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Starting a Rural Broadband Revolution at RTIME

By Angie Tran

Use our cover story to help you on-site at the RTIME meeting in New Orleans, La.—or to find out what you’re missing. Go in-depth on our keynote speakers, Foundation for Rural Service and Rural Broadband PAC anniversaries, session highlights, membership benefits and our product previews. The revolution begins now, at RTIME.

A Changing Landscape

A New Congress in Washington

By Michael Daniels

2018 was a busy year for the telecom industry in Washington, and 2019 is shaping up to be very active for NTCA and its members. The rollout of the ReConnect Program, implementation of the Farm Bill and a changing committee landscape will all become immediate priorities in the new year. Congress will also want to make sure the FCC delivers on promises to resolve budgetary concerns in the Universal Service Fund High-Cost program.

Are We There Yet?

The Long Path Toward Regulatory Certainty and Sustainability

By Michael Romano

Telecom services simply cannot be provided in many deeply rural areas without a sound regulatory foundation and, in some cases, financial support. As we enter 2019, the industry stands on the cusp of obtaining levels of regulatory certainty not seen for more than a decade—although these changes still offer both promise and challenge for small operators in rural America.

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NTCA’s Mission: NTCA–The Rural Broadband Association works on behalf of small broadband providers who are working on behalf of rural America.

NTCA represents more than 800 small, rural, locally owned and operated broadband companies in the United States and abroad, as well as state and regional telephone associations and companies that are the suppliers of products and services to the small and rural broadband industry. Our readers are the managers, directors, attorneys and key employees of these broadband companies as well as consultants, government officials and telecommunications experts.

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The Rural Broadband Agenda for the Year Ahead

By Christian Hamaker, Editor

How’s your new year going? If you’re a rural-broadband company manager, you’re probably feeling more confident, or at least relieved.

2018 went out on a high note after the FCC’s adoption of an order providing greater sufficiency for the high-cost Universal Service Fund (USF). The order is, in the words of NTCA–The Rural Broadband Association Chief Executive Officer Shirley Bloomfield, “a watershed moment in our nation’s long-running effort to promote and sustain universal service in a broadband world.”

As you contemplate how this order may help your telco, make sure NTCA’s annual meeting, RTIME, is part of your decision-making. This issue’s cover story includes a message from keynote speaker Seth Mattison, details about NTCA’s new GetIN membership campaign, a deeper dive on RTIME educational content and ways you can celebrate landmark anniversaries for NTCA Rural Broadband PAC and the Foundation for Rural Service. If you’re on-site at RTIME in New Orleans, use this issue to enhance your show experience. If you’re at home, read up on how you can follow along on social media.

New Orleans isn’t the only hub of industry activity this winter. A new Congress has arrived on Capitol Hill, and the FCC is moving ahead with its 2019 agenda. Learn about NTCA’s legislative and regulatory priorities in our annual overviews beginning on pp. 28–29. And for a reminder of all that the industry experienced last year, consult Rural Telecom’s “Year in Review” roundup of 2018 articles on pp. 40–41.

Whether you’re a telco using new USF funds to expand your network or a solutions provider offering the latest resources to retain customers and boost bottom lines, we hope you’ll continue to look first to NTCA meetings—like RTIME—and publications—like the one you’re reading now—as essential industry resources that can help you make the most of a more favorable regulatory environment.
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Kids Best Parents in Battle of Smartphone Distractions

A Pew survey on parents, kids and their smartphones reveals how distracting the devices can be throughout the workday or school day.

"In some cases, teens might be a little bit better at managing their own distraction than their parents are," wrote Abby Ohlheiser. "Fifteen percent of parents told Pew that they are often distracted at work because of their phones. Just 8% of teens said the same about themselves at school."

But both groups are nearly equally susceptible to the temptation to respond quickly to texts. "Similar numbers of teens and parents (18% and 20%, respectively) report that they feel obligated to respond to messages from others immediately," Ohlheiser wrote.

Source: www.washingtonpost.com

Out With Passwords, in With Microchips?

Tired of always entering a password when you start your computer? Maybe a radio frequency identification chip (RFID) is the answer.

Patrick McMullan, president of Three Square Market in Wisconsin, joined last year with roughly 50 employees in volunteering to have a chip injected into his hand. The chips, wrote Rachel Metz, are intended to "make it a little easier to do things like get into the office, log on to computers and buy food and drinks in the company cafeteria." A year later, McMullen and a few others continue to use the chips, while 30 more employees have had chips inserted. Only two people have had them removed, and that was when they left the company.

Software Engineer Sam Bengtson said he uses his chip 10–15 times a day. He told Metz that "swiping his hand over an RFID reader plugged into his computer is no different from typing in his password on a keyboard."

Source: www.technologyreview.com

Device Anxiety Long Predates Smartphones

Eyestrain. Screen time. We worry that our devices are doing us in. But that fear has been around for decades.

"Before smartphones and handheld devices, that anxiety was directed at televisions," wrote Susan Murray. "From the time of their commercialization, people worried about the potential harms of the device: the harms of placing their face close to the screen, of watching for many hours at a time, of the appliance's position at the center of domestic life."

Concern about radiation-emitting color TV sets led to viewers to maintain "at least a six-foot viewing distance from the front of the screen and [avoid] prolonged exposure at the sides, rear or underneath a set."

The concern over TV radiation gradually faded, but today's smartphone users "share a niggling sense that something about the way people use them is amiss." Despite features that reduce blue light from displays, or apps that help reduce smartphone use, "these forces are producing an existential dread" about our device dependency. "It's hard not to feel that we are doomed to be destroyed by them eventually," Murray wrote.

Source: theatlantic.com
Is Your Email Address Helping or Hindering Your Career Prospects?

That email address you’ve had since college could be a roadblock in your career path.

“Recruiters and hiring managers know too well: Not everyone sheds their adolescent email addresses when they enter adulthood, instead maintaining allegiance to digital monikers based on the music, videogames and contraband they once held dear,” wrote Chris Kornelis.

Mackenzie Moore, a recruiter for tech startups, said she often refuses to consider applicants with drug-related handles. And if you want to come across as tech-savvy to a potential employer, go with Gmail addresses rather than AOL.

“Don’t even get her started on Hotmail,” Kornelis wrote.

Source: wsj.com

The Revenge of Analog: Typewriter Edition

Millennials might be tech-savvy, but some of them are embracing older ways of communicating—like the manual typewriter. “Vintage typewriters are making a comeback, thanks to young people who appreciate the machines in the same way they fell in love with vinyl records and turntables, wrote Cathy Free. Behind the surge in interest: Celebrities like Tom Hanks, as well as writers, collectors “and anyone who wants to own a reminder of simpler times.”

