

Welcome Back, BROADBAND COMMUNITIES Summit!

The 2021 **BROADBAND COMMUNITIES** Summit brings together broadband providers and multifamily owners to address new technology trends and share industry experiences.

By Bryan J. Rader / *UpStream Network*

I have been attending the **BROADBAND COMMUNITIES** Summit since the 1990s. I am amazed at how many people I still see every year who have been attending as long as I have!

Back in the 1990s, Summit attendees discussed ways to expand programming lineups from 40 channels to 60, or how to use microwave antennas to transmit video from one multiple-dwelling-unit (MDU) building to another.

I remember sitting on a panel many years ago when one speaker professed that all cable channels will be going “digital” in a few years. Wow, no more analog?

In many events, the debate and discussion were on key topics impacting the MDU business. What made the conversations most interesting is that providers were able to brainstorm solutions directly with their MDU customers.

The **BROADBAND COMMUNITIES** Summit has always brought together broadband providers and multifamily owners. That’s why it’s a great place to listen and discover what’s happening in the broadband business.

IN-PERSON EXCHANGES

Over the past 18 months, everyone in the broadband business has sat through dozens of webinars and video presentations from home offices. But it’s simply not the same as being together in person.

This time we *are* in person, and I am very excited to participate. Watching great sessions such as “MDU Legal Leaders” (which is always entertaining theater), and presentations about trends in the business is always a highlight – but it’s far from the only one. In fact, the great conversations that happen over coffee in the hallway between sessions among vendors, property owners, and even competitors is what’s really valuable.

I remember one year the conference was held in Dallas: A group of long-time Summit attendees sat around in the lobby telling stories and laughing about many shared experiences in the industry until 2 a.m. The hotel management finally turned the lobby lights off and said, “Go to your rooms!”

But that is what this market is made of – great attendees

who are deeply passionate about bringing top-of-the-market services to the ever-changing MDU market. Having customers in the room makes the exchange of ideas even more rewarding.

POST-COVID-19 REALITIES

This year, I am sure Summit attendees will hear more about smart-home concepts – particularly how they are becoming integral parts of property management tools. Another hot topic will be bulk managed Wi-Fi’s becoming a leading service for apartment residents.

There are always heated debates: “Should I even care about 5G?” and “What does it matter if service is delivered over coax versus fiber?” Then there are many new realities, such as the changes in the apartment business since COVID-19 arrived. This includes the expansion of virtual leasing tours, digital door locks and smart thermostats.

There’s also ample conversation at the Summit about the changing behavior of apartment residents. A few years ago, several leading MDU ancillary income managers pointed out that their revenue-sharing checks for pay TV were dropping to almost nothing because their residents were no longer subscribing. This was an early indication of how fast young residents were cutting the cord.

The **BROADBAND COMMUNITIES** Summit has stood the test of time as the best platform for sharing all these ideas. It has a broad-based attendance from all different parts of the industry and geographies. This has made the content much richer and more timely over the years.

I’m so excited that 2021’s event is upon us, and that we are heading back for another Summit in person. I hope to see you there, but not likely in the lobby at 2 a.m. I think those days are over! ❖

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