

Cablefax

21st Century Service

By Sara Winegardner | June 18, 2019



Customers aren't looking for the same-old, same-old in their service offerings anymore. With new technologies like VR and AR, service providers are working to find the best ways to offer their customers lower latency and access to these futuristic developments. With that area of opportunity, there's no better time than now to try and become one of the beloved tech vendors for providers big and small.

In comes **Broadband Success Partners**, a consultancy aiming to address the go-to-market needs of providers and their suppliers. Former **Cablevision** engineer *Jack Burton*, **Juniper Networks** veteran *David Strauss* and the most recent **Lightpath** svp, finance *Joe Caruso* work to bridge the gap between what a provider wants to deliver to its customers and the tech needed to power it all.

This trio is keeping a close watch on where operators are moving next, but one area that remains unclear is exactly how much MSOs are willing to invest to offer specialized services for high-power users. And while major players like **Cox** are piloting a gamer-specific option with promises of lower latency and faster speeds, it seems like the rest of the industry is taking a look-and-see approach before strengthening their tech teams.

"I haven't seen any kind of an increase in that space, at least as far as it comes to the staffing up of MSO tech forces or anything new from the vendors," Burton said. "What Cox

is doing may be an experiment that they're doing internally to see if a service like that may have some traction and then, of course, if it does, everyone else will jump on."

"When it comes to further segmentation and further targeting of particular sectors including gaming, as the MSOs mature in terms of their segmentation and targeting efforts, we're going to see more of that and customized offerings," Strauss added. "We're probably still in the beginning stages of that because if you look at the data, there's a long way to go to more fully penetrate the market overall."

CableLabs has been hard at work on low latency DOCSIS specs that could speed up investment in the space.

"That's not out yet. Until it is, doing anything low-latency probably involves changing to a physical fiber-to-the-home or fiber-to-the-business architecture if you really want to reduce latency," Burton said. "I know that that's a priority at CableLabs because a low-latency DOCSIS spec is required to do 5G backhaul over DOCSIS."

And continuing with the subject of 5G, Burton reiterated that it is not a technology that is going to change the country so drastically that it could eliminate the need for in-home broadband.

"On the 5G adaptations of what they're doing over current mobile frequencies, that's an evolutionary change that will provide some reduced latency, some increased speeds, but nothing revolutionary," Burton said. "They do have some building penetration... on the other hand, millimeter wave is a big change."

And while mmWave has been utilized in early deployments of 5G, perhaps its biggest barrier are barriers themselves.

"They don't go through leaves, they don't go through walls, they barely go through windows. It's a very different type of technology. It can't be used for indoor coverage unless you put a 5G mmWave radio indoors. Not just indoors, but in the room you want coverage in," Burton explained. "But a 5G connection from a pole-mounted device to a home could be used to replace a cable drop and could deliver all of the same or even more and faster services than conventional cable today."

That doesn't mean traditional service providers don't still have a place to benefit off the mmWave craze. Because mmWave goes such short distances, field-mounted radios will need to be everywhere in order for it to make a major impact. Those fiber radios need a fiber fronthaul, Burton said, and cable can offer that service if they have enough to do it.

"Indications are that going to fiber-deep, cable operators could be building enough infrastructure to take care of that along the way," Burton said.