Paul Schweitzer, who runs the Gramercy Typewriter Co. shop in Manhattan, said he used to sell 10 manual typewriters a month in the early 2000s, but he’s now up to approximately 60 a month, “with millennials steadily buying the machines and bringing them in for service.”

Source: washingtonpost.com

For Some Workers, Negative Feedback Is Best

Who wants a bad performance review? Maybe more people than you think.

“Some people actually want and even seek out criticism at work,” wrote Sue Shellenbarger. “Who are these people?”

They “tend to be strivers who believe they can improve their skills and abilities,” and they’ve “embraced personal goals so compelling that they see criticism as a tool for helping reach them, rather than a setback.” They also have close friends at work, and “tend to be strong on both self-control and self-awareness.”

Source: wsj.com

TEENS: Don’t Talk to Us. Just Text.

If you have a teenager, this won’t come as a surprise, but a recent survey confirms it: Teens prefer texting to talking face-to-face. A Common Sense Media survey of 13- to 17-year-olds shows that 89% of teens have a smartphone and that texting is their favorite mode of communication. Only one-third (32%) prefer in-person interaction, down from 49% in 2012.

As for teen-to-teen interaction, 55% of respondents say they rarely or never put away their devices when spending time with friends. Yet 44% get frustrated when those friends are on their phones.

Source: axios.com

OWN SMARTPHONES

PREFER IN-PERSON INTERACTION

PREFER TEXTING
Short Attention Spans May Not Be a Problem

Shortened attention spans represent another common fear in our tech-addled age. How can we accomplish anything that requires extended concentration when we seem to crave constant distraction?

Don’t worry. Although a Microsoft report from 2015 asserted that the average human attention span had dropped to eight seconds from 12 seconds just two years earlier, “human attention has always been fleeting,” wrote Ben Healy. “A study conducted several years before the first iPhone was unveiled found that workers spent an average of just two minutes using a particular tool or document before switching to another.” ● Source: theatlantic.com

Geographical Wage Gap Stops Shrinking

For decades, the gap between higher-income and lower-income wages in the United States was closing. That’s no longer the case.

A report from the Brookings Institution’s Hamilton Project confirms what many have reported anecdotally: After decades of Americans moving toward higher wages and better jobs, people can no longer afford to move to areas that are more well-off economically. At the same time, the tech boom has benefited mainly already prosperous counties and states.

“By and large, places have gotten stuck,” Jay Shambaugh told Axios.

But one region has seen conditions worsen. “States and counties in the Midwest, which used to be the middle of the pack for household earnings, have plummeted toward the bottom,” wrote Stef Kight. However, the Upper Great Plains region, which includes North Dakota, is “experiencing a boom largely due to the fracking industry.” ● Source: axios.com

Vegetation Makes You Vivacious

Good news for those who live in rural towns with more green space than their nearest metro areas: You may be healthier than city workers.

According to Tom Jacobs, a study in the Journal of the American Heart Association shows that the natural world lowers the risk of cardiovascular disease by reducing stress. Researchers recorded the amount of green space within six-tenths of a mile from 408 study participants, all of whom had been diagnosed with cardiovascular disease or were considered at high risk of such disease, and they found that people who live near green spaces had lower levels of adrenaline and other stress-activated hormones. They also had higher levels of blood cells that encourage cardiovascular health.

“The overall pattern held true regardless of age, race, the socioeconomic status of their neighborhood, and whether or not the subjects smoked cigarettes or used statins,” Jacobs wrote. “So it’s not just a matter of wealthier people having better access to greener neighborhoods. Vegetation appears to be an equal-opportunity health promoter.” ● Source: psmag.com
Welcome New NTCA Members!

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We are very proud to announce that Kevin Beyer, General Manager of Farmers Mutual Telephone Company and Federated Telephone Cooperative, was elected chairman of NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association at the association’s fall board meeting last week.

7 in 10 teachers assign homework that requires internet access. But 1 in 3 households has no broadband. Where these numbers overlap is the #HomeworkGap. Thanks @SenAngusKing @SenCapito @JohnBoozman & @amyklobuchar having me join you today to talk about fixing this #digitaldivide.

Christmas trees are up at the @FCC! And underneath I found quite a December agenda—with plans to auction a lot of #5G spectrum. No coal from Santa this year: we’re also taking steps to reduce unwanted robocalls and spam texts.

A slow internet connection isn’t a minor annoyance—it’s a challenge to a region’s growth. With high-speed broadband’s growing importance, it’s essential that rural Maine communities can improve their broadband infrastructure to create new economic and educational opportunities.

New technology is providing affordable, reliable broadband in rural communities without access. Thank you @SteveDaines and @SenRonJohnson for your leadership to bridge the digital divide.

Lack of #broadband in rural areas puts rural America behind at home AND in the global marketplace. It’s time to bridge the rural digital divide.

Follow @POTUS’s lead, @usdaRD announced $600M for broadband infrastructure in rural America. High-speed Internet is a necessity and vital for economic opportunity. Thanks to Congress, which provided the funding.

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Stability in the USF

For the past several years, budget shortfalls in the USF High-Cost program have been an obstacle for small, rural carriers. In December, thanks to dozens of NTCA members who shared their stories and testified before congressional committees, as well as those who have spent literally hundreds of hours on committee calls and in FCC meetings, we secured some stability by way of the latest FCC order. It is a big step forward, and as with anything this complicated, there will be hiccups. NTCA will continue to work on your behalf to ensure USF programs remain sustainable mechanisms. We know how essential the work of closing the digital divide is to ensuring a bright future for rural America.

A New Congress

As wonderful as it was to close out 2018 on such a high note, after a well-earned vacation, we welcomed the 116th Congress to Washington, D.C., in January. In the new year, our advocacy and communications efforts will operate with an eye towards USF contribution reform, spectrum access, and reiterating to policymakers that “wireless—including 5G—needs wires.”

Taking Our Seat at the Cyber Table

NTCA secured its seat at the cybersecurity table in 2018. Our work included providing small-provider specific cybersecurity education through Cyber Wise, taking part in the Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) Cybersecurity Summit in New York City, and renewing our partnership with DHS and the National Institute for Hometown Security (NIHS) for 2019 to create a forum for small, rural telecom operators to share and receive timely and relevant cyber threat information. I’m excited to see what the next year brings as NTCA members continue to provide an important perspective on the cyber landscape.

Telling the Rural Telco Story

Last fall was a whirlwind of speaking engagements that provided excellent opportunities for me to share your stories. I spoke of the unique experiences of small providers and of innovative partnerships they have achieved. I always welcome the opportunity to share the perspective of NTCA members, and doing that will be key this year as Congress continues discussions about our country’s critical infrastructure. In the new year, NTCA will seek to provide even more avenues for the rural telco story to be told—whether through our Stories of Innovation, Rural Telecom or other means. After all, there is no better voice for your communities than you.
NTCA would like to thank its Super Star Partners for their generous support of NTCA throughout 2019.

