investors back in February as shares plummeted. "Twitter changed the way the world communicates, and we'll do it again."

Well, Dorsey is holding true to that. According to the Wall Street Journal, the new network venture between Twitter and Bloomberg will launch this fall and tentatively be a mix of expanded Bloomberg TV network programming and curated user content. The service is unnamed but it will most likely be something like "Twitberg TV" or some mash-up. Perhaps not. That's just silly.

"It is going to be focused on the most important news for an intelligent audience around the globe, and it's going to be broader in focus than our existing network," said Bloomberg Media's CEO, Justin Smith.

Listen Smith, you're on the right track. The world wants exciting nonsense. We don't want to see boring stock tickers on Twitter or old white guys droning on and on about some political minutia. We want that sweet 24/7 news that hearkens back to the days of a white Ford Bronco speeding down the highway. That's the kind of news that will get more eyeballs. 24/7 coverage of the most insane stuff, curated from users around the globe. That's the kind of stuff that will create new viewers and bring in those video ad dollars.

Focus up Twitter, this might be the last shot at profitability.

forbes.com

Industry Reports

More Americans Have Cell Phones Than Landlines For The First Time

May 4, 2017

Deborah Braswell, a university administrator in Alabama, is a member of a dwindling group — people with a landline phone at home.

According to a U.S. government study released Thursday, 50.8 percent of homes and apartments had only cellphone service in the latter half of 2016, the first time such households attained a majority in the survey. Braswell and her family are part of the 45.9 percent that still have landline phones. The remaining households have no phone service at all.

More than 39 percent of U.S. households — including Braswell's — have both landline and cellphone service. The landline comes in handy when someone misplaces one of the seven cellphones kicking around her three-story house in a Birmingham suburb. "You walk around your house calling yourself to find it," she says.

It's also useful when someone breaks or loses a cellphone and has to wait for a replacement.

The Patterns

Renters and younger adults are more likely to have just a cellphone, which researchers attribute to their mobility and comfort with newer technologies.

The in-person survey of 19,956 households was part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Health Interview Survey, which tracks landline use in order to assure representative samples in ongoing health studies. The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 1 percentage point.

Cellphone-only home have other commonalities. "Wireless-only adults are more likely to drink heavily, more likely to smoke and be uninsured," even after factoring for age and income, says Stephen J. Blumberg, the study's co-author (and a landline user himself). "There certainly is something about giving up a landline that appeals to the same people who may engage in risky behavior."

Why that's so will require further research.

The survey doesn't get into why people ditch or keep landlines, though landline users cited a number of reasons for hanging on in phone interviews and email exchanges with The Associated Press.

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"According to a U.S. government study released Thursday, 50.8 percent of homes and apartments had only cellphone service in the latter half of 2016, the first time such households attained a majority in the survey."

No Choice In The Matter

Plenty of people would get rid of their landlines if they could. It goes beyond complaints about cellular reception at home.

Joe Krkoska, a supply chain director, needs a traditional copper wire for his home security system in Zionsville, Indiana. Getting rid of the line would require crews to drill holes in his home and put batteries in the bedroom. No thanks, he says.

Chris Houchens, who works in sales and marketing, says his phone company forces him to get a landline with internet service. There's no cable TV alternative where he lives in rural Smiths Grove, Kentucky.

And those who could drop phone service might pay more after losing package discounts. Martin Axel, a retired hospital administrator in Seal Beach, California, says dropping the landline would increase his cable bill by more than \$40 a month.

Emergencies

Traditional copper phone lines have their own power supply, so those landlines still work during blackouts. Internet-based phones through the cable or phone company aren't true landlines, although the CDC counts them that way. The internet modem for these phones still needs power.

Both kinds of landline phones are more dependable for 911. Even if you can't give dispatchers your home address, they would often have that already. Cellphones primarily use GPS for location, which means the dispatcher might know which building you're in, but not the specific apartment.

