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Giant stakes in cable

Microsoft stands to gain a lot from investments in the cable industry and may be laying the groundwork for a foray into the satellite industry as well.

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Microsoft(MSFT) has a long list of things it stands to gain from investments in the cable industry, and the software giant may be getting ready to lay the groundwork for a hedge bet with the satellite industry as well.

Microsoft has identified cable operators as the most likely vehicle for the fast delivery of information to American homes. This high-speed delivery, Microsoft's executives believe, will lead consumers to adopt a "Web lifestyle," and Microsoft wants to be at the forefront of this potentially huge new market for software development.



So today's **report** that Microsoft may be planning a \$1 billion investment in **US West's** cable operations comes as no

surprise, even as previous reports had the Redmond, Washington, company ready to make a similar investment in **Tele-Communications Incorporated**.

An investment in either cable company would build on Microsoft's \$1 billion stake in Comcast in June and its purchase of WebTV, which delivers Internet access to TVs via set-top boxes.

Microsoft also is looking for new platforms for its operating systems, particularly its slimmed-down version of Windows, Windows CE. Moreover, the software giant is searching for more venues for its broad content offerings, such as **MSNBC** and *Slate* magazine.

If its recent business deals are any indication, Microsoft apparently is unfazed by the fact that the **Justice Department** is charging the company with antitrust-related violations. The software giant continues to look for new markets in which to expand its already highly profitable business. (See related coverage)

What Microsoft hopes to gain from spurring the development of broadband cable networks is influence over the operating systems these networks will have to adopt, analysts said.

But entering the traditionally independent cable operator market has proven more difficult than anticipated. Even Brian Roberts, president of Comcast, found himself reassuring fellow cable operators after Microsoft invested in his company. "We are



neither legally nor morally committed to having only the Microsoft set-top product," he said at a cable industry trade show last month. "We want an open system."

Tom Aust, global telecommunications analyst at Citicorp Securities, believes that Microsoft will benefit from electronic commerce once the high-speed connections are in place. The software company already has positioned itself on the Internet by



way of its Expedia travel site and CarPoint auto site, as well as its Sidewalk city

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guides.

But will Microsoft be able to influence the standards for the next-generation set-top boxes through its investments in Comcast and possibly US West? Microsoft is betting that it can, and the decision to invest in Comcast and US West, rather than TCI, may be an indication of the company's confidence.

Comcast was in need of Microsoft's cash and is a small enough company for Microsoft to gain real influence in exchange for its \$1 billion investment. The cable operator also had invested significantly in broadband networks before Microsoft's involvement.

TCI, although technologically advanced, is significantly larger, and Microsoft CEO **Bill Gates** would gain much less influence for