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By Christian Hamaker

Kathy Morgan
Customer Engagement and Media Relations
Endeavor Communications
(Cloverdale, Ind.)

Tell us about the demographic breakdown of Endeavor’s customer base.
Endeavor customers didn’t understand how to use their technology. Endeavor’s demographics skewed toward an older population. Endeavor’s demographics are median age 35–40, 63% some or finished high school, 13–16% college degree, median household income of $38K–$53K. Of the total population, the skew is even older, with 60% falling in the over-55-and-childless, mature-years segment.

Our ad campaign highlighted the problem Endeavor Communications faced. A billboard with an elderly woman looking perplexed and holding a phone broadcast the slogan, “Can’t tell a gigabit from a megabutt?” I saw this problem and launched a unique solution.

You started an outreach effort to high-school students, having them staff a free community Help Desk. What’s the response been like—from both the students and from your customers?
We started the Speed Geeks Apprentice Program last year at the beginning of the school year. Limited marketing budgets mean we have to stretch, and this seemed like the solution—get teen volunteers, put them with customers with questions and help them use the technology they have.

The community loves our free Community Help Desk. Many of our members do not have kids at home and often need help learning technology. The kids love the comradery of the group and being able to help someone. They are learning soft skills, and the adults get to learn about technology and not feel so scared to try new things. We have many that come over and over to learn more.

The kids who staff the Help Desk are volunteers, and they’re getting invaluable experience at a broadband provider. Are there other tangible rewards for their time and efforts?
The kids have united as a group and are also very willing to help with our other volunteer events. Getting goodies and swag like T-shirts isn’t the primary motivation for the teens. They really seem to love engaging with people and solving problems. Sure, they get free food or an occasional gift card, but there is something that stirs in them as they gain through this experience. Even putting this on a resume at the end of the year isn’t the primary thing I see students expressing as their motivation. Julie, a volunteer in the program who now works with us, said, “We get treated as independent problem solvers.” She expressed that there is a sense of being responsible to solve a problem that her peers really enjoy. They only ask for help from a mentor if it’s really needed. The junior Geeks love it when they figure a complex problem out.

A FEW QUESTIONS

What high-school year was your best?
I couldn’t wait until my freshman year. It was extremely fun because I was finally able to play high school sports and I liked hanging out with the older crowd.

What was your first or best high-school job?
A small-town country store that served ice-cream became the coolest (pun intended) experience as my first job. Scooping out scrumptious ice cream was a treat.

Where do your loyalties lie—with the Pacers or the Colts?
Colts fan!

How old were you when you learned the lyrics to Gary, Indiana?
Never heard it until you asked. Sorry, but in my defense, I can sing the fight song from both Purdue and Notre Dame. I will also never forget singing with Jim Nabors’ booming voice belting out “back home again in Indiana” during the Indianapolis 500 in 2014.

FAST AND FURIOUS:

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Technology is dramatically changing the world, and rural broadband companies are at the forefront.

It’s no secret that technology is changing the landscape of how we communicate, with growing demand creating new opportunities and challenges to the way we do business.

The largest annual convergence of rural broadband leaders is happening in New Orleans, February 2–6, 2019. More than 2,200 thought leaders, innovators and futurists from across the United States gather at one location each year for the NTCA Rural Telecom Industry Meeting + Expo (RTIME) to collaborate, network and explore ideas on where the industry is heading in the future.

Not only will attendees look forward this year at RTIME, but they will reflect on how the industry has evolved—and how a broadband revolution will bring about an innovative future.

RETHINK Your Approach

The RTIME program was designed for you to understand and embrace the future of the industry.

A dynamic lineup of expert speakers will share their experiences in how to translate motivation into success. Take notes on how to rethink your approach to business, retrain a new world of work leaders and build your network for the next-generation customer.

A revolution is on the horizon, and RTIME is where it all begins—four days of information sharing—starting with keynote speaker Seth Mattison, a fourth-generation farm business strategist who helps to navigate the future. End your RTIME experience with the adventurous Robyn Benicasa, a world champion adventure racer who promotes leading through change and learning by embracing setbacks.

REINVEST in the Future

RTIME offers more than 30 educational sessions and executive roundtable discussions. Decide where you want your company to be in the next 10 years. The sessions focus on sales tactics, telehealth, regulatory challenges, video and culture change, charging you to embrace and apply the knowledge that is presented to help grow your business.
The future is tomorrow, but the challenge is today. Challenge your board to advance their telecom knowledge. Challenge your key employees to understand culture shifts that will move your business forward. Challenge your executive team to take employee transitions to the next level.

**[R]E CONNECT With Solution Providers**

EXPO at RTIME is the place for networking, face-to-face conversations with solution providers and more. It’s the pulse of the conference—where vendors showcase their best and latest solutions.

With 150 exhibitors, the EXPO is the largest that caters to the needs of rural broadband service providers. RTIME vendors are well-versed in the challenges that rural providers have, and they understand the unique situations of their communities. EXPO Plus provides an opportunity for clients to set aside time with vendors and share the needs of their own communities.

New additions at this year’s EXPO include:

- Extended show hours to allow more vendor-customer face-to-face time.
- EXPO Live, offering educational programming live on the show floor.
- EXPO Forum, which gives you the opportunity to experience product demos during EXPO hours.

**[R]E ENGAGE**

RTIME takes place in New Orleans, a city that has rightfully earned more nicknames—NOLA, Crescent City, N’Awlins, Big Easy, Paris of the South, Birthplace of Jazz—than, arguably, any other city. The music, food, culture and history add excitement to conference events. Milestone celebrations with the Foundation for Rural Service (p. 22) and NTCA Rural Broadband PAC (p. 24) are among several notable events to attend.

The beignets, Creole and Cajun cookin’ and jazz are all waiting for the [R]EVOLUTION to begin.

Angie Tran is marketing manager at NTCA–The Rural Broadband Association. Contact her at atran@ntca.org.
GetIN
With NTCA at RTIME

Stop by and visit NTCA at booth 619 on the EXPO floor at RTIME to connect with the NTCA team and learn all about how to maximize your membership. From insurance and benefits to training and professional development opportunities, face-to-face networking events and access to the latest industry news and innovations, we’ve got all your business needs covered. Get in and let your NTCA membership work for you!

Get INformed
Got questions? We’ve got answers. Your member relations manager is your go-to resource to connect you with NTCA business solutions that support your team. Chat with us and get up-to-speed on the many resources and benefits available to you. We can help you plan a year of engagement by subscribing you to the biweekly ‘Online Opportunities’ newsletter. Check out our ‘Events’ homepage, where you’ll find the most up-to-date news on NTCA webinars, conferences and other networking opportunities.

