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**March 22, 2019**

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Comcast said Thursday that it will launch a \$5-a-month streaming platform for internet-only customers, targeting consumers who have ditched traditional pay TV for online video streaming.

***ECN***  
**ACA Pivots Away from Cable with New Name**

The new service, called Xfinity Flex, will let customers access their subscriptions to such streaming services as Netflix and Amazon Prime, as well as 10,000 free movies and shows, including live TV from ESPN3 and other networks. It will come with a 4K HDR streaming box and a voice remote. The service will debut March 26.

***MediaPost***  
**Viacom-DirecTV Fallout: Viacom Could Lose \$2 Billion In Affiliate, Ad Revenue Declines**

Xfinity Flex is Comcast's response to an ongoing trend of consumers dropping traditional cable TV for less expensive internet-based streaming services. Comcast lost about 371,000 cable subscribers last year, according to market research firm **MoffettNathanson**. The product is similar to Comcast's X1 video platform for cable subscribers. It aggregates streaming services that customers pay for, such as HBO and Showtime, and free ad-supported live TV services such as Cheddar and Pluto TV. Consumers can also rent or purchase movies through the service and listen to music on such applications as Pandora.

***TVNewsCheck***

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Xfinity Flex will eventually allow customers to instantly upgrade to traditional pay-TV service, because the equipment will already be installed. The platform will also let customers manage internet-connected devices, such as security cameras, from the TV screen. Xfinity Flex is available only for customers within Comcast's footprint. "Xfinity Flex will deepen our relationship with a certain segment of our Internet customers and provide them with real value," Matt Strauss, Comcast's executive vice president of Xfinity services, said in a statement.

An Amazon Fire Stick and Roku Streaming Stick have similar capabilities, letting consumers access streaming services on one platform. Those products cost roughly \$40 upfront and don't have an ongoing rental fee like Xfinity Flex. "This is really a very clever way of luring cord-cutters back into the ecosystem," Bloomberg analyst Geetha Ranganathan said of Xfinity Flex. "Five dollars doesn't seem like a whole lot when it's slapped onto your internet bill ... but down the road it is a nice way to get a foot in the door [to potentially sell] a more full-fledged video package, which I think is their ultimate goal." Ranganathan noted that Xfinity Flex will launch a day after [Apple is expected to unveil its video streaming service](#).

Cable companies are pivoting away from video to broadband, as a third of all U.S. households are expected to be broadband-only subscribers in a few years, Ranganathan said. Comcast-owned NBCUniversal [plans to launch both a free and ad-supported streaming service](#) that will be available in the United States in early 2020 and will stream NBCUniversal content. – [Philadelphia Inquirer; more from CNBC](#)

Facebook Inc. for years stored hundreds of millions of user passwords in a format that was accessible to its employees, in yet [another privacy snafu](#) for the social-media giant. The incident disclosed by the company Thursday involved a wide swath of its users, though Facebook said no passwords were exposed externally, and it hasn't found evidence of the information being abused.

Facebook estimated it will notify "hundreds of millions of Facebook Lite users, tens of millions of other Facebook users, and tens of thousands of Instagram users," the company's vice president of engineering, security and privacy Pedro Canahuati said in a blog post Thursday. Facebook Lite is a stripped-down version of the product for use by people without access to reliable internet service.

The security lapse appears similar to others that have occurred at tech companies, including Twitter Inc., which asked 331 million users to [change their passwords](#) in May after discovering that one of its internal systems logged users' unencrypted passwords. Because so many people reuse their passwords, they have emerged as a major security problem for tech companies. Password databases have become a prime target for cyber thieves, and hackers will often try a user's stolen password to break into new sites.

Most companies, including Facebook, monitor the internet for publicly released databases of passwords. "Passwords are extremely sensitive data," said Deirdre K. Mulligan, an associate professor at University of California Berkeley, who specializes on data privacy. "If passwords are

being stored in the clear, accessible by thousands of employees, one can only imagine how poorly other data is being managed,” she said.

Facebook’s data-security lapse attracted more attention than similar stumbles elsewhere given persistent criticism of how the company collects, stores and deploys its users’ data. It also contradicts at least some of the company’s previous assurances on the matter. In a [2014 post](#) about password security, Facebook’s then-security engineer Chris Long wrote that “no one here has your plain text password.” Facebook identified that it did log plain-text passwords as part of a security review in January, Mr. Canahuati said.

During the review, Facebook has been looking for ways it stores some information, such as access tokens, and have fixed problems as they were discovered, he said. While Facebook will notify users whose passwords were stored insecurely “as a precaution,” there is no current plan to require users to change their passwords.

