

# 578 20220404 CNN+

新闻实验室会员通讯 (578) CNN+

## 案例

### CNN+

当地时间3月28日晚，美国有线电视新闻网（CNN）在纽约为旗下全新的流媒体服务“[CNN+](#)”举办上线发布会，该服务于29日正式推出。会上，该公司将CNN+的发布形容为与1980年CNN电视台的创立相提并论的大事，并宣布CNN创始人泰德·特纳（Ted Turner）成为第一名订户。

CNN并不是美国第一个进入流媒体领域的主要电视新闻网络——实际上，应该算是最后一个了。在此之前，ABC、CBS和NBC都开设了免费的流媒体新闻频道。付费内容方面，NBC将MSNBC内容纳入其全台流媒体服务[Peacock](#)旗下。大概三年半以前，福克斯新闻推出了针对“超级粉丝”的增值服务[Fox Nation](#)。

本期会员通讯将介绍CNN+包含的所有服务项目，分析其与Netflix这样的流媒体订阅服务、《纽约时报》这样的数字新闻订阅服务的异同，以及在立场公正性及商业前景方面的挑战。

### 订阅内容：热门原创剧集、独家节目、观众参与

CNN+的定价是每月6美元或每年60美元，早期注册有50%的终身折扣（即如果中途不退订，可以一直享受这个折扣价）。相对于Netflix、Disney+等月费在8-10美元的服务，乃至月费5美元的Apple TV+，可带广告免费观看的Peacock等而言，这个价格并不便宜。那么，人们需要知道这样的价格将会为其订户带来什么。

首先，CNN拍摄的一系列原创剧集和纪录片都被转移到CNN+下面。其中最有可能的是已故旅行家、美食达人安东尼·波登的《未知之旅》（Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown）全集，此外也有圣经故事、《70/80/90年代》等剧集。CNN+也将上线一些仅仅在流媒体播出的资讯节目，比如一档墨西哥美食游记。作为对比，Fox Nation也主要是提供福克斯新闻频道监制的资讯和娱乐节目，其定价也是每月6美元（并且有一个对退伍军人免费一年的“情怀价”）。

不过这并非CNN+的主要组成部分，它每天都会有8场直播的新闻播报，贯穿全天；此外每周有10个周播的新闻和访谈类节目。

电视新闻频道需要严格控制时间，并插播广告。所以在CNN电视频道的新闻栏目被切成半小时或一小时规整的方块，其中插播广告至少占据了三分之一的时间。相比之下，流媒体播报的时间限制就要自由得多。以首档节目《今天五件事》（5 Things）为例，如果今天事情比较少以及比较简单，可能五分钟就完事了；如果需要大篇幅的背景介绍，可能是15分钟或更久。而对于克里斯汀·阿曼普尔（Christiane Amanpour）这样的访谈主持人来讲，也不用担心为了卡结束时间而不得不草草收尾，可以聊个痛快。

因为CNN的三个电视频道——美国版、国际版和HLN——早已经在全世界200多个国家和地区签订了复杂的分销协议，所以CNN+订阅内容并不包含电视频道的直播和点播。但原本属于CNN Go品牌的电视频道网上直播还是将迁移到CNN+品牌下面，同时CNN Go品牌将下架。CNN+表示，其付费的新闻节目可以涵盖电视频道播出的内容，且质量更好。

最后，CNN+还将提供一个互动式的“采访俱乐部”，允许订阅者向专家嘉宾提出问题，经过审核之后，问题将在网上节目中被解答，感觉有点像是视频版的Clubhouse一样。在CNN+的网站上，[显示](#)了其中一些观众已经提出的问题，提问对象包括传染病专家安东尼·福奇等新闻当事人，而对应的答案正是需要先付费再查看。[正如CNN一位高管所说的那样](#)，这个互动环节也是产品竞争力的一部分，以使该服务“不仅仅是一个拥有新闻内容的Netflix”。

## 一场1.2亿美元的豪赌，前景如何？

CNN+是一次在电视业界史无前例的豪赌。公司为只在网上播出的节目花大价钱挖来了不少来自其竞争对手的主持人，其中包括NBC的亨特（Kasie Hunt）、NPR的康妮什（Audie Cornish），而最让人震惊的是曾经为福克斯新闻效力的克里斯·华莱士（Chris Wallace，“谈笑风生”的迈克·华莱士之子）。这也被CNN方面作为一个例子，说明CNN+将尽量摒弃在电视频道上明显的自由主义党派立场。之前，华莱士曾特意感谢老东家慷慨地放行。

据报道，CNN+的初始投资额已经达到1.2亿美元。除了大笔金钱花到名主持的工资上，还聘请了数百名编辑和技术人员，并扩大了演播室和新闻编辑室的空间。[根据《名利场》杂志的说法](#)，这是CNN在其核心产品（即电视频道）之外花钱最多的项目。

CNN+希望这样的大手笔不仅吸引CNN的“忠实粉丝”，也吸引那些没有有线电视订阅的“拔线族”。这种投资重心的迁移反映了美国有线电视用户数量的锐减，而有线电视新闻观众已经严重老化，年龄中位数处于60-70岁。