Get INvolved
Find out how to establish your company as an industry leader by participating in NTCA’s many awards programs and/or developing your team with our many certificate and continuing education programs. Or, discuss the valuable cost savings available through our comprehensive group insurance benefit plans. Staff will also be available to strategize on how to turn your current HR challenges into opportunities using our many HR Consulting services.

Get INspired
Connect directly with staff from the Foundation for Rural Service, NTCA Rural Broadband PAC and Smart Rural Community, and learn how they are ensuring a bright future for the industry through the support of member companies and employees just like you. Most importantly, share your story and partner with NTCA on public awareness campaigns like #buildbroadbandwithus.

To learn more about how to GetIN with NTCA, visit www.NTCA.org/GetIN. See you in New Orleans!

Luke Haynes is the member services assistant at NTCA. Contact him at lhaynes@ntca.org.
Leading the Revolution

At no time in history have leaders been responsible for shepherding their organization through more disruptive forces.

From technological and consumer expectation shifts to evolving generational and relationship dynamics and volatile political and regulatory environments, leaders today face an era of unprecedented change.

At the same time the way in which we’ve approached the role of a leader and the skills and competencies required to effectively navigate this whitewater world of change have remained surprisingly fixed. The hard truth is, at most we’ve fiddled at the edges of what it means to be a leader today and how we design policies, procedures, systems and culture to future-proof our organizations against increased competition, commoditization and marketplace relevance.

In today’s hyper-connected networked world, past success is unfortunately no longer a guaranteed predictor of future results. Not only is the past no longer a great predictor of future success, most of our existing learning methodologies rely on learning from that very past state, while our most pressing leadership challenges appear to require a letting go of the past in order to connect with and learn from emerging possible future states.

At RTIME, we will fully embrace the theme of [R]evolution by exploring one of the most important shifting leadership paradigms in modern history and the role attendees will play in shaping this defining moment for the rural telecom industry.

We’ll break down specifically what this critical paradigm shift is, what it means for our organizations and communities, and how we as leaders can activate the specific strategic imperatives, action items, and best-in-class routines and rituals of high performing leaders needed to future-proof ourselves and our organizations—and ultimately serve our communities from a place of deep impact.

Seth Mattison is the keynote speaker during the RTIME opening general session on February 4, 2019, 8:30–10:30 a.m.
Educational content

at RTIME is all about innovation—finding new and better ways to tackle the work of today and thinking beyond the norm to discover opportunities for the future. With 16 concurrent sessions, three general sessions, and a special policy and industry fundamentals session, there are topics of importance for every member of the telco team. By the end of the conference, all attendees should be ready to answer the question: “How can we approach our work differently?”

The Director Track challenges board members to strengthen the board through new ways of thinking about recruitment and onboarding, preparing for eventual transitions of executive leadership, and evaluating new business ventures or partnership opportunities.

The Telco Track considers the future of video, finding success with operational succession planning, tactics for competitive expansion, and data-driven approaches to building and executing marketing campaigns.

In the general sessions you will learn to think like a futurist, understand rural network economics and hear a panel of industry visionaries discuss rural broadband in 2030.

Of course, education happens outside the session rooms, too. Informal conversations with peers are a valuable learning experience whether you catch someone in the hall between sessions, at the networking lounge, on the ExpO floor, at the regional caucuses, or one of the many receptions or special events. Hearing directly from peers about how they have dealt with certain situations or what they are planning for the future can provide reassurance that you are not alone with the questions and issues faced by your company.

Mark Marion is director of training and development at NTCA. Contact him at mmarion@ntca.org.

Twenty-five years ago the then-National Telephone Cooperative Association (NTCA) made a decision that would impact thousands of lives across dozens of communities.

On April 13, 1994, NTCA formed the Foundation for Rural Service (FRS) and elected its first officers: David Schmidt, Mickey Simms and William Stanley, Jr.

Since that day, FRS has:

- Awarded over $1.2 million in scholarships to over 600 students across rural America.
- Invested over $200,000 in grants for rural communities, enabling everything from telemmedicine to distance education.

Mark Marion is director of training and development at NTCA. Contact him at mmarion@ntca.org.
2019 MARKS A YEAR OF EXCELLENCE

RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE IN RURAL TELCO MARKETING
SALES
PR

RECOGNIZING INDIVIDUAL EXCELLENCE ACROSS RURAL AMERICA

ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS THROUGH JANUARY 21

www.NTCA.org/marketingX

RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE IN RURAL TELCO MARKETING
SALES
PR

ACCEPTING 2019 NOMINATIONS THROUGH AUGUST 16

www.NTCA.org/excellence
We’re Golden in 2019

NTCA Rural Broadband PAC celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2019.

Although the PAC has seen a few name changes over the decades, the goal has remained the same—to educate federal candidates about the important work of NTCA members so they can make informed decisions that promote telecommunications deployment. Although Washington has grown increasingly partisan, the PAC is a bipartisan organization that continues to help garner bipartisan support of our issues.

Our yearlong celebration of this milestone begins at RTIME with a special anniversary edition of our annual awards breakfast on Tuesday, February 5, at 7 a.m. Come and be treated to a brief history of the PAC—how it was founded by a small group of NTCA members in Tennessee in 1969 and how it has grown over the past half century.

Also on Tuesday during RTIME, attendees are invited to join us for an evening at the National World War II Museum. The event will include exclusive access to select galleries, dinner and a private screening of “Beyond All Boundaries” narrated by Tom Hanks. The museum—designated by the U.S. Congress as America’s official national WWII museum—has for the past five years been the number one attraction in New Orleans.

The celebration continues in mid-April at NTCA’s Legislative & Policy Conference in Washington, D.C., as the PAC hosts a private dinner at President Lincoln’s Cottage. For three summers of his presidency, Abraham Lincoln and his family lived in a cottage on the outskirts of Washington, D.C. During the event we’ll be treated to a guided tour of the cottage and have dinner in the room where Lincoln wrote the Emancipation Proclamation.

Whether you attend one of the PAC’s events at an NTCA meeting, attend a political fundraiser or present a check to a congressional candidate, we hope you’ll make 2019 golden by being involved in NTCA Rural Broadband PAC.

Michelle Ly is advocacy program manager at NTCA. Contact her at mly@ntca.org.

Jessica Golden is executive director of FRS. Contact her at jgolden@frs.org.
NTCA–The Rural Broadband Association would like to thank its generous 2019 Rural Telecom Industry Meeting & EXPO Sponsors.
i ve years ago, NISC launched NISC LeadAgent, a pow-erful app integrated with Salesforce® that empowered on-the-go sales teams with the tools they need in the palms of their hands. The development of this solution opened the door to lead generation options for tele-coms across the nation, which was critical with the growing focus on sales. NISC LeadAgent helps mine the valuable data in the iVUE Enterprise System, as well as leads from outside sources such as websites, to create a dynamic sales lead repository for telecoms to leverage and grow their customer base.

