

Interview: Vito Forlenza on Comcast's Innovative Winter Olympic XFINITY X1 Viewing Experience

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CHICAGO – The 2018 Winter Olympics at Pyeongchang, South Korea, begin this week, with opening ceremonies on Friday, February 9th. NBCUniversal TV will be the broadcast source for the Games, but their parent company Comcast is upping the ante for their XFINITY X1 TV system subscribers, offering a viewing experience that is a more flexible and user friendly way to see virtually all aspects of the 2018 Winter Games, and Team USA. Vito Forlenza, Executive Director of Business Product Management – who helped developed the strategy for the viewing experience – stopped by in Chicago to promote the multi-platform system.

As with the 2016 Rio Games, the XFINITY X1 customer can expect easy access to how they want to customize what they see, beyond and in conjunction with the NBC broadcast. Using a home screen with 50 category channels, XFINITY X1 viewers will be able to relive highlights of each day's events, trending news/popular views of the Games, medal counts, stats (the X1 Sports App is a virtual update companion) and much more... there is even a way to find out which song a skater is using to accompany a routine. This can also be synced up – using an XFINITY Stream App and web portal – with a smartphone, tablet or computer. Besides the interactive channel display, the XFINITY X1 Voice Control remote can get a viewer anywhere within the options, just by speaking.



Comcast's XFINITY X1 2018 Winter Olympics Experience
Photo credit: Comcast XFINITY X1

Vito Forlenza was a perfect guide for the X1 Winter Olympic experience, in his current role as Executive Director for Comcast. He has been involved in development for these types of systems for most of his career, and joined Comcast as a member of their Interactive Media department. As Business Product Manager, he helped lead a team which is constantly evolving the interactive qualities of the XFINITY X1 system, which is the cutting edge of how we watch, and what we watch, beyond TV in our current age... as Forlenza relates in his interview with HollywoodChicago.com.

HollywoodChicago.com: In the service of the Olympics, how has the XFINITY X1 interactive experience evolved since NBC/Universal and Comcast have merged?

Vito Forlenza: So we first introduced this experience for the London Summer Olympics in 2012, after we came together with NBC/Universal, and we created it for the web and tablets. The coverage on TV centered around On Demand, and for live coverage in non-broadcast hours users had to sign in at the NBC website.

For the 2014 Sochi Winter Games, we put the App that customers would sign into for NBC coverage on the XFINITY X1 system, but it wasn't integrated. With the Rio Summer Olympics of 2016, we moved to integration. It was a blended experience... we put all the App features next to all the broadcast coverage on a home page, whether it was live coverage or On Demand.

HollywoodChicago.com: So what is new for 2018 and the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics?

Forlenza: It's a new level. We have the Olympics home page again, and we're going to integrate the event scores, results and statistics into that home page, which is new for this year. We're going to have every minute of the Games, live or On Demand, on X1 or XFINITY mobile... so at home or on-the-go.

The big features are the 50 Winter Olympic virtual channels, which are like an on-demand playlist. Whether it's a theme, a specific athlete or sport, you can navigate those channels with your remote. Also exciting are the new Voice Command on the remote, you can call up the Olympics home page, a specific event and statistics. There is a lot of fun with this feature.

HollywoodChicago.com: What is most interesting is that Winter Olympic Sports fans can customize their XFINITY X1 viewing experience. How is that a game changer for both the Olympics and the type of sporting event that the Winter Games are about?

Forlenza: Well, there is 2400 hours of coverage, and it can be hard to keep track of everything. We wanted to make it easy to find it all, so we created this X1 home page, blended the content and we organized it in a way that a user would think about it. For example, if I want to watch something live, there is a channel that says "Live Now." For On Demand, there is a channel of "Top Moments." And for the early adopters of 4K screen technology, we partnered with NBC to deliver Olympics moments that best utilize that broadcast capability... including the Opening Ceremonies, Figure Skating, Snowboard "Big Air" [a new event] and more.

In the audio portion of the interview, Vito Forlenza talks about how the interactive team at Comcast maximized the X1 Olympic evolution, his thoughts on the future of TV/personal screens and his personal favorite childhood sports moment, which informed his strategy toward the 2018 Winter Olympics XFINITY X1 experience.

NBC-TV and the Comcast XFINITY X1 interactive viewing experience presents the XXIII Olympic Winter Games from Pyeongchang, South Korea, from February 9th through the 25th, 2018. For more information on the XFINITY X1 coverage, [click here](#). [21] For NBCUniversal TV coverage, [click here](#). [22]



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