不过，并不是所有人都看好CNN+的前景，从它挖角的成功率上可见一斑。尽管有成功跳槽者，但也有更多的新闻台主播和记者不为所动，比如MSNBC的玛多（Rachel Maddow），她拒绝了CNN+每年2000万美元的工资包。人们也猜测曾因报道造假丑闻跌落黄金时间主播神坛的布莱恩·威廉姆斯（Brian Williams）可能转会到CNN+，但目前这也不是事实。MSNBC内部人士指出，CNN+“除了能让心思松动的人跟老板谈涨工资之外，没有真正受到任何人的注意”。

## 对标Netflix，还是《纽约时报》？

如果将CNN+定位为一个独家内容构成的视频流媒体服务，就像Netflix那样，那么如上文的价格对照显示的，它确实缺乏一点竞争力。但CNN首席数字官兼CNN+负责人莫尔斯（Andrew Morse）拒绝这样的类比。莫尔斯表示，CNN+的商业模式实际上更类似于《纽约时报》——会员通讯此前曾经多次提到过，这份报纸在过去10年中建立了庞大的数字订阅用户群，且得到丰厚的回报。《纽约时报》的数字订阅不仅包含报纸

本身，也有菜谱、填字游戏等周边项目。但总体上，新闻服务仍是它提供给用户的最大价值。

另一方面，尽管Fox Nation已经早早开办，CNN+并不屑于与之相提并论。[它声称](#)自己是“全球唯一基于视频的新闻订阅业务”，并且直言不讳地称Fox Nation是“一款专注于娱乐和右翼言论而不是新闻的流媒体”。

CNN+意在通过更富弹性的节目编排，更精华的访谈节目嘉宾人选，特别是更大牌和多元的主播阵营，来区别于其有线电视频道的自由派节目。由杰夫·扎克（Jeff Zucker）主政的过去8年让CNN的节目风格有了明显的偏移，特别是在2015年特朗普开始竞选总统时起。（会员通讯447期曾介绍过CNN不慎外泄的内部编辑会议如何裁剪与特朗普有关的新闻内容。）

党同伐异的有线电视新闻频道以日益极化的风格各自拉走观众，也让关心媒体业的人士担忧：长此以往，这可能意味着新闻业整体的公信力下降。在这个阶段，如果能有一个确实做到中立持平的媒体平台出现，自然是非常好的。有不少人怀念上世纪90年代及以前的CNN，那时他们确实能提供简单、纯粹，没有冗长嘉宾连线，也没有明显倾向和偏见的新闻报道。而CNN+的出炉似乎意味着，要再次看到这种质量的报道，起码是得掏点钱才行。

但是，甚至连CNN这个招牌本身，都有可能构成通往中立持平这一理想的障碍。其直接的竞争对手、刚被挖走一员大将的福克斯新闻对CNN+宣称要做跨党派媒体嗤之以鼻，[他们认为](#)有如此多的同时主持电视频道的主播加入CNN+的节目，而且他们无一例外表达了自由主义倾向，是不可能让CNN+真的只有纯新闻，而不夹杂观点与意见的。

最后，CNN+的前途还很显然受到其母公司和整个行业大势的影响。2021年初，在特朗普总统任期末尾发生冲击国会山事件时，CNN收视率是有线电视业界的榜首。结果到年底，[它只能在全美所有频道排名第17位](#)，黄金时间收视率更掉到第31位。

一系列不利事件造成了CNN的挫折，其中最大的一起当属知名主播科莫（Chris Cuomo）的丑闻（详见会员通讯546期）。他离职后不久，曾经力保他的杰夫·扎克本人也因为和女下属的地下恋情曝光而不得不辞职。就在这时，CNN母公司华纳媒体（WarnerMedia）被AT&T分拆出来，并完成与探索频道（Discovery）合并。

这就意味着新公司将拥有两个已经运转良好的流媒体订阅服务：Discovery+和HBO Max。CNN推出第三个服务CNN+的决定是独立做出的，并没有征求母公司的意见。因为它刚刚推出不久，未来它将如何与上述两个订阅服务共存，还是说会融合或分拆等等，也有悬念。

如果说CNN+是从行将就木的有线电视业脱身出来，为自己在不看电视的“拔线族”中找一条活路，它可能动作得太晚了。2021年初，美国消费者已[每月花费47美元](#)用于各种各样的流媒体订阅服务，比疫情前上升了24%。如果算上云存储、家庭安全、餐饮、约会应用乃至亚马逊Prime等种类繁多的订阅，消费者们在订阅服务的[总支出是每月273美元](#)。甚至有89%的受访者都没意识到自己花了这么多钱，直到把所有服务加起来才恍然大悟。

在这么多花费上再加6美元，并不是一个很容易做出来的决定。这就使得CNN+面对的情况，和80年代给CNN有线频道招募订户时的情形大为不同，这也是它面对的一个更根本性的挑战。

