



## Missing—NCTA Sessions About Competition

### Report from the Cable Show: No panels on meeting telco, DBS, Internet TV or wireless challenges.

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NEW ORLEANS—Competition was mentioned at the NCTA show both in the sessions and on the exhibit floor. However, there were no sessions specifically focused on cable operators' experiences confronting the industry's competitors. This was a missed opportunity.

Each year, the Cable Show celebrates the industry for its members, investors, regulators, media and other stakeholders. It provides a convenient venue for vendors, tire-kickers and purchase-order-writers to get together. It also offers an opportunity for industry participants to learn from each other. Indeed, the show in New Orleans scheduled many informative sessions on a wide range of topics, with numerous qualified speakers who took their role seriously in conveying their views to attentive audiences. However, given the industry's competitive challenges, a program of information sharing that lacks sessions on competition cannot win an unqualified "mission accomplished" badge.

Perhaps convention planners feared that sessions focusing on competition might be downers or reveal sensitive information. While such concerns are understandable, more weight should have been given to the educational value of such sessions. MSO panel participants could describe how they are dealing with competitive challenges in a way that would not give aid and comfort to adversaries and naysayers.

Here are examples of worthy sessions *not* scheduled at this year's Cable Show:

- **On the Telco Frontlines:** War stories from cable operators facing competition from Verizon FiOS or AT&T U-verse. Effective selling points of these competitive services and their exploitable weaknesses.
- **DBS vs. Multiplay:** To the extent that video-only DBS continues to capture cable subscribers despite cable's multi-play advantage, why is this happening and what is being done about it?
- **Internet TV—the Next Frontier:** How best to respond to Internet TV competitively, cooperatively, acquisitively, complacently or otherwise.
- **Wireless—What's Next for Cable?:** MSO perspectives on wireless as a strategic imperative and how the Sprint Nextel JV and other wireless initiatives by cable operators will position the industry vis-à-vis the long-term threat posed by telco mobile wireless.

The competitors are out there. They are an unavoidable part of contemporary cable experience. There should have been an NCTA session or two that enabled operators to share their stories from the competitive frontlines.

*Sour grapes disclosure: The author proposed a session on cable's multi-front competition that was declined by the NCTA program committee.*

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