Closing the Deal in the Field
Recent NISC LeadAgent development brought enhance-ments enabling sales teams to configure services, accurately price out bundles, generate quotes and capture electronic signatures—all while in the field—increasing the sales team efficiency and effectiveness while streamlining the sales process with full integra-tion into iVUE using SmartHub Order Management.

Managing Business Sales With Service Requests
Business sales quoting can be complex. Between knowing what services are available to the customer, the costs associated with those services and how they will be engineered, several departments in your organization are needed to accurately price the bid. NISC LeadAgent can streamline this process by bringing these teams together. NISC LeadAgent tracks who is responsible for providing information, ensuring each sale is profitable, and commu-nicating between these departments without the need of extra worksheets, meetings or phone calls.

Compensation Management and Reporting
With the shift to a sales-focused organization came the need to develop a powerful reporting tool for goals and commissions. Incentive compensation management is now available in NISC LeadAgent to help determine com-missions based on closed/won opportunities, the ability to establish minimum sales goals as well as tiers based on total sales. In-depth reporting of all sales is also available for calculation of commission at a manager or superv-isor level, giving visibility of total sales compared to organization-wide sales goals.

Lead Crowdsourcing
If you are considering CLECing into a new service territory, planning for success is the key. NISC LeadAgent can help by leveraging Web-to-Lead for capturing those interested in your services. Assigning leads to predefined zones can help track goals related to minimum signup along with estimated revenue to ensure you have met the return on your investment. The app can send prospects messages to keep them informed of the status of each zone as you move from one stage to another, as well as encourage them to urge their neighbors to sign up for your service offerings. As each zone meets or exceeds the projected ROI based on the level of interest, you can proceed with construction and prompt the prospects to sign up for service directly with New Customer Signup.
2019 PRODUCT PREVIEW

Cyber Liability Insurance
From Telcom Insurance Group

Even in changing conditions, some companies stay at the top of the industry.

Go to the top! Telcom Insurance Group has long been the top writer of insurance in rural telecommunications—and with good reason. We’ve gotten there by being the industry’s leader in customer care, education and new product development.

As a company integrally involved in the rural telecommunications industry, we’ve been able to adjust our product lineup to meet the changing needs of our clients. Nowhere is this more apparent than with Cyber Liability policies.

A Cyber Liability and Network Security Liability policy from Telcom Insurance includes protection from claims related to:

- Information gathering or privacy
- Lost business due to malfunctioning sites
- Data breaches
- Network ransomware, malware or cyber attacks

Are you covered? Most standard policies provide only a limited amount of coverage for today’s online threats, or the policies entirely exclude these risks. Cyber Liability Policies or Network Security Liability policies from Telcom Insurance Group have been designed for the independent telcos we serve.

In something as complex as cybersecurity, the differentiators are in the details. Telcom Insurance Group is the first provider to offer a Network Security Data Liability form with a “telecommunications errors and omission” component to help mitigate risk. Our policy includes specific protection from regulatory expenses and security breach expenses such as notification and credit monitoring.

Like all Telcom Insurance Group policies, your Cyber Liability and Network Security Liability policies include value-added education on insurance, risk management and best practices. We do that for two reasons:

1) because we know the best key to protecting your network and digital assets is to have employees well-versed in cyber threats.

2) developing specialized coverage to protect you from the risks is what we have done for more than 35 years.

No insurance provider knows the risks you face better than Telcom Insurance Group, and no one can protect you and your company’s digital assets the way we can.

If you’d like more information on a Cyber Liability policy, please visit Booth No. 622. Or, go straight to the top of our organizational chart and contact President and CEO Peter Elliott at (301) 785-6424 or pje@telcominsgrp.com.

When it comes to protecting your telco from the ever-evolving threats online, why go anywhere except the top?
2018 was a busy year for the telecommunications industry in Washington—including seven congressional hearings at which NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association staff and members testified, as well as numerous other panels and events featuring NTCA staff. This beehive of activity contributed to both a heightened focus on and increased resources for broadband deployment across the country.

Among other items, Congress pushed forward a new Farm Bill, which includes additional initiatives to promote rural broadband. Moreover, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018 created a new pilot program overseen by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Rural Utilities Service (RUS). This e-Connectivity Pilot Program—now known as the ReConnect Program—provides $600 million through grants and loans for broadband deployment in mostly unserved areas. Furthermore, this pilot program will likely receive even more funding in 2019 after the Senate voted to appropriate $425 million and the House voted to appropriate $550 million to the program in their respective fiscal year 2019 appropriations bills, in either case, the total across the 2018–2019 fiscal years would exceed $1 billion. Finally, Congress introduced a myriad of other bills dedicated to the telecommunications and broadband industry. From the RAY BAUM’S Act to the STREAMLINE Small Cell Deployment Act, Congress was active in the sector and held several hearings on related topics.

2019 is certain to bring even further activity in this space. The rollout of the ReConnect Program, implementation of the Farm Bill and a changing committee landscape will all become immediate priorities in the new year. We expect Congress will also want to make sure the FCC delivers on promises to resolve budgetary concerns in the Universal Service Fund (USF) High-Cost program. Overall, 2019 is shaping up to be very active for NTCA and its members.
Anyone looking to Washington, D.C., for stability and predictability might want to cast his or her gaze elsewhere. Yet telecom services simply cannot be provided in many deeply rural areas without a sound regulatory foundation and, in some cases, financial support to make the business case for investment and ongoing operation. NTCA–The Rural Broadband Association has therefore focused its efforts on trying to shore up that regulatory foundation across a wide range of policy priorities.

As we enter 2019, the rural telecom industry stands on the cusp of obtaining levels of regulatory certainty not seen for more than a decade—although, as discussed below, these changes still offer both promise and challenge for small operators in rural America.

High-Cost Universal Service
NTCA’s membership consists of providers that share a common rural telephony heritage but have evolved to reflect the diversity of challenges they face and opportunities before them. Of course, one common thread today is that all NTCA telco members provide broadband in deeply rural areas—and from a regulatory perspective, this translates into a common need for sufficient and predictable federal Universal Service Fund (USF) support.

No governmental “broadband program” has a better track record in rural America than USF (or, as it has been rebranded, the Connect America Fund). To be sure, financing is essential as well, and the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) has long been critical in lending for the construction of networks in rural areas. But, without USF in the first instance, the economics of building in and serving many rural areas simply would not work, regardless of whether capital is otherwise available.
Committee Changes Await

The 2018 midterm election represented a key benchmark for rural America. Did the country support the president’s agenda by re-electing vulnerable Republicans? Or did the so-called wave arrive to check the president, as it often does in a midterm year?