**（本期会员通讯由李书航主笔，方可成编辑。）**



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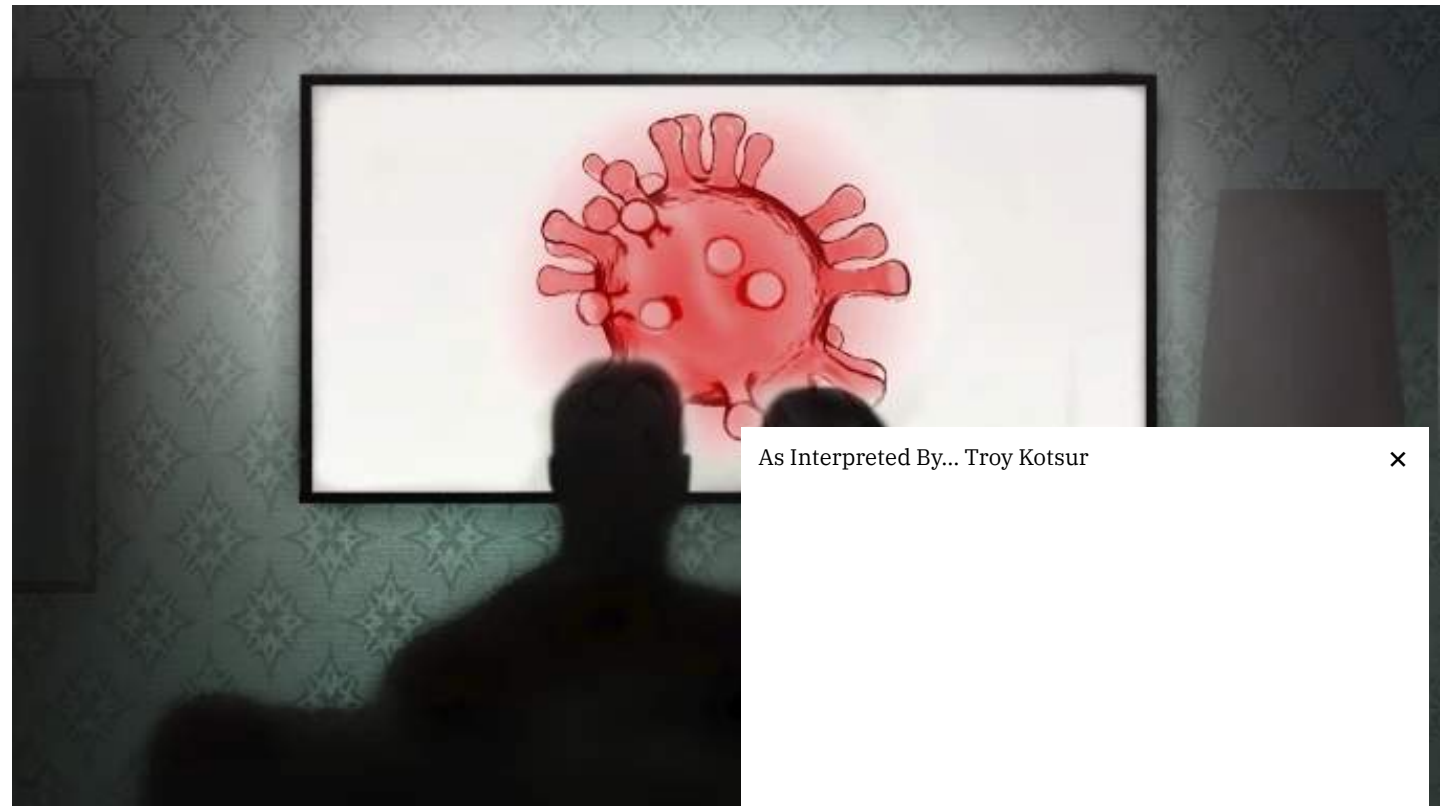
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# U.S. Consumers Now Pay \$47 Monthly for Streaming Services — Up 24% Since COVID Hit, Survey Finds

By Todd Spangler ▼



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The “streaming wars” are now in full swing, but so far the competition has produced a rising tide lifting all boats — the adoption of subscription-video services has soared across the board during the time of the coronavirus. The question now is whether that will mostly stick, or if there’s a wave of SVOD cancelations coming in the months ahead.

Americans now subscribe to four streaming services on average, up from three at the outset of the COVID pandemic last year, according to a new J.D. Power survey. And they’re shelling out 24% more to get their on-demand fix: U.S. consumers spent an average of \$47 per month in December 2020 on video subscription services, up from \$38 in April.

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That’s been fueled by the arrival of new streamers like HBO Max and Peacock, while [players like Netflix](#) (203.7 million subs at year-end, up 22% year over year) and [Disney Plus \(nearly 87 million in its first year\)](#) have continued to surge — against the backdrop of stay-at-home quarantines as the coronavirus shut down public venues for most of 2020. The losers, of course, are pay-TV providers, which have continued to shed customers.

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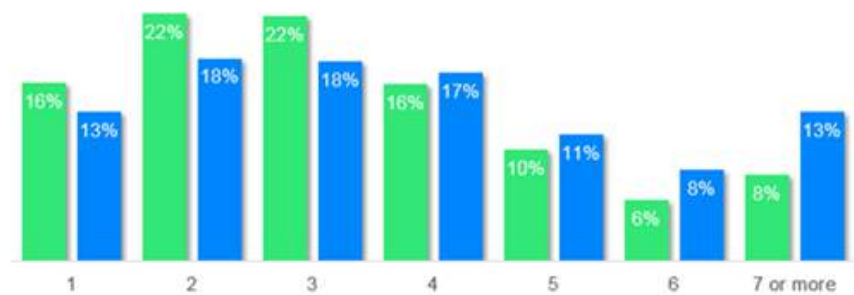
About 49% of respondents on J.D. Power’s survey said that t streaming services. In April, that figure was 39%. In fact, 13 (versus 8% in April 2020).

