

What Are the “Real” Components of the Triple Play?

Offer solutions, reliability and value; THEN you can offer dozens of services, too.

By Bryan Rader ■ *MediaWorks*

On a recent Saturday night, I stayed up late to watch a replay of several panels that were recorded and shown on C-Span from this year’s National Cable TV Association conference.

As I watched these incredible people, I thought to myself, “is anybody else up this late? Shouldn’t I be watching Saturday Night Live, or at least a West Coast late-night ball game?”

Nope, not me. Private cable guy decides to stay up until 2 am to hear guys like Brian Roberts (of Comcast), Dick Parsons (of Time-Warner), John Chambers (of Cisco) and Anne Sweeney (of ABC-Disney) vocalize their opinions about the future of the cable TV industry. Who says there is no good content anymore on late-night cable?

These panels were fascinating. Speakers also included CEOs and COOs of Cox Communications, Cablevision, Insight and HDNet. It was great to hear them blab on and on about the convergence of new technology and giving the customer what they want. I bet half of the participants made self-fulfilling statements about “we must give our customer what he wants.”

“And what does he want?” the moderator would ask?

Oh, the “triple-play” each of them said. “Today’s customer must have the triple play from one source, and we are in a better spot than the phone guys to deliver it.”

“To deliver what?”

“Oh you know. The triple play,” each of them said sternly, looking out at an audience full of their own employees. “That is, a phone product, a TV service and an Internet connection, and maybe a wireless solution too.”

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It was at that point that I thought, I stayed up until 2 am to hear this? My kids know the triple-play and they’re not yet employed (or out of grade school).

It seems to me that no one spoke about the real three components in a triple play that will make each of these operators more effective in their future battles with a satellite or phone company. The real triple play knocks out the competition, gets the runner out gazing off of first base, and tags out the opposition at the plate. It’s not another 75 channels of cable TV, or another DVR look-alike for \$10 more.

It’s three things that should make up the “triple play” of the future. And none of the big cable company CEOs even mentioned them. But I’ll mention them here. Because it’s another way for our side of the cable industry to stay one step ahead of our competitors.

I believe the three components of the “triple play” are *solutions*, *reliability* and *value*. These are the things that will create stickiness with your customers and encourage them to trade up to newer services and features.

And if you don’t offer solutions, reliability and value to your customer, you will not be around long enough to expand your product mix with exciting technologies.

The Real Triple Play

Let’s break down the “real” triple play.

“Solutions” are what our customers are demanding. Someone that solves the prob-

lem of installing new services. A company that supports their Internet connection when it is attacked with a virus. A company that simplifies the myriad of wires connecting VCRs, DVDs, HD receivers and surround sound. A company rep who can solve all types of everyday issues that our customer doesn’t have time to worry about, but is willing to pay for. Note that this is the opposite of the “self install” philosophy.

“Reliability” is the second key to the triple play. Our customer will no longer accept outages of several hours, several minutes, or even several seconds. This is especially true with a customer who is obtaining an Internet connection, a dial-tone, or expects your DVR to record her favorite show.

“Value” is the third piece. The bundled package has to have perceived value, or customers won’t buy (or stay with) you. Package the right set of services – like Cablevision’s \$99 bundle – and you’ll sign up (or save) over a million customers, which they have. Creating the right mix for your customer is key to creating value.

So, now when you have leaders of cable companies brag about their new triple play, think about what they really should be talking about: Solutions, reliability and value. **BBP**

About the Author

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