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BCAP's 29th annual Cable Academy heads to the Poconos to highlight the direction our industry must embrace to prosper during the most competitive environment in its history. Cable Academy 2017 will showcase the "Uncapped

Potential" that exists today, and how it can further expand in the near future.

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Seeking to boost tech in Philadelphia, Comcast Corp. plans an "accelerator" program for start-ups and entrepreneurs on the fourth floor of its new tower in Center City, the company said Monday.

It's the latest project for Comcast that faces huge hiring needs as the company prepares for the opening of [its new \\$1.5 billion tower](#) in early 2018. Comcast has said it needs a vibrant, tech-skilled labor force. As part of that effort, Comcast has launched a summer-intern program for college students and now will open up a floor of the new tower for interaction with small tech companies.

An outside group, [Techstars](#), will manage LIFT Labs for Entrepreneurs and select start-up companies to participate in the 14-week program at the 60-story tower. The group will choose applicants for the program from Philadelphia and globally, Sam Schwartz, chief business development officer at Comcast's cable division, said last week. (LIFT stands for Leveraging Innovation for Tomorrow.)

If selected from outside the region, the start-ups would relocate to the city to participate in the program, Schwartz added. About a dozen start-ups will be selected initially, and the media- and technology-themed program will be a collaboration between Comcast-owned NBCUniversal and Comcast itself. Even though the start-ups will participate in the formal program for 14 weeks, the accelerator will be open all year with seminars and other activities to boost local tech companies, Schwartz said. "We are excited to work alongside and learn from some of the best entrepreneurs while offering access to our experienced innovators to help them grow their businesses and take them to the next level," Schwartz said in a statement.

Comcast believes that the accelerator will be "one of the best in the nation," Schwartz said. Disney, Samsung, and other companies operate similar accelerators to help the companies interact with young companies. A second accelerator is scheduled to open later in 2018 in Atlanta, Comcast said. No more details were available on the Atlanta project. Applications for the accelerator will be available in January 2018, with a preliminary deadline for applying on April 8, 2018. The accelerator also will host other programs, including seminars and interactions between Comcast experts and local tech companies, Schwartz said.

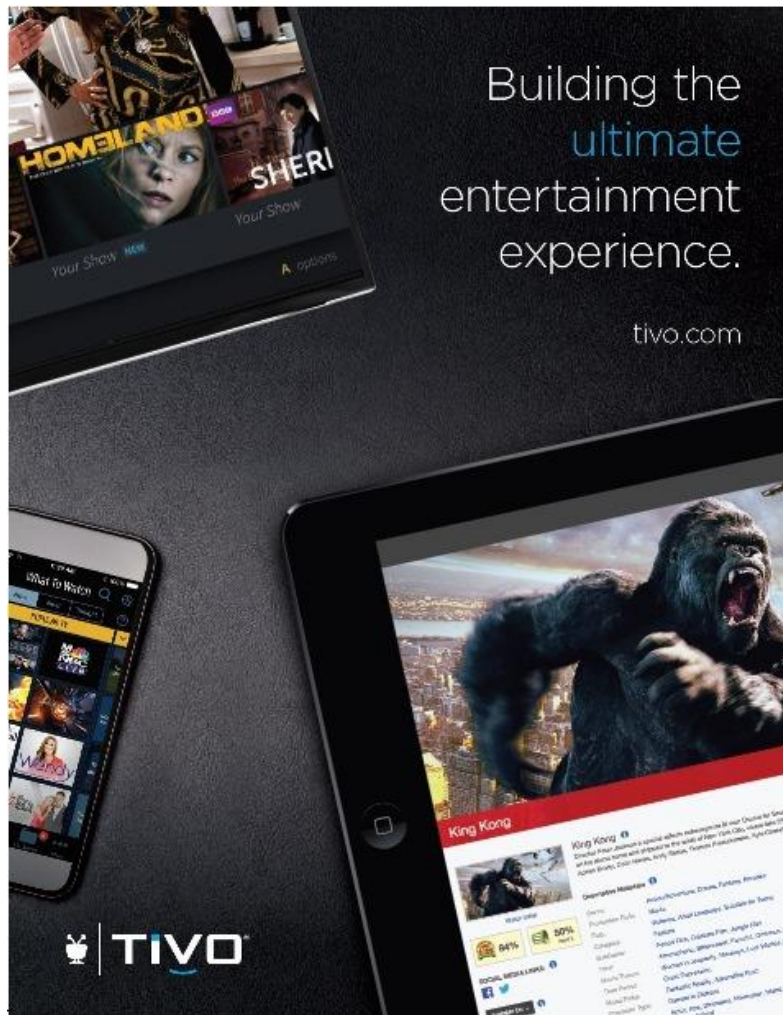
Danielle Cohn, the executive director of entrepreneurial engagement, will run the fourth-floor accelerator. In addition to these plans, Comcast has invested hundreds of millions of dollars into a venture fund that seeds start-up companies, with offices in Silicon Valley, Philadelphia, and New