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# of Streaming Services you Use



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Source: J.D. Power TMT Insight survey of 1,745 U.S. adults, Dec. 16-19, 2020

J.D. Power

But a sector shakeout could be looming once lockdowns lift and “[streaming fatigue](#)” sets in.

“When we emerge from this pandemic and people have less time to consume content at home, it will be intriguing to see how regularity of use factors into streamers’ decisions to potentially unsubscribe from some of these services,” MoffettNathanson analysts led by Michael Nathanson, wrote in their [Q4 2020 SVOD tracking report released Friday](#).

Note that MoffettNathanson’s study found lower average household SVOD penetration than J.D. Power’s did. Per MoffettNathanson, whose survey was conducted with HarrisX, the average U.S. pay-TV household as of the end of 2020 subscribed to an average of 3.33 SVOD services while non-pay-TV homes subscribe to an average of two.

About 81% of respondents on J.D. Power’s survey said they subscribe to [Netflix](#), the No. 1 streamer. Amazon Prime Video ranked second at 65%, followed by Hulu at 56%, [Disney Plus](#) at 47%, HBO Max at 22%, Peacock at 18%, and Apple TV Plus at 14%.

Meanwhile, J.D. Power’s survey found Disney Plus’ “The Mandalorian” was the most-watched TV show on streaming platforms in December 2020. That helped Disney Plus boost user time spent on the platform, rising from 4.8 hours per week in April to 5.0 hours per week in December. Among the services in the survey, Netflix had the biggest decline from the spring, dropping from 10.2 hours to 9.5 hours weekly.

The J.D. Power TMT Insight survey of 1,745 U.S. adults was conducted Dec. 16-19, 2020. The margin of error for the survey results is +/- 2% at the 90% confidence interval, according to the researcher. A copy of the study is available at [this link](#).

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## Average consumer spending \$273 per month on subscription services: report

People are spending 15% more than they did in 2018, equalling an extra \$430 spent each year.



Written by **Jonathan Greig**,  
Staff Writer

on September 21, 2021 | Topic: E-Commerce

Consumers are spending more than ever on subscription services, according to a new report from West Monroe.

West Monroe polled 2,500 consumers about how much they spend each month on a variety of subscription services, finding that people are spending 15% more than they did in 2018. The types of subscriptions have also expanded as more companies create digital platforms and offerings to lure in consistent customers.

The average consumer surveyed said they spend \$273 per month on subscription services, up from \$237 in 2018. This extra 15% equals an additional \$430 spent each year.

The researchers behind the study were also very interested in people's perception of how much they spend each month on subscriptions, finding that most people underestimate how much they dole out monthly before sitting down to calculate it.

All of the respondents to the survey were unaware of how much they actually spent on subscription services off the top of their heads and most needed more than two tries to get close.

In 2021, 89% underestimated what they spend each month, and in 2018, 84% underestimated what they spent each month. Nearly half of those who underestimated were off by between \$100-\$300.

About 70% of respondents subscribed to mobile phone services and a home WiFi service as well as TV and movie providers. Half of all respondents had Amazon Prime accounts.

The rest of the list varied widely, with respondents reporting a hodgepodge of subscriptions ranging from music streaming sites, gaming services, cloud storage sites, home security systems, newspapers, fitness apps, dating apps and meal services.

There was also an increase in the number of people using subscription boxes, which now cover a range of industries like beauty, pets, toys and wellness. Services like Ipsy and Dollar Shave Club were referenced by respondents.

Other subscriptions named included book services like Kindle and Audible as well as cloud storage tools like Dropbox, iCloud and OneDrive.

Tinder, Match, eHarmony and other dating sites featured prominently alongside fitness apps like MyFitnessPal, Lose It! and Fitbit.

Respondents also had a number of newspaper or magazine subscriptions as well as gaming services like PlayStation Now and Xbox Game Pass.

ADT, Nest and Ring dominated the home security system subscriptions while identity protection services like LifeLock and Identity Guard were popular as well.

Verizon, Sprint and Boost Mobile were the most popular mobile phone services and streaming sites like Spotify, Pandora and XM Radio led the way.

Netflix, Hulu, cable services and premium packages were cited as well, alongside WiFi services like Comcast, AT&T and CenturyLink.





*West Monroe*

Dhaval Moogimane, a partner at West Monroe, said it was not surprising to see that subscription spend grew over the past three years.

"It is reflective of the growth of products and services available to us as subscriptions, and the buying behavior that has changed, driven by COVID. What was most surprising to see was the perception gap between how much respondents thought they spent on subscriptions per month versus what they actually spent," Moogimane said.

"The percentage of respondents who were off by more than \$200 grew to 66%, from 24% in 2018. This increase in perception gap is indicative of how some of the subscriptions are now viewed as utilities, particularly cell phones, Wi-Fi, ID protection services, cloud storage services, and more."

Moogimane added that to capture estimates, they asked respondents to think generally about "recurring monthly expenses associated with digital services, devices, and subscription boxes" -- including prompts of specific examples and service categories.