The midterm results provide mixed guidance. The House of Representatives flipped to the Democrats after eight years of Republican control. Incoming House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Frank J. Pallone (D–N.J.) will surely have a different set of priorities than his predecessor, Greg P. Walden (R–Ore.). The House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Communications and Technology will be under the new leadership of Rep. Mike F. Doyle (D–Pa.), while outgoing Chairman Marsha Blackburn (R–Tenn.) was elected to the Senate, thus creating turnover on the minority side.

The Senate remained in Republican control, with only a few seats changing hands. Still, some key positions will nonetheless change and indicate a different path forward for the broadband world. John Thune (R–S.D.) will move up in Senate leadership, vacating his role as chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, with Roger Wicker (R–Miss.) taking the gavel. Meanwhile, the committee’s ranking member, Bill Nelson (D–Fla.), lost to Rick Scott in Florida, so there will be a domino effect on the Commerce Committee, its subcommittees and other committees as well.

Infrastructure Initiatives

The previous Farm Bill (the Agricultural Act of 2014) expired on September 30, 2018. The House passed its version of a new Farm Bill by the narrowest possible vote of 213–211. In the Senate, a different version of the bill passed 86–11, thus presenting a challenge for the two chambers to resolve the differences. Notably, the two bills each contained broadband-related provisions, although there were material differences between parts of them, including provisions related to overbuilding of existing networks.

The Senate and House convened a conference committee to hash out the differences between the two bills. With the clock ticking until the new Congress was due to be sworn in on January 3, the four key lawmakers on the Agriculture Committees—Chairman Pat Roberts (R–Kan.) and Ranking Member Debbie A. Stabenow (D–Mich.) in the Senate, and Chairman Mike Conaway (R–Texas) and Ranking Member Collin C. Peterson (D–Minn.) in the House—were under the gun to finalize a Farm Bill and all parties were motivated to get it done before the new Congress took office. NTCA continued engaging with the leadership and other conferees with respect to the broadband provisions of the legislation and were very pleased with the final bill.

By contrast, Congress had little difficulty enacting the new ReConnect Program earlier this year. The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018 passed and signed into law in March appropriated $600 million to this program for grants, loans and grant/loan combinations—with many more hundreds of millions of dollars likely to come in 2019. The funding will be directed to areas with populations under 20,000 where at least 90% of the households to be served lack “sufficient access” to broadband, which is initially defined as 10/1 Mbps. This standard shall be re-evaluated and redetermined on an annual basis by the secretary of agriculture.

As NTCA has worked with RUS on the rollout of the ReConnect Program, the association has also participated in an e-Connectivity tour focused on engaging stakeholders and constituents on the needs, challenges and successes of rural broadband deployment. Significantly, during a tour stop in Minnesota, USDA Senior Adviser for Rural Infrastructure Jannine Miller reiterated USDA’s commitment to not overbuild through that program: “It’s something that the secretary has articulated and vocalized how important it is to him to not overbuild. We understand that the private sector has put their own money at risk. We do not want to have government dollars in there competing for that.”

End-of-Year USF Action

Budget shortfalls in the USF High-Cost program have forced small, rural carriers to recover costs through higher consumer prices while also slowing down or halting future investments. Although the FCC provided more than $500 million in additional support in March 2018 in response to NTCA advocacy, this much-needed relief was only partial or interim in nature, and that order did not make the USF High-Cost program budget sustainable over the long term. Providing sufficient and predictable funding over the long term is required by federal law and is necessary to fulfill the will of Congress, as evidenced by various letters to the commission over the past five years. In the wake of the commission’s March order and at the urging of hundreds of NTCA members attending the 2018 Legislative & Policy
Conference, nearly 200 members of Congress wrote to the commission yet again, urging sufficient and predictable funding of the USF High-Cost program. Through hearings and follow-on letters over the course of 2018, Congress continued to press the commission for action on the USF budget shortfalls, and the commission pledged in response to take action to resolve the concerns of Congress by the end of the year. NTCA is appreciative that the commission recently fulfilled its pledge by approving the order that would resolve these USF budget shortfalls.

A Busy Year Upcoming

What can we expect in 2019? We should certainly anticipate an active year in the broadband world. A new Farm Bill and the rollout of the ReConnect Program, along with additional USF support allocated by the commission to the High-Cost program will hopefully give rural broadband providers both resources and regulatory certainty to get back to focusing on the business of building and sustaining broadband in rural America. In the wake of Democrats gaining control of the House, a bipartisan consensus on the importance of infrastructure policy could bring even more resources to the table through a comprehensive infrastructure funding package—although coordinating any new resources with existing programs and initiatives will remain a significant NTCA priority.

Beyond the question of infrastructure resources, however, there will of course be other areas of focus for NTCA, including but not limited to retransmission consent via the Satellite Television Extension and Localism Act reauthorization, spectrum policy, mapping and broadband regulation. Indeed, with respect to that last issue, we expect that House Democrats will likely prioritize privacy issues, net neutrality and FCC oversight in the next Congress.

If 2018 was a year in which broadband became a focus on both sides of Capitol Hill, 2019 will surely be a continuation of that. NTCA looks forward to continuing its dedicated advocacy on Capitol Hill through partnership with members and to ensuring that our members can maintain the robust, reliable and affordable communications services they have long provided for their customers across rural America.

Michael Daniels is director of government affairs at NTCA. Contact him at mdaniels@ntca.org.
The USF program has been the subject of reform for more than a decade. Starting in 2008 and continuing through 2016, the FCC considered (and reconsidered) how to reorient USF for a broadband world. Unfortunately, much of the early focus centered upon how to deliver minimal levels of broadband to unserved areas, ignoring both the need to sustain existing networks and the fact that networks must evolve to keep pace with user demand. For smaller operators, many of these changes unfortunately translated to new cuts, caps, and constraints on USF support as the commission looked to provide “better incentives” for investment and operations and to funnel money toward unserved areas.

In 2018, however, we saw a shift in direction. There were elements of promise in the 2016 reforms that, for the first time, reoriented support more toward broadband and gave smaller operators options to receive USF through other models. These reforms fell short, however, because of a severe lack of funding—as NTCA remarked often the past few years, even the best rebuilt engine cannot work without gas. To help with these concerns, in early 2018 the commission provided a “shot in the arm” by granting NTCA’s petition for reconsideration and infusing more than $50 million in incremental USF support. While a huge victory for rural America, these funds still represented only a “down payment” on the amount needed to fulfill the mission of universal service.

Fortunately, policymakers recognized that this funding, while substantial, was only partial and interim in nature. We therefore saw nearly 200 members of Congress write to the commission only weeks after the additional $500 million was provided, urging it to fill the remaining USF budget shortfalls on a more complete basis. FCC Chairman Ajit Pai, in turn, issued a statement in mid-2018 expressing similar concerns as the new budget controls kicked in and imposed even deeper levels of pain.

