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MDU Bulk Broadband Service Comes of Age

Service providers and MDU property owners/managers embrace bulk broadband service as an amenity to attract and retain residents.

Bulk services have become commonplace in the multiple-dwelling-unit (MDU) broadband industry segment. Offering a simple, lower pricing structure for building managers and consumers, competitive and incumbent providers are stepping up to the bulk service plate.

A big part of bulk growth occurred during the pandemic, when people were forced to work and attend school remotely. Bulk broadband also started to bridge the digital divide for seniors and low-income families.

Guillermo Rivas, vice president of new business development for Cox Communications, says the cable MSO experienced a “significant increase in bulk services.” Other incumbent providers, such as AT&T, DISH Fiber, Greenlight Networks, Ting and Starry Internet see a similar trend.

INSTANT-ON BANDWIDTH

Similar to electricity and water, consumers expect to be able to connect to broadband when they move into an apartment or condo. With instant-on bandwidth, users go to a website, enter credentials and connect. Because the provider already put equipment in place, there’s no waiting for an installation window.

According to the 2022 NMHC/ Grace Hill Renter Preferences Survey, which features input from more than 221,000 renters, more than 80 percent consider immediate internet service availability essential. Moreover, more than half of renters want bulk internet that provides seamless connectivity across their apartment communities.

DIVERSE APPROACHES, CHALLENGES

As you will see throughout this issue, service providers and property owners enhance MDU broadband through diverse approaches. Technology choice and process depend on whether the property is greenfield or brownfield:

- **Fiber to the unit:** Leveraging a mix of GPON and, increasingly, XGS-PON technology, a service provider brings fiber directly into each unit to deliver broadband services.
- **Managed Wi-Fi:** Properties outsource the management and monitoring of Wi-Fi to a third-party provider. Residents can immediately connect to multiple access points throughout a property.
- **Fiber extension technologies:** For brownfield buildings in which getting fiber directly to a unit is not feasible, fiber extension technologies such as G.fast, G.hn and MoCA can deliver gigabit-speed bandwidth using existing coax or Ethernet cabling.

For all the opportunities with bulk broadband, challenges remain. Service providers must battle supply chain constraints and the subscriber onboarding process. However, MDU owners/operators and providers see bulk as a critical amenity.

As bulk broadband service comes of age, are you ready? ❖

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