

An Organization Evolves

The Fiber Broadband Association (FBA) was founded to help companies and equipment vendors influence legislation and regulatory policy related to the role fiber can and should play in broadband service delivery. Historically, the focus of the organization was to serve as a lobbying organization that worked primarily with regulators, administration officials and members of Congress to shape legislation and policy. When the FBA appointed Gary Bolton as its new president and CEO, that changed.

2021

Mr. Bolton understood that to reach all his organization's relevant audiences, he needed to expand the range and reach of the communications efforts. To do this, he retained Connect2 Communications (Connect2) as his Agency of Record, to help shape an expanded program. Mr. Bolton worked with Connect2 at his two previous companies, ADTRAN and Hatteras Networks, so he understood the firm's capabilities, deep industry knowledge and broad connections within the telecommunications press and analyst community. The first goal was to define the organization's message on key industry topics that had become part of stories within the mainstream, business and industry press, while also maintaining its existing relationships with key editors covering regulatory policy and legislation.

As part of this process, Connect2 set up briefings with key industry media, relevant business reporters covering telecommunications, regulatory and policy issues, as well as FBA's traditional press contacts at publications focused on issues inside the Beltline of Washington DC. During these conversations, Mr. Bolton was able to share his vision for FBA, the goals for 2021, and the areas of expertise the organization has at its disposal that might be relevant to the reporter's coverage area. This effort generated more than 15 pieces of earned coverage and set the stage for FBA to be included in additional articles as the market developed. Within six months, this effort led to over 100 pieces of earned media.

Connect2 also helped FBA shape the issues it wanted to focus on in the first three, six and 12 months. With a long-term goal of supporting the organization's objective to create an understanding that "if it's not fiber, it's not broadband," Connect2 identified the stakeholders that needed to be influenced, the key areas of the story that needed to be defined and articulated, and the time frame in which the message could be delivered.

Reorganizing and Refocusing

With the start of the new program, the relevant media were regularly covering topics that were relevant to FBA and its members, but not including the organization in stories as an industry voice. These topics included FCC funding for rural America, the Biden

Administration's Infrastructure Bill and the impact the pandemic has had on telecom networks as it relates to work from home, remote learning and telemedicine.

FBA has several key assets and programs that needed to be refined and refocused to help tell a more cohesive story to its audiences. These include its "Fiber for Breakfast" weekly webcast, a monthly webinar series and a branded industry conference. Connect2 worked with FBA to better organize the first two events so that listeners would better understand topics and discussions. It was recommended that "Fiber for Breakfast" transition to focus on industry events, trends, regulation, policy and legislation. We also helped the organization turn the live-streamed event into a podcast to extend the life of each event and create reference points for media and the industry. The webinar series has now become an opportunity for member companies to discuss products, technologies, markets and trends as a mechanism to share individual company insights and perspectives with the market.

Connect2 has helped FBA create a working Media Room to help facilitate story creation, interviews and press conferences during the event. Just weeks after registration opened, more than 25 press and analysts registered to attend the event and Connect2 will be coordinating interviews with FBA executives during the conference.

Finally, Connect2 worked with FBA to create a new research organization and identify key areas of research the organization and its members could understand and/or sponsor. This research has made the FBA a frequently quoted source on key technical and market issues related to broadband and rural broadband services, as well as create a potentially lucrative new revenue source for the organization.

Results

In the first six months of engagement, Connect2 has helped expand the total number of media outlets covering FBA, drive a 243% increase in earned media, and establish Mr. Bolton as a go-to-source for information regarding fiber broadband, closing the digital divide, economic and societal impact of fiber broadband on communities, and the technical benefits of fiber broadband over competing technology options.

Mr. Bolton is now a regular commentator for business, trade and regulatory media, an industry expert guest on key industry podcasts, and a go-to resource for legislators and policy administrators shaping broadband and infrastructure policy in the U.S.