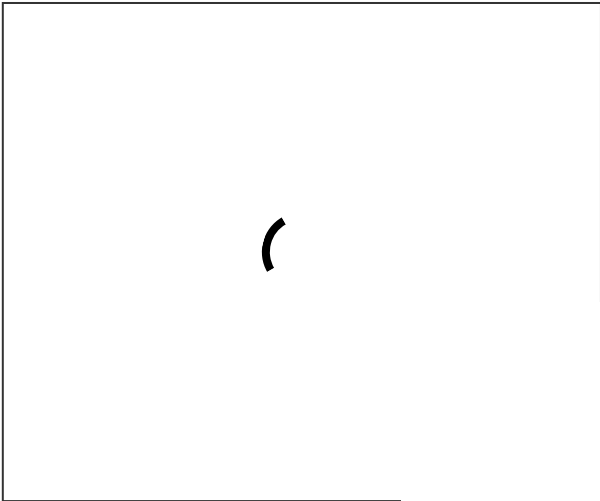
Respondents were given 10 seconds to guess how much they spend each month. After recording this initial answer, they immediately asked participants to repeat the exercise with 30 seconds to think about the question more carefully.

"This is how we calculated what their initial perceptions were for their monthly subscriptions. Then we took them through their subscriptions one by one and tallied up their spend per each individual subscription to determine their actual total spend," Moogimane said.

"The idea is that consumers may think they know what they are spending each month, but when they are asked what they actually pay for each subscription service and the total is added up, it reflects a different story."

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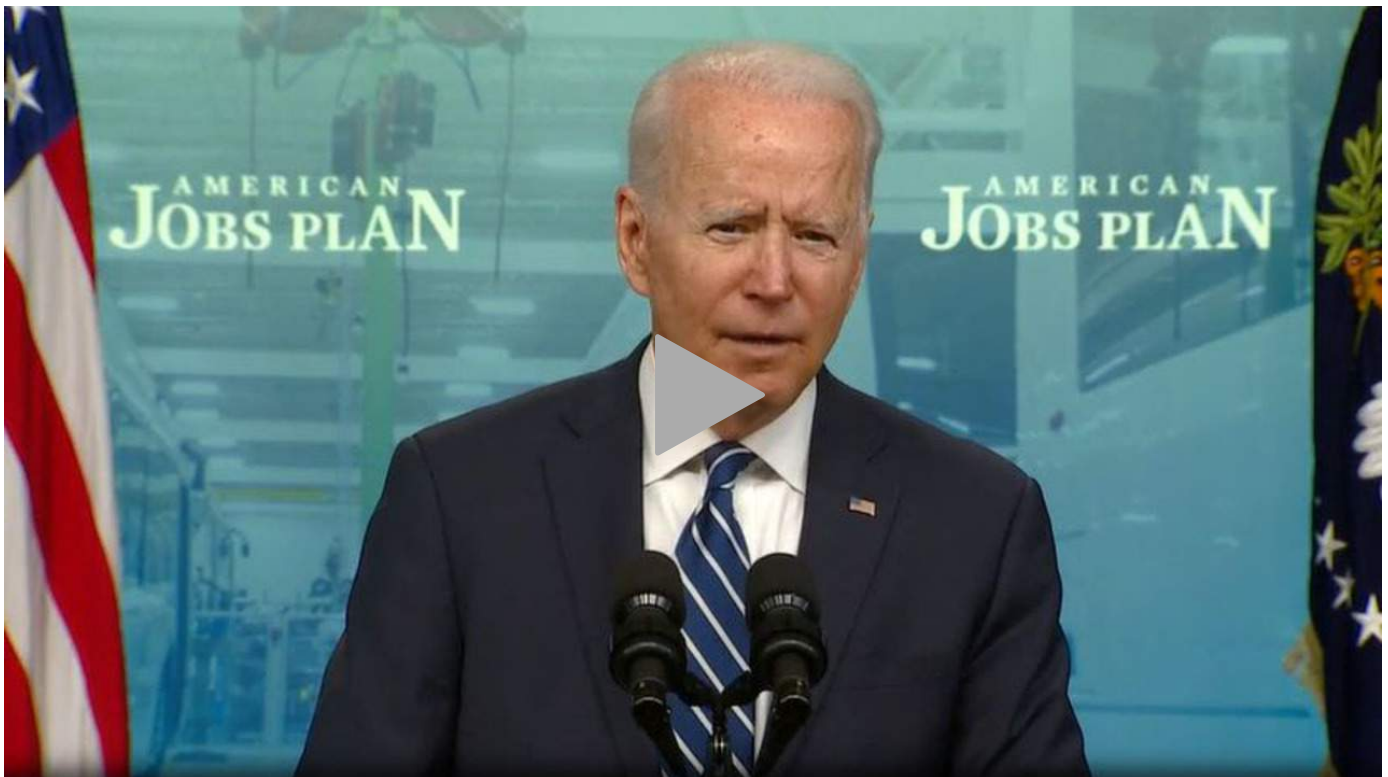


**MEDIA** • Published July 20, 2021 1:41pm EDT

# CNN claims to be nonpartisan while announcing new streaming service: 'We're not an opinion network'

CNN executive says news organization with Acosta, Stelter, Toobin, Cuomo, Lemon, Keilar, Tapper, Cooper is not ideological

By [Cortney O'Brien](#) , [David Rutz](#) | Fox News



## Media top headlines July 20

In media news today, reporters hit President Biden for walking back sharp criticism of Facebook, MSNBC's Andrea Mitchell made eyebrow-raising remarks about crime in Washington, D.C., and the Washington Post lightheartedly mocked Hunter Biden's art.

