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CONNECTIVITY Going Above & Beyond

Midco is now offering new technology that expands its in-home Wi-Fi coverage, give customers more control over their systems, increase security and enhance the customer-service experience.

by Darin White

Technology is an ever-changing and developing tool that has the potential to change how we work, play, provide philanthropy—almost every facet of our lives. Bill Chatwell, vice president of product engineering at Midco, says that while it is a technology-driven company, “Midco is in the business of connectivity.”

Connectivity goes above and beyond technology, as it provides the ability for the customer to use technology in more directed ways that are customized to their needs. Midco has and continues to offer internet and landline services, and also video products, including for news and sports.

Within the past year, Midco has rolled out a new version of Midco Wi-Fi, which, as part of the connectivity, goes way beyond the hardware components with new technology brought to the market. New hardware elements allow for expanding Wi-Fi coverage, and “pods” that boost this coverage are available. Up to a total of six pods, which “continually adjust to home usage, topography and neighborhood activity to deliver in-home performance beyond the capabilities of standard ... systems,” according to the Midco website, can be installed per system.

New cloud-based software components are also pivotal and drive the hardware, and it features intelligence that gives the consumer control of his or her network. It allows for more security and greater parental controls, including blocking content/websites, self-monitoring and more. This new system also has enabled customer support to provide even more understanding and help, allowing for troubleshooting issues that arise with the ability to see what the customer sees in real time.

While speed was a major issue previously, it is not as important now, as speed has become more universal. The conversation focuses now more on quality, reliability and consistency throughout the space. Chatwell describes consistency as delivering data with lower latency (less delay) and lower jitter (less timing deviation). He says that currently, pods are available in different versions, with new and even more capable products being developed and coming to market in the next year and a half.

Midco TV has had a number of recent changes and updates, as well, which rolled out to Lawrence in October 2021. The major change was from an RF- based (radio frequency, fixed co-



Bill Chatwell, Vice President of Product Engineering at Midco.

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axial cable) delivery to IP (Internet Protocol). This is the same type of delivery as Hulu, Netflix, YouTube, etc. The set-top box, which used to be a larger box that was limited to a location where the coaxial cable was located, is now much smaller and more powerful, and has more flexibility. It is easy for consumers to install themselves. The set-top box's DVR storage “cloud-enabled” in a Midco data center and is based on an Android TV operating system. A new feature allows you to go back in time three days on many channels, even if you didn't record a program, to watch it. Another excellent feature is the set-top box aggregates all content, so you can search for a title, and it will check across all of your TV channels, Netflix or any other OTT video application connected to the service. All is available through the set-top box or on the Midco TV mobile app.

It is a constant challenge to keep up with customers' needs and applications, and in Chatwell's view, “[it is] a privilege to serve the community.” This helps Midco stay up-to-date on technology and the ever-changing landscape of media service, as well as the connectivity it provides. While we can't see into the future—what new technology or systems will be invented, and in what way these connections will help us—it is nice to know we can build upon our strong foundations of innovation that brought us to this point. ▲

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