



Mike Schwartz, PRINCIPAL,
MICHAEL M. SCHWARTZ LLC
michael_schwartz@comcast.net

Mike Schwartz is the principal of Michael M. Schwartz LLC, a consulting company aimed at providing communications for broadband solutions. He was among the original team that started CableLabs®, the industry's technology development consortium. Schwartz created the consortium's communications department and originated the award winning cable industry technology exhibit known as CableNET®. He holds a BA in journalism from Penn State and had multiple daily newspaper and trade press reporting jobs prior to his 22 years at CableLabs.

***Publishers Note:** John Malone is my cable hero. His guest author article written in this publication in 1999 was at the close of the AT&T/TCI merger. "Self-Provisioning The Next Step in a Win Win Evolution" was a retrospect of his entire career and it brought me to tears.



CONVENTIONAL WISDOM

Cable is Winning

A few months ago one of my electronic clip services blared a headline: "Liberty's John Malone bullish on the cable industry". That got my attention. He doesn't talk much with the media, so when he gives an interview it's usually for a bigger reason than building up his clip file.

He is a true cable pioneer, with decades of involvement in the industry, including a long history of running TCI back in the day before selling it to AT&T.* He now has cable holdings internationally through Liberty Media, but is known as a satellite guy here in the states because of his dealings with DirecTV. He also happens to be one of the largest land owners in the country.

The interview was done by *Multichannel News* Editor Mark Robichaux and published in the Oct. 24 issue. Some years ago Robichaux wrote a book about Malone ("Cable Cowboy...").

When Malone talks, people listen. I know. I sat in the early board meetings of CableLabs when Malone was chair and you could hear a pin drop when he held court. He could talk about the technology, the business and the strategy, and he would do a lot of complex financial stuff in his head. Some of us thought that the board, made up of CEOs of cables operators, came to the meetings just to hear what he had to say.

I think that having Dr. Malone as the CableLabs chair for a decade was a great assist; it gave the Labs credibility and stature in its infancy.

Malone told Robichaux that cable is winning the broadband battle versus telephone companies. He specifically mentioned cable's business-to-business efforts as a great growth opportunity. Cable's chief threat, Malone said, is an over the top provide that would have an attractive entertainment package but would not have to pay big money for sports programming.



Green Light for John Malone and the Broadband Industry

And while we are on the subject of John Malone...

Interesting news at year end. Lackluster Current TV (and its 40 million TV households) was sold to Al Jazeera for a lot of money, \$500 million by some accounts. Co-founder Al Gore reportedly received a good chunk of that. Congratulations.

Not bad for someone who oversaw Current TV as it plodded through years of lack of identity, lack of clear mission, mismanagement, and horrible ratings. And ironically, this is the same Al Gore who, as a U.S. Senator, was telling cable operators how they should conduct business in the legislative battles that resulted in draconian cable re-regulation in 1992. Gore led the anti-cable gang in Congress back then. He tried to focus on Malone as the industry leader and Gore's statements regarding Malone were not always pleasant.



Good luck to Al Jazeera but RED LIGHT to Al Gore, the former senator from Tennessee for failing to develop Current TV into a lasting, viable network.

EIDR gets some juice

EIDR (Entertainment ID Registry, pronounced like cider without the "c"), gained more support last year when it announced it had added Time Warner and Bright House to Charter, Cox, Comcast and Shaw as participants. It also has studios, some hardware manufacturers, and MovieLabs and CableLabs as promoters. It also has a lengthy list of entities it calls industry contributors, which are comprised of suppliers and interestingly the British Film Institute.

EIDR essentially is a database for video content that allows use of that content to be tracked across all uses, including targeted advertising. Think of it as a bar code on an item at the grocers. In these days of expanded broadband video platforms, the EIDR service is critical. And finally, it now has some actual staff with CableLabs SVP Don Dulchinos being loaned out for some percentage of his time.



Green Light for a broadening recognition of the value of EIDR.