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[CNN](#) announced its new CNN+ streaming service on Monday, claiming that the platform starting next year will be free from partisan agendas despite the network's well-established liberal lean.

In promoting the subscription service, CNN chief digital officer Andrew Morse claimed the venture would not be ideological and CNN is "not an opinion network."

"I don't think anyone who's looking for 'deep lib' would seek out CNN," Morse [said](#) on the Variety podcast "Strictly Business." "It's just not what we do. No, it's not going to be ideological. We're just not in that game. We're not an opinion network, we're a news network."

### **NEW LOW? CNN'S 'NEW DAY' DRAWS ONLY 76K VIEWERS AMONG DEMO COVETED BY ADVERTISERS**

His remarks raised some eyebrows.

"So you'll be able to watch Kamau Bell ask giggly softballs to Antifa or the CNN Films love letter to RBG, but "it's not going to be ideological," [wrote](#) NewsBusters executive editor Tim Graham about the new service.

CNN's primetime lineup consists of nothing but left-wing commentary from hosts Anderson Cooper, Chris Cuomo, and Don Lemon, but CNN's editorializing is also rampant among its news hosts and reporters. "New Day" co-anchor [Brianna Keilar](#) was accused of [patronizing](#) her guest Rep. [Byron Donalds](#), R-Fla., last month, suggesting that he was not admitted to the Congressional Black Caucus because his ideals were "incongruous" with their mission.

### **REP. BYRON DONALDS TEARS INTO CNN, BRIANNA KEILAR FOLLOWING TENSE INTERVIEW: 'THEY HAVE A POLITICAL AGENDA'**

Reflecting on the contentious interview on Sunday, Donalds [told](#) Fox News that CNN has "a political agenda."

"The people at CNN, they have an agenda, they have a political agenda," Donalds said. "Let's be very clear. They have a political viewpoint, the political viewpoint moves forward on everything



they report. And it's not just the anchors. It's the producers and it's the people at the top of the organization."

Under CNN President [Jeff Zucker](#), the network has taken a sharp left turn over the past eight years, particularly when Donald Trump began his run for president in 2015.

Left-wing weekend anchor Jim Acosta became well-known over the past four years for his bombastic, feverishly anti-Trump [coverage](#), where his melodramatics [annoyed](#) even some of his mainstream contemporaries. He declared once that journalists should march in front of the White House and chant "We are not the enemy of the people," and he parlayed his style of journalism into a [weekend gig](#) for CNN once Trump was out of office. His current pinned tweet is a monologue comparing the former president to a clown.

CNN White House correspondent [John Harwood](#) has not troubled to hide his liberal political preferences in his reporting either, [cheering](#) Biden's inauguration on Jan. 20 and frequently fawning over the new administration.

Other liberal figures like media correspondent [Brian Stelter](#), a staunch defender of establishment journalists, recently returned legal analyst [Jeffrey Toobin](#), and outspoken anchor [Jake Tapper](#) also belie Morse's claim.

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It doesn't stop on the news side.

Cuomo was [forced to apologize](#) this year after revelations that he offered political advice to his brother New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, D., on sexual harassment allegations against him. That came after [CNN was sharply criticized](#) for allowing Cuomo to do chummy interviews with his brother during the outset of the coronavirus pandemic.

In April, Lemon was [called](#) "incredibly dishonest and openly partisan" for claiming President Biden simply misspoke about a Georgia voting law when he falsely said the measure "ends voting hours early." In May, Cuomo vented about the [Supreme Court's](#) decision to hear [a Mississippi case](#) that could prohibit abortions after the 15th week of pregnancy, condemning the pro-life movement as catering to "the far-right white-fright vote."

Journalist Glenn Greenwald was among the critics who sarcastically celebrated the network's new streaming service announcement, questioning CNN's use of the phrase "much-anticipated."

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A look into **CNN+**

## CNN+ is here: What to expect from the subscription news streamer

By [Brian Stelter](#), CNN Business

Updated 1730 GMT (0130 HKT) March 29, 2022



CNN's goal is to establish closer relationships with news consumers — the same way Netflix ([NFLX](#)) and HBO Max have done in entertainment.

It has hired hundreds of people and developed dozens of shows for this new platform. Analysts say it is the most [ambitious](#) streaming news venture to date in the United States.

"We are going to be the only global video-driven news subscription business," CNN chief digital officer and [head of CNN+ Andrew Morse](#) said in an interview.

The big three broadcast news divisions -- ABC, NBC and CBS -- have streaming channels that are free and ad-supported, but have far less content. MSNBC repurposes some of its programs on NBCUniversal's subscription service, Peacock, while Fox News sells a streamer that focuses on entertainment and right-wing talk, not news.

CNN+ is distinct from all of those. Still, the service faces headwinds, including looming management changes and outside skepticism about the service's prospects.

"News is additive. It's habit forming. But it's a hard sell for a standalone subscription service," said Julia Alexander, senior strategy analyst for Parrot Analytics, a firm that advises media companies.

Down the road, CNN+ may be bundled. But at launch it is a standalone product priced at \$5.99 a month.

