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Congratulations To the FTTH Top 100 Companies

Some trends gleaned from **BROADBAND COMMUNITIES'** 2018 Top 100 list

Nothing brings trends into clear focus like spending a few months studying the leading companies in the fiber-to-the-home world – not just the 100 companies listed in this issue but also the many other candidates. Here's some of what I learned in the course of preparing the list.

- All major U.S. telephone and cable companies now have significant FTTH programs. AT&T's fiber build will soon be comparable in size to Verizon's; others are smaller (some are limited mainly to greenfield developments) but still sizable. In contrast to years past, the companies tout these projects to Wall Street. This development occurred at the same time copper and coaxial technologies were rapidly *improving* – which demonstrates that planning for future demand, once a radical idea, is becoming acceptable.
- The number of competitive fiber overbuilders is increasing. In the past, rural telcos often “edged out” to compete with larger providers in nearby, underserved towns. Today, there are many purely competitive companies.
- There's tremendous innovation in public-private partnerships. Municipalities and private providers are experimenting with ownership, management and contractual forms. (See, for example, the descriptions of Huntsville Utilities; Ammon, Idaho; and Allo Communications.)
- FTTH electronics, though they keep increasing in capacity, have become commodity items; equipment vendors are shifting their

focus to software, which adds more value for customers. Increasingly, that software is moving to the cloud. Vendors and network operators agree that separating control and management functions from network hardware allows operators to deliver services in a flexible, agile way.

- Passive equipment is becoming *less* commoditized and ever more tailored to the needs of specific deployers – whether they're installing networks with untrained workers in remote, mountainous regions or trying to please finicky condo owners concerned about the aesthetics of their hallways.
- Automated fiber design solutions are gaining traction. Two reasons come to mind: First, there are only so many experienced engineers, and the pace of fiber deployment has reached record levels; automated solutions can help them keep up with demand. Second, today's automated solutions have been shown to reduce overall network costs.

As in past years, I finished the Top 100 issue awed by the creativity and determination that so many companies, throughout the broadband ecosystem, put into delivering the benefits of fiber broadband. Congratulations to the FTTH Top 100 companies and the hundreds of other outstanding companies that are making 2018 the best year ever for fiber to the home. ❖

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