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[Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Cyberattack still affecting computer network of Pa. Senate Democrats](#)

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York. The company also has investments totaling almost \$1 billion in digital media companies or social media platforms, including its recent \$500 million stake in Snap. – Philadelphia Inquirer



Speculation that Sprint will merge with T-Mobile USA or another competitor has ramped up since the inauguration of President Donald Trump. That continued Friday when a [report](#) from *The New York Times* suggested that Sprint could combined with either T-Mobile or Comcast, the nation's largest cable company.

Masayoshi Son, founder and CEO of Sprint owner SoftBank, "and his financial advisers are weighing several major possible deals for Sprint," the *Times* wrote. "Be it a tie-up with T-Mobile US, Sprint's closest competitor, or a more ambitious marriage with the cable colossus Comcast, a transaction would allow Mr. Son to fulfill a long-held ambition to invest aggressively in wireless networks in the United States and enable next-generation mobile technology."

Titled "The World's Top Tech Investor Is Betting Big on Trump," the *Times* report says that "the Trump administration's push for lighter regulation and lower taxes has

been a powerful lure for cash-rich investors the world over." SoftBank, which is based in Japan, had several of its executives "spen[d] a day in Washington talking to senior members of Mr. Trump's economic team" last month, according to bankers who were briefed on the meetings, the *Times* report said.

US regulators opposed wireless consolidation during the Obama administration, preventing potential mergers between [AT&T and T-Mobile](#) and later between [Sprint and T-Mobile](#). With four major nationwide carriers, US wireless competition recently led to an [expansion of unlimited data plans](#). "The Federal Communications Commission looks very smart for blocking the AT&T/T-Mobile deal," telecom analyst Philip Cusick of JPMorgan Chase told *The New York Times*. "Five years ago, Sprint and T-Mobile were irrelevant. Now we are seeing them drive down prices. Why would you want to change that?" Trump and Son have been friendly since the election, with Trump taking credit for SoftBank's planned investments in the US.

T-Mobile USA CEO John Legere was asked about the potential for wireless industry consolidation in an earnings call last month. Legere said there are no ongoing merger talks because "we're in an anti-collusion period during the low-band spectrum auction," but said that T-Mobile will have numerous options after that quiet period ends. "I couldn't be more excited about the period that's going to come up when this auction is over, while we continue to do what we just announced and then engage in understanding what the future of this industry is going to be, which is fascinating," Legere said, according to a [Seeking Alpha transcript](#). – *Politico*

Sprint has [struggled](#) while T-Mobile solidifies its position as the [third-place US carrier](#) after Verizon and AT&T. SoftBank is willing to give up control of Sprint to T-Mobile owner Deutsche Telekom AG in order

to finish a merger deal, [Reuters reported last month](#). That's a turnabout from 2014, when SoftBank wanted to buy T-Mobile and retain control.

A Sprint merger with Comcast wouldn't reduce the number of major wireless carriers, but it would expand the power of the country's biggest home Internet service provider. When Comcast's attempt to buy Time Warner Cable was blocked in 2015, US regulators explained that giving Comcast more Internet subscribers would pose a threat to online video streaming services that compete against Comcast's TV business.

Buying Sprint would quickly give Comcast a major presence in the mobile Internet market, but Comcast has at least one other compelling option. Comcast is planning to offer mobile phone service this year through a reseller agreement with Verizon Wireless. By reselling Verizon data, Comcast can offer mobile Internet service without buying a wireless carrier and without building its own cell towers. We've asked SoftBank and Comcast for comment on the *New York Times* report today but haven't heard back yet. – *Ars Technica*



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