CNN's hit original series like ["Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown,"](#) which were previously streaming elsewhere, will now be available exclusively in the CNN+ library. Acclaimed documentaries and specials will also be streaming.

Eight daily newscasts and interview shows will go live throughout the day on weekdays, then be available on demand.

Nearly a dozen new weekly programs like ["The Don Lemon Show"](#) and ["Jake Tapper's Book Club"](#) will also premiere throughout the week.

A dedicated team will cover breaking news and produce special reports with many of the same correspondents and analysts that appear on CNN.

But nothing will change about the current CNN experience on TV or on CNN Digital. Anchors will continue helming their existing shows, available via cable and satellite, and reporters will continue publishing stories on CNN.com, the free ad-supported website.

CNN+ is something different -- partly out of necessity and partly out of creativity.

WarnerMedia's lucrative and long-term deals with cable and satellite distributors mean that CNN+ can't simulcast the existing CNN/U.S., CNN International or CNN en Español channels.

But a growing number of American households don't have cable anyway, creating a major threat to the future of major media companies. So CNN executives and producers pondered: What would a brand new video news service look like in 2022, freed from all the constraints of traditional TV?

The answers are evident throughout the daily CNN+ schedule, beginning with "Five Things," five of the morning's top headlines hosted by Kate Bolduan at 7 a.m. Eastern.



CNN's chief media correspondent Brian Stelter takes a closer look at the companies, players and trends dominating the ever-changing media landscape. [Exclusively on CNN+](#)

"Because we're not doing one set linear feed, we can do a show that allows people to get up to speed in the morning," CNN head of product and CNN+ general manager Alex MacCallum said. "If that should be five minutes one day, 15 minutes the next day, we have the flexibility to be able to make the shows as long or as short as they need to be to fulfill whatever the customer need is."

"Go There" at 8 a.m. Eastern will feature in-depth coverage from correspondents in the field, including the war zone in Ukraine. The daily schedule will continue with "The Big Picture with Sara Sidner" at 9 a.m., "Reliable Sources Daily" at 11 a.m., "The Source with Kasie Hunt" at 4 p.m., "The Global Brief with Bianca Nobilo" at 5 p.m., "Who's Talking to Chris Wallace?" at 6 p.m., and "The Newscast with Wolf Blitzer" at 7:30. (Full disclosure: I'm the host of "Reliable Sources Daily.")

CNN executives expect that many people will watch these shows on-demand, not live, which invites a different way of thinking about news coverage.

Weekly programs will feature established CNN stars like Anderson Cooper and new additions like Audie Cornish and Scott Galloway.

The streaming service's interactive component, Interview Club, will also be a regular source of content.

"We want to give space for subscribers to ask the questions that they have," CNN chief technology officer Robyn Peterson said in an interview.

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CNN+ is here: What to expect from the subscription news streamer - CNN

Interview Club will let subscribers submit questions that moderators will share with expert guests. It was "built from the ground up, from whiteboard all the way to product," Peterson said.

An immense amount of work has taken place behind the scenes to create a streaming platform that can eventually expand around the world.


The ultimate question is: How many people will pay up for video news?



CNN is rolling out a marketing blitz to raise awareness of the product. Hosts like Wallace are making the rounds on other channels as well.

The launch is complicated by the fact that WarnerMedia is on the verge of merging with Discovery. The mega-deal is expected to take effect in April, and may augur changes behind the scenes.

Alexander said Discovery could take one of two different paths to integrate all the brands. "The first is a scale play bundle," she said, combining HBO Max, Discovery+, and CNN+ much like "Disney did with its three services, Disney+, Hulu, and ESPN+."

The second and more likely path, she said, is "all of these services melding together into one platform."






service.

Peterson said CNN+ will be available on a key set of devices at launch — on the web, mobile and connected TV sets — and will "expand to new devices" in the months ahead.

While executives have not commented on when CNN+ might be available outside the US, "CNN is a brand that is known around the world," Morse said. "Aside from the BBC, there really is no other global news organization like CNN. So we see a really substantial market opportunity."

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## MEDIA

# "THIS IS NOT CNN 2": INSIDE THE CABLE NEWS GIANT'S STREAMING DREAMS

CNN+ is loading up on new talent (Alison Roman, Chris Wallace, Audie Cornish) and tapping its own (Anderson Cooper, Kate Bolduan) for a subscription service launching this spring. It's shaping up to be a major investment in the network's future—and maybe a lifeboat?



BY JOE POMPEO

JANUARY 12, 2022



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**T**he next time a prominent broadcaster reveals they're leaving their job for some sort of "new adventure" they promise to tell you more about soon, it would be reasonable to assume they're headed to CNN+, a forthcoming direct-to-consumer service from the network that kicked off the cable news revolution more than 40 years ago. That's how it went down when **Kasie Hunt** left NBC News and MSNBC in July, when **Chris Wallace** left Fox News in December, and when **Audie Cornish** left NPR last week, making her the latest arrival at CNN's streaming soirée. "This is not CNN 2," as executives have put it, which is to say they view it as something much more ambitious.

