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Happy 10th Birthday To the FTTH Council

A few facts and figures show the progress of fiber to the home in the last decade.

It's been quite a season. First the 20th anniversary of the World Wide Web – or at least the launch of the first Web page – and now the 10th anniversary of the Fiber-to-the-Home Council.

From that first page, which contained an introduction to the WWW and instructions for using it, the Web has grown to include more than 16 billion indexed pages about every subject imaginable. The Fiber-to-the-Home Council North America, founded in 2001 by a few visionaries, has also grown, even if not at such a dizzying rate. Today it includes 288 companies and individuals. Many are service providers that deliver Internet access via fiber to the home; others supply the products and services that make FTTH access possible.

The 10th annual FTTH Conference this month offers a good opportunity to review how far fiber in North America has come in the last decade.

- In 2001, fiber connections were available to 19,400 North American households. By 2011, 21 million households could connect to the Internet via fiber.
- In 2001, only 5,500 households actually connected via fiber; in 2011, there are 7.1 million fiber-connected households.
- From a negligible percentage of the broadband market in 2001, fiber now accounts for 18 percent of the broadband market.
- The number of FTTH service providers grew from just over 20 in 2001 to more than 770 today.

Note that the take rates for FTTH have risen from about 28 percent a decade ago to about 34 percent today. The numbers are growing because subscribers who have fiber love it.

The most recent survey by RVA LLC found that FTTH users are more satisfied with their broadband service than other broadband subscribers are. Seventy-four percent say they are “very satisfied” – up from 71 percent in 2010 – compared with 54 percent for cable users and 51 percent for DSL. One reason is that FTTH subscribers get considerably more bandwidth for the buck: They pay \$2.91 a month per Mbps, compared with \$3.83 for cable subscribers, \$16.40 for DSL and \$49.38 for fixed wireless services.

To date, 752 U.S. network builders have taken the leap to all-fiber networks, according to Broadband Communities' count (the FTTH Council's count is slightly higher). Led by Verizon, the largest FTTH provider in the country, the list includes AT&T, CenturyLink and 500 other incumbent telcos, most of them small and rural. There are also about 80 pure competitive phone companies, 107 public entities and an assortment of other companies – real estate developers, cable TV companies, electric utilities, wireless providers and, of course, Google.

Kudos to all for their vision and their faith in the future. May the next 10 years be just as exciting and rewarding.

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