For that reason, Trey Forgety of the nonprofit National Emergency Number Association recommends landlines for those who live alone and have a disability or medical condition. He says cellphone location accuracy is improving, but there's still work to be done.

Spam Magnets

In many households, the landline is a honey trap for telemarketers.

"We never use the landline, and the only calls I get on it are from someone looking to sell me something," says Matt Lawrence, a management consultant in O'Fallon, Missouri.

On the other hand, it's comforting to have a device just for calls — without "all of the irritating bells and whistles of smartphones," says Brad Cooney, a Navy veteran in Brandon, Mississippi. "I can shut the (cell) phone off and still have a landline if someone needs to call me."

Phone Nostalgia

The landline harkens to an era in which a number is tied to a family and not an individual. You can call your parents' home and not play favorites in choosing Mom or Dad. Children can talk to Grandma at once from separate phone extensions.

"My parents had landlines, as did their parents," says Axel, the landline user in Seal Beach. "It's probably a habit. It just feels more comfortable to me."

Cynthia Dibblee, a retired teacher in Merced, California, has elderly parents who "can't remember our cell numbers but know the landline by heart."

The Future

USTelecom, a trade group for traditional phone companies, estimates that true landlines — the copper kind — now connect fewer than 20 percent of households. The group says companies have adapted by offering other types of services, including video and, for some, cellphones.

Even so, phone companies get new landline customers now and then.

Shawn Fisch, a 37-year-old teacher in New York, got his first landline after becoming a dad. When his son is old enough, he says, he'll need "an extra way to phone home."

time.com

Fitbit Beats Low Expectations On Stronger-Than-Expected Demand

May 3, 2017

Fitbit Inc. gave investors some much-needed good news, reporting revenue that beat projections and suggesting it's finally making progress in its transformation from a maker of step-counting gadgets to essential health-monitoring tools.

The hardware maker's profitability has sagged while it confronts a maturing market and falling sales. Fitbit shares have lost more than half of their value over the past year, as investors lost patience that upcoming products would resuscitate demand. The company reported earnings that came in well-below analyst expectations the past two quarters and cut staff earlier this year to reduce operating costs.

Sales fell 41 percent to \$298.9 million in the quarter ended March 31, Fitbit said Wednesday in a statement. Analysts on average estimated \$279.4 million, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. The company said it lost 15 cents a share, excluding some costs, compared with analysts' projection of a loss of 18 cents a share.

Fitbit's share gained 9.3 percent in extended trading at 4:28 p.m. in New York after closing at \$5.68.

Chief Executive Officer James Park has been trying to prove to investors that he can transform Fitbit into a digital-health company that relies less on consumers and more on the health-care industry. The company continues to increase its corporate program and earlier this year it unveiled an alliance with the UnitedHealthcare Motion wellness program that lets participants use Fitbit's Charge 2 fitness tracker.

Though the company has hung on as the market leader for fitness bands, it faces competition from lower-cost makers and smartwatches from Apple and Samsung Electronics Co. Fitbit's long-term growth depends on its ability to diversify into new product categories and software offerings.

Fitbit is "focused on positioning the company for the next stage of growth with wearables and connected health," Park said in the statement.

The company forecast sales in the current period of \$330 million to \$350 million, compared with estimates of \$350.1 million.

Expectations were low for the first part of the year, considering the market for activity trackers is shrinking and Fitbit planned no major new products, said Charlie Anderson, an analyst at Dougherty

"Chief Executive Officer James Park has been trying to prove to investors that he can transform Fitbit into a digital-health company that relies less on consumers and more on the health-care industry."

& Co. In the smartwatch category, Anderson said he expects Fitbit's growth will be tempered by competition from the Apple's product and the scores of Android watches.

"The good things are its loyal user base, but the bad thing is that it's hard to get confidence that it'll bring features to the table that aren't already in the market," Anderson said.

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