The security lapse follows a [data breach](#) six months ago in which Facebook said attackers managed to extract data such as name, gender and hometown for around 50 million users. It also comes amid a wide-ranging Federal Trade Commission review of Facebook’s privacy policies and handling of user data. Though that probe began [following a scandal](#) over how political consulting firm Cambridge Analytica obtained Facebook user data, Facebook has said it kept the FTC abreast of other privacy and data-handling lapses.

Storing passwords in an encrypted format is “not just best practice, it’s something that industry should always do,” said Jennifer Granick, a lawyer with the American Civil Liberties Union. “Facebook’s failure to do that will really upset the FTC,” she said. The internal exposure of passwords was reported by [krebsonsecurity.com](#) earlier Thursday. Citing an unnamed senior Facebook executive, independent security researcher Brian Krebs wrote that as many as 600 million passwords were exposed, with some being improperly stored as far back as 2012. According to Mr. Krebs’s report, the files containing the passwords were accessible to as many as 20,000 Facebook employees, and around 2,000 company developers and engineers interacted with the system that contained them.

Facebook’s post disclosing that it had logged the plain-text passwords came after a company source grew impatient waiting for the company to acknowledge the problem on its own and contacted Mr. Krebs. “My source did seem to be concerned that Facebook was going to delay disclosing this as long as it could,” Mr. Krebs told the Journal in an email. Facebook’s hashing algorithm, known internally as “the onion,” is made up of a series of cryptographic techniques that evolved over time and are used internally to obfuscate data such as user passwords. Mr. Canahuati’s post didn’t explain why a vast quantity of login information had not been treated in that fashion in this instance, and Facebook didn’t respond to a request for additional information about what purpose the logged data served.

The risk of mistakes like Facebook’s are greater within large companies because teams of engineers are often working on unrelated projects with different goals, said Chris Vickery, a security researcher for Upguard. “This was logs of the passwords arriving, data in transit,” Mr. Vickery said. “Whoever designed the logging system didn’t have

passwords in mind. Whoever designed the database that stored passwords probably didn't know this existed."

Even if no users were harmed by the mistake, Mr. Vickery said, the sloppiness in handling user data is "another example of bad data governance as a culture at Facebook." Facebook has been under fire for much of the past year over data-security issues and concerns over how it monitors the platform. Even against that backdrop, the past week has been a difficult one for the Menlo Park, Calif., company. Last week the company's chief product officer and the head of its WhatsApp division resigned unexpectedly, a move seen as reflective of intense debate within the company over its direction.

This week the company has had to answer questions about its response to the video of the Christchurch, New Zealand shooting, which was live-streamed on Facebook and remained on the site for half an hour after a user brought it to the company's attention. The company also announced the settlement of a lawsuit alleging that it had discriminated against some users by allowing housing, employment and credit-related ads to be targeted according to gender, age and ZIP Code. Facebook paid less than \$5 million and agreed to end the practice. – ***Wall Street Journal***; also see ***New York Times***: **[! Deleted Facebook Last Year. Here's What Changed \(and What Didn't\)](#)**.

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**[Former State Rep. Nick Miccarelli](#)**, who last made news when sexual harassment allegations sank his political career, has a new job. Miccarelli was appointed this week to head Community Transit, a nonprofit that mostly shuttles seniors around Delaware County. He got the job after the board interviewed him along with "five or six candidates," Chairman Nate Much told the Delaware County Daily Times. "He brings a fresh perspective, and we felt comfortable he was going to do the job. That's all there is to it," Much said in an interview with that newspaper. Miccarelli told Clout he's "looking forward to doing the job," but declined to say how much it pays.

Miccarelli **[was accused by two former girlfriends](#)** of physical or sexual abuse. One of the women, **[State Rep. Tarah Toohil](#)**, said he kicked her and threatened to kill himself and her with a gun when they dated in 2012. The second woman, a GOP political consultant, said Miccarelli sexually assaulted her after their relationship ended in 2014. Miccarelli denies the allegations and was never charged, but an internal state House investigation **[found the claims to be credible](#)**, prompting the House **[to impose restrictions](#)** on him, and Gov. Tom Wolf and GOP House leaders to call for his resignation.

Members of the social justice group Indivisible Swarthmore protested the appointment Wednesday at the County Council meeting. Delaware County has a \$5.7 million contract with Community Transit, good through July. Rachel Pastan, a member of the group, urged the council to not renew the contract as long as Miccarelli was executive director. She called the job an "appalling" political appointment. "Given his history of making women feel unsafe, Mr. Miccarelli seems like a singularly inappropriate choice for this job," Pastan said in a statement. – ***Philadelphia Daily News***



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