NTCA has continued to lead the charge for sufficient and predictable funding, and these efforts are poised to deliver greater success. In the face of continued requests from Capitol Hill for resolution of USF budget concerns, the FCC approved an order in December that will override existing budget controls and provide levels of additional funding aimed at enabling deployment of higher-speed networks and sustaining the USF programs for years to come. NTCA will continue working to confirm that the order works as intended and delivers on the promise of universal service for the millions of rural Americans served by small telcos, but we believe this watershed decision should put the high-cost USF budgets on more solid foundation in 2019 and beyond.

Even if USF budget concerns can be addressed and resolved for a series of years, certain implementation details remain critical to resolve. For example, NTCA has filed for review of certain decisions with respect to verification of performance on USF-supported networks. NTCA is aiming to strike a balance between ensuring workable testing requirements while avoiding the prospect of less robust networks receiving USF support for substandard performance. Similarly, NTCA continues to consider how providers will map coverage information critical to determining where USF support is needed, seeking to balance reporting burdens with concerns about overstated service capabilities.

**Intercarrier Compensation**

Although intercarrier compensation (ICC) has not gained as much attention as other regulatory issues in recent years, it remains an important component of universal service. NTCA led the successful charge in 2011 to protect transport rate elements most important to establishing financial responsibility for the costs of getting traffic to and from rural America.

We have seen a renewed attack, however, with certain parties (and even the commission itself) exploring how to move the remaining ICC rate elements to “bill and keep.” NTCA has worked with other stakeholders to fend off thus far a comprehensive set of reforms, but the commission is still evaluating how to address several discrete “arbitrage” practices. As this debate unfolds in 2019, NTCA’s focus continues to be upon:

- Defining carefully and then closing through surgical measures those clear arbitrage loopholes that undermine the integrity of the ICC system.
- Obtaining alternative cost recovery if any reforms reduce ICC rates—but without squeezing already insufficient high-cost USF budgets.
- Ensuring that transport responsibilities are not altered in a manner that would foist upon rural consumers the full cost of interconnecting with consumers across the nation and the globe.

**Infrastructure Investment**

For the past few years, there has been a buzz around the prospect of a package of funding, streamlining efforts and tax incentives to promote infrastructure deployment, including broadband networks. Broader political debates and other policy priorities, however, have stalled any comprehensive initiative. Still, more targeted efforts to promote broadband deployment have progressed, most notably in the form of congressional appropriations made available through the Rural Utilities Service and permitting relief efforts in the form of enacted laws and commission activity.

NTCA has been involved at every level of these debates thus far. From having secured the first communications industry witness spot at a Senate infrastructure hearing in early 2017 to assuming a leadership role within the Rebuild Rural Coalition of rural and agriculture-focused stakeholders, NTCA has sought from the start to ensure that its members “have a seat at the table,” and this has continued through NTCA’s participation in working groups of the FCC’s Broadband Deployment Advisory Council and support for the afore-
mentioned congressional permitting measures and others. In recent months, activity has centered upon implementation of the RUS $600 million “pilot project” that will finance construction of broadband networks in unserved areas and Farm Bill rural development provisions that promise more funding for such deployment. NTCA has met repeatedly with policymakers to express support for the programs while attempting to ensure that new resources will be steered toward projects that will best sustain broadband in rural America. Finalization of these efforts will remain a high priority into 2019, and NTCA also remains well positioned to contribute to any discussion that may reignite with respect to a more comprehensive infrastructure package.

Broadband Regulation
Net neutrality remains top of mind in D.C. telecom circles, even if the specific question of the commission’s authority is now (yet again) being considered in court and challenged by some states. On a related note, many in Congress and across the industry are beginning to consider how to address consumer privacy across technology platforms, including but not limited to broadband services. NTCA will remain focused in 2019 on practical issues of essential importance to rural consumers, particularly how rural communities will stay interconnected with the rest of the world in a broadband era; how broadband rates will remain affordable without having the costs of network interconnection all fall onto the backs of rural consumers; and how reasonable expectations as to consumer privacy can be satisfied regardless of what type of entity holds data.

Content and Spectrum Issues
Unfortunately, 2018 was another “lost year” in the effort to control content costs. Still, NTCA left no stone unturned in this effort, making targeted arguments to help improve matters in the content marketplace and opposing transactions that would exacerbate already insufferable content pricing. In 2019, reauthorization of a satellite programming law might provide a vehicle for action, and NTCA is coordinating with other stakeholders on how best to leverage that for potential progress.

Meanwhile, the commission opened numerous dockets in 2018 to free up spectrum that will promote fixed and mobile wireless broadband. As these efforts roll into 2019, NTCA will continue to advocate for spectrum allocation policies that strike a balance between enabling smaller operators to serve rural markets while also ensuring that the licenses are of a reasonable size to justify investment in them.

Michael Romano is senior vice president of industry affairs and business development at NTCA. Contact him at mromano@ntca.org.
You were recently involved in a study of viewing patterns for TV subscribers in rural America. How was that study structured?

Our video middleware software allows service providers to access channel statistics that show what channels set-top boxes are tuned to. We have been receiving monthly reports from 53 providers in locations from Alaska to New York with data from approximately 60,000 boxes. When aggregated, the reports are enlightening for certain: they show patterns that often run counter to conventional thinking and especially the trends we see with urban subscribers.

Retransmission rates and the revenue models imposed at various levels in distribution seem to be at odds with local providers that just want to provide a video product for their community. Is this sustainable in the long run?

Retransmission rates are unreasonable, but the reality is that broadcast channels are the most popular channels in rural America. Our first three months of channel stats data show the broadcast networks in the top ten. The prognosis for retransmission relief is not good, and I don't see that changing anytime soon. The best thing a service provider can do is to analyze their channel stats and drop the channels that they can—channels that no one is watching. This may not always be possible if contracts require must-carry low-interest channels that are part of a family of channels that consumers do watch regularly.

Some providers have considered getting out of the traditional TV business entirely, making up the revenues by offering higher tiers of service, and showing customers how to get TV using a streaming device. What do you say about this line of thinking?

Our rural video and broadband survey shows that over the last three years, 60% of rural consumers report that bundled services are very important to them. Getting out of video may entice rural consumers to find bundled options elsewhere, so there is a risk of losing the customer entirely or inviting competition in the video space.

This summer you spoke at the NTCA Regional Conferences about the future of video. Where do you think we are headed with TV, cable subscriptions and the consumption of video?