The project has been in development for around a year and a half at least; I **first reported** in August 2020 that parent company WarnerMedia was developing a "global direct-to-consumer offering," with one source remarking, "The trick is to create a new product, with all the foundations and brand prestige of CNN, that people would be interested in paying money for." Now CNN is in the midst of a full-court P.R. blitz ahead of a planned debut this spring, with a rapid clip of press releases heralding talent and programming. The **latest** additions are new weekday shows from CNN anchor **Kate Bolduan** and national correspondent **Sara Sidner**, as well as a daily offering hosted live from the field by a rotating cast of domestic and international correspondents. Programs like these, as well as those from Wallace, Hunt, **Anderson Cooper**, and **Scott Galloway**, will make up the news-driven, 8-to-12-hour live programming block that CNN+ promises at launch. Others, including new shows from the likes of **Eva Longoria** and **Alison Roman**, not to mention the **Stanley Tucci** and Anthony Bourdain libraries, will be offered on demand, reflecting the documentary-driven approach that has become a bigger part of CNN's identity in recent years. CNN also announced this week that CNN+ will premiere *The Last Movie Stars*, **Ethan Hawke**'s six-part, Scorsese-produced film about **Joanne Woodward** and Paul Newman. It's the latest get by top CNN executive **Amy Entelis**. She's expected to substantially increase the number of films and series that are developed and acquired by her team, which will have a home at CNN+ even if they premiere on the main network. Additionally, CNN+ will have an interactive component, which was described to me as a way of "building community into the service." If you were to speculate about what that might look like, picture, say, **Sanjay Gupta** interviewing **Anthony Fauci** in front of a virtual audience of CNN+ subscribers, almost like a video version of Clubhouse.

The caliber of people signing on with CNN+—as well as the wads of cash WarnerMedia appears to be throwing at it—has raised eyebrows across the industry. "They've got all these big announcements—when's the last time anyone wrote about what they're gonna do at 9 p.m.?" said a prominent talent agent, referring to the recent **implosion** of prime-time anchor **Chris Cuomo**. "Well played." Someone with knowledge of the investment described it as "many,

many orders of magnitude larger” than anything else CNN has done outside of its core product. Puck’s **Matthew Belloni** recently **reported** that CNN boss **Jeff Zucker** offered **Rachel Maddow** a roughly \$20 million-a-year CNN+ deal before she signed a new package with NBC. (CNN confirmed the offer but not the amount.) Sources told me CNN+ also had talks with Maddow’s MSNBC colleague **Ari Melber**, but he too decided to stay put. Speculation abounds that **Brian Williams** will resurface at CNN+ following his recent departure from MSNBC’s 11 p.m. hour, but I’m assured there’s nothing presently brewing on that front. Someone at MSNBC told me CNN+ “isn’t really on anyone’s radar” there “except [for] trying to keep defectors from going.”

One way of looking at CNN+ is as a **weapon in the streaming wars**, in which a news division revs up its streaming platform to help power the mothership’s broader streaming service, à la CBS News with Paramount+ and NBC News with Peacock, which **announced** this week that former **Kamala Harris** aide **Symone Sanders** will host a show for MSNBC’s streaming option, *The Choice*. **Andrew Morse**, CNN’s chief digital officer and the head of CNN+, rejected that characterization. “We’re not fighting the streaming wars,” he told me. “We’re playing a fundamentally different game.” Morse suggested the business model of CNN+ is actually more akin to that of *The New York Times*, which has built a large and lucrative digital-subscriber base over the past 10 years. For a more platform-specific comparison, the model also jibes with Fox Nation, the three-year-old stand-alone subscription service that blends original programming from Fox News stars like **Tucker Carlson** with documentary series and even a *Cops* reboot. “This is not a small swing for us,” said Morse. “We believe very strongly that CNN is uniquely positioned to build a global direct-to-consumer subscription service that will be an essential part of people’s lives.”

That said, it’s not as if CNN+ *won’t* help power WarnerMedia’s bigger streaming platform, HBO Max. There are plans to offer a bundled option, although the pricing is still being ironed out. Meanwhile, Discovery’s deal with WarnerMedia is projected to close in mid-2022, creating Warner Bros. Discovery, which will then create its own streaming behemoth that merges the assets of both companies. Discovery CEO **David Zaslav**, **who will run** the combined entity, will presumably want CNN+ to be a part of that behemoth, which will battle Netflix and the Disney bundle. Or maybe not? “At this point it’s unclear what the right strategy is,” said **Michael Nathanson**, a Wall Street analyst covering the merger. “There’s one school of thought, which is you need to build these super-apps with everything under the sun to satisfy as many people as possible. On the flip side, and this is where I come down, it may be a better model to go after niches and serve those niches with a smaller, more targeted service.”

Another way of looking at CNN+ is as an investment in CNN's future—or, to use a more cynical analogy, a lifeboat. The network appears to be laying down building blocks to prepare for an eventuality in which the traditional cable bundle, or at least traditional cable news, starts collapsing more than it already has. I suggested to Morse that it wouldn't strain reason to imagine a rather minimal audience for CNN+, at least near term. In the **post-Trump news cycle**, CNN's having **enough trouble** with its linear ratings. Moreover, with the ever-growing roster of direct-to-consumer options, streaming and otherwise, subscription fatigue is a real thing. How many more services can people sign up and pay for? Morse rejected this premise as well, citing extensive market research. "We're practical," he said. "We know this is going to be extremely difficult, but we're launching something entirely new. It's not a service that exists today. We've got aggressive but achievable subscription targets. Our one North Star metric is number of paying subscribers, and we have pretty ambitious goals for year one."

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