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Fiber Technology Is the Future. Is Your Community Ready?

BY JOHN
VON STEIN

We live in a digital age. Screen time is on the rise, with American adults spending more than 11 hours every day watching, reading, and listening to or interacting with media on their devices, according to a Nielsen study. The recent COVID-19 pandemic has forced us all to work

and learn from home, which emphasizes the importance and need for a high-performance network connection in every home. This is the “new normal” that property managers need to give careful consideration to as you weigh technology options and choose service providers for your communities.

Following are some of the most frequent questions that communities and managers ask about fiber connectivity.

Q How is fiber different from cable?

A Where cable uses copper wire to transmit data, fiber-optics uses light, which



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facilitates much faster internet connections that are capable of handling greater bandwidth. Copper (coax cable) is generally regarded as outdated technology—it’s what we used to watch cable television starting in the 1970s.

Here’s the big difference: When using your internet connection for web surfing, streaming, or watching TV, think about your devices as cars—even if you have a Ferrari, you can’t travel fast if you’re driving on a pothole-filled road. To maximize your car’s performance and hit top speed, you need a smooth road like the Autobahn. That’s fiber!

When clean, fiber-optic strands provide the pathway on which your digital services are delivered—and since fiber is devoid of potholes (splitters) inherent with cable—your user experience is simply better. Fiber is the wide-open road to Autobahn-speed connectivity.



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COVID-19 UPDATE

As of press time, it is up in the air with regards to whether normalcy would return by the time you read this. The health and safety of your Community and all residents is very important to us. We also realize that our clients have uncertainty and concerns around the continuing operation of your Community, and our team of attorneys will remain available to all of you during these times. Stay safe, everyone.

In addition, we added a useful section to our website at: KBRLegal.com/covid-19. At RembaumsAssociationRoundup.com, check out “Covid-19 Update: Your Questions Answered & Emergency Powers.”

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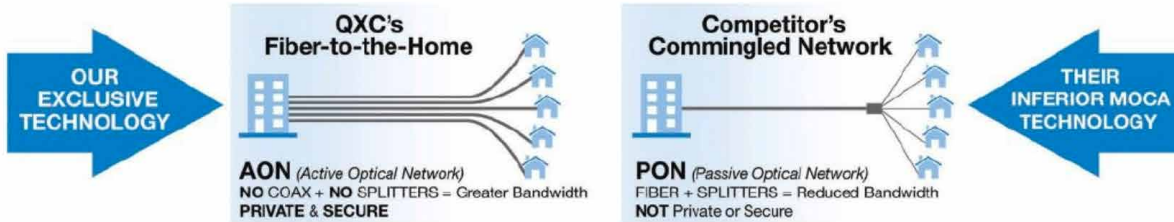


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Q What are the benefits of fiber?

A Fiber is not only faster than cable, but it's also able to transmit data over longer distances, is more secure, and is easier to scale. Flexible and lightweight, fiber is simpler to install and less demanding on the limited space of small control rooms.

Ultimately, the total cost of ownership over the lifetime of fiber is lower because it is more durable than cable (it stands up to extreme Florida weather and the salty environment), is cheaper to maintain, and requires less hardware. Clearly, fiber is the future: Fiber is on pace to be in 50 percent of all U.S. homes by 2025 (Source: *Fiber Broadband Association and RVA LLC*).

Q What about network design: Are all fiber installations the same?

A There are two types of fiber installations. Most providers deploy a low-end, cheap, PON (Passive Optical Network) structure: The cables are run from the main point of demarcation and then splitters are used to fan out to, and be shared with, the many homes connected to the splitter.

On the high end, an Active Optical Network (AON) architecture uses direct, fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) design—no splitters. The dedicated single



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fiber strand is run directly from the point of demarcation to each home or condominium unit so you get full, uninterrupted signal strength. AON is a much better network design:

- It's safer. Because there are no splitters, there's no commingling of data. Using dedicated fiber strands, AON is more private and secure; hackers cannot snoop on, or access, your data.
- It's faster. AON facilitates symmetrical bandwidth—it has the same upload as download capacity and has the lowest latency (i.e., fastest network speed) physically possible.

Q What's the difference between bandwidth and speed?

A It's like traveling on a highway such as I-95: Bandwidth is the number of lanes on the highway. The more lanes, the greater the bandwidth capacity. Speed is how fast you can travel in those lanes (75 mph vs. 25 mph). Both are important and contribute to the total user experience, but speed—the time it takes for a data bit to get from point A to point B—is what matters most for real-time use like streaming video, gaming, and online applications like Quickbooks and Salesforce. Your experience is going to be much better if you can go faster regardless of the amount of bandwidth. Faster is always better, and the smoother and safer the highway is, i.e., no potholes (splitters), the faster you can go.

Q How can we ensure WiFi works well in a home?

A WiFi is the last link in the long chain that connects your device (laptop, tablet, phone, etc.) to the rest of the world (internet). WiFi uses industry-standard wireless frequencies. Both the wireless access point (AP) and the device need to be on the same wavelength, literally, to communicate with each other. The problem is that there are a finite number of unique WiFi channels that can be used. WiFi signals can pass through the rooms, walls, and doors in your home...but can also flow into adjacent condominiums or homes.

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While a wireless device can “hear” many APs at a time, the device’s transmit power (called signal strength) is very weak by comparison to an AP’s strength. As such, it’s difficult for the AP to “hear” the mobile device if many nearby APs are all using the same channel (called background noise). The stronger the signal versus the background noise—the signal to noise ratio (SNR)—the better the overall user experience.

By custom mapping the channels being used throughout the community, we can manage the signal-to-noise ratio, minimize background noise, and maximize the complete and strong coverage throughout each home.

An analogy: Imagine you’re a lead singer performing on stage. You look out into the audience and see a fan yelling something at you—but you can’t hear his/her words over the crowd. Channel mapping is a lot like enjoying a concert of one: You can hear each other without having to shout because you are on your own dedicated channel.

Q Why is direct fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) networking appealing to Florida homeowners?

A A good AON FTTH project can provide three primary benefits:

- **Enjoyment**—Homeowners will enjoy a faster network; will have access to more bandwidth with increased privacy and safety; and won’t be subject to typical service degradation and outages caused by massive congestion that plague cable, DSL, and PON networks.
- **Home value**—Based on those benefits outlined above, an AON FTTH upgrade to your community can also boost your property value 3.1 percent (Source: *University of Colorado at Boulder and Carnegie Mellon*

University, Fiber Broadband Association).

- **Cost savings**—You can also save a lot of money every month if your condominium or homeowner association combines both TV and internet into a bulk services agreement. Typically, only TV is provided in the common fees; the total spent per household can usually be slashed with a double-bulk agreement, even including the cost to install the new FTTH infrastructure.

Technology is changing at warp speed. Investing in AON fiber-optic architecture will help ensure that your community and your homeowners can manage today’s digital load while positioning yourselves for fast, reliable, secure connectivity down the road. ■

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