Demographically, rural America is different, and this affects their video consumption patterns. In my conversations with attendees at the 2018 NTCA Regional Conferences, which consisted mostly of board members, oftentimes they would say, “I just want to use one remote control and watch my TV shows.” They want simplicity. However, the majority of rural America is unable to receive their local broadcast channels with an over the air (OTA) antenna, despite the consistent survey data that proves local channels are very important to them. This data suggests that rural consumers, because of their age and limitations to local OTA channels, are going to continue to want a traditional pay TV service.

I can’t let you go without asking about your days in Sturgis and the motorcycle rally. Can you share one of your most memorable moments?

Those were some crazy days! It’s a tough question, but one of the most interesting things relates to law enforcement: During one of my years as director in 1999, there were 1,916 arrests, which given the overall attendance pushing 400,000 is a remarkably low number. What is even more interesting was the total number of uniformed law enforcement was about 100—a real testament to how well behaved the cyclists are compared to what some might think!
Coming Up...

- **February 3–6 2019**
  Rural Telecom Industry Meeting & Expo (RTIME)
  Sheraton and Marriott New Orleans, La.

- **March 10–12 2019**
  Telecom Executive Forum
  Hyatt Clearwater Clearwater, Fla

- **April 14–16 2019**
  Legislative + Policy Conference
  Hyatt Regency Washington, D.C.

- **April 23–25 2019**
  Technology + Business Conference
  Hilton Chicago Chicago, Ill.

- **April 28–30 2019**
  Marketing + Sales Conference
  New Orleans Marriott New Orleans, La.

- **July 21–24 2019**
  Summer Symposium
  Hyatt Savannah Savannah, Ga.

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Challenge: 4K TV sets are now hitting the sub $500 range, and 4K UHD TVs are dropping below the $1,000 range. 4K TV shipments have grown nearly 30% in the last four years, and yet very few service providers are offering their customers 4K STBs. This creates a vulnerability for churn as customers may choose to go to a DBS provider. They may also perceive that they can go to an OTT service to get 4K, not realizing that limited bandwidth will greatly diminish the OTT 4K viewing experience.

Solution: Having an inventory of 4K STBs is crucial for higher ARPU customers who demand the best viewing format on the market even though 4K content is still limited.

Challenge: An average video Set-Top Box (STB) installation consisting of three STBs occupies two technicians for up to three hours. The challenges of finished basements and customer aversion to wrapping cable around the home exterior greatly influences time and expenses, decreasing ROI for the service provider. In the competitive landscape, additional installation costs can be a pain point if they are passed on to the customer.

Solution: An STB like the IS-5112W, that can act as an access point to wirelessly connect to multiple STBs reduces installation costs and increases ROI. Less wiring means less intrusion, which will create higher customer satisfaction.

Challenge: Reducing service calls and increasing customer satisfaction is always a top priority, and many support supervisors report that wrong input issues are at the top of the support call list. Rural providers are repeatedly sending technicians on distant service calls just to change an input.

Solution: CEC (Consumer Electronics Control) using HDMI connections allows for enabled devices such as STBs to be controlled without interaction from a subscriber. This functionality is available with the IS-5112W IPTV Set-Top Box powered by the Video Middleware from Innovative Systems and can realistically reduce wrong input calls and truck rolls by at least 50%.
Challenge: The STB in a customer’s home can be exposed to all sorts of unhealthy conditions, leading to poor or erratic performance and increasing customer dissatisfaction. The customer’s tolerance for poor quality video is very low and a top reason for churn. The odds for STB failure increase exponentially after three years.

Solution: The IS-5112W IPTV STB has the most advanced diagnostic report and management functionality in the industry. Service providers will have the ability to install, monitor and troubleshoot the STB remotely. Using the STB Stats App from their smartphone or tablet a service technician can do one-touch setup, configuration and Wi-Fi diagnostics.

Conclusion
Controlling video costs is a service provider’s greatest challenge. One way to mitigate those costs is with better back-office tools and solutions that can reduce installation expenses and service calls. The 5112W 4K STB has been built from the ground up using the Reference Design Kit (RDK) model and is offered exclusively to Video Middleware providers of Innovative Systems. Please contact sales@innovsys.com for more information.

“With the Innovative 5112 STB, our customers can move their furniture, entertainment centers, and the Set-Top Box without a service call—a huge savings for us. Wiring is always the best option; however, with the improvements in wireless technologies, the IS-5112W provides a viable option to reduce installation time and costs. Because of this box’s reliable wireless access point, we can assure customers of an install that will be less than three hours, reducing costs tremendously and allowing more installs per day.”

Mark Wilson, Santel Communications, South Dakota
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IN THE NEXT ISSUE

- A History of SRC Showcase Award Winners
- The Ins and Outs of Speed Testing
- RTIME Wrapup

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2018 Rural Telecom Index of Articles

HUMAN RESOURCES
Improving Our Wellness Beat With PositivePulse
By Tracey G. Ratliff and Becky Kimble > Spring > 36

What to Do in the Workplace When There's a Tornado
By Marilyn A. Blake > Spring > 38

Creating a Culture of Good: A Q&A With Ryan McCarty
By Dennis McGarry > Summer > 40

How Wellness Works at Local Telcos
By Ashley Spinks > Fall > 18

Active Shooter Training: An Employer Necessity
By Marilyn A. Blake > Fall > 34

A Journey From Minnesota to Hawaii Begins With a Single Step
By Ashley Spinks > Fall > 36

LEGISLATION & REGULATION
Less Talk, More Action
By Scott Lively > Winter > 18

No Rest for the Weary; No Time To Be Weary
By Michael Romano > Winter > 18

A Full Plate for 2018
By Shirley Bloomfield > Winter > 14

Into the Home Stretch
By Shirley Bloomfield > Fall > 14

A Few Questions for Christa Natoli
By Christian Hamaker > Fall > 16

MANAGEMENT/FINANCE
A Few Questions for Russell Kacer
By Christian Hamaker > Winter > 16

Cowbells, Bagpipes and Influencing Change: A Q&A With Garrison Wynn
By Mark Marion > Spring > 32

DIY Rural Economic Development
By Tara Young > Fall > 26

NTCA MEETINGS AND EDUCATION
It's Time for RTIME
By Yolanda Akinrimisi > Winter > 24

RTIME Wrapup: Austin Highlights Innovation
By NTCA Staff > Spring > 28

RTIME Expo Showcases Innovation
By Angie Tran > Summer > 34
Tough commutes are taking a toll.

A new study from staffing firm Robert Half found that nearly one-quarter (23%) of the workers surveyed had ditched a job because their commute was too long. And commutes are getting worse. Twenty-two percent of respondents said their commute had deteriorated in the past five years, and 60% reported that their employers hadn’t made any concessions as commute times worsened.

But the news isn’t all bad. Workers in these major cities reported that their commutes had improved in the last five years.

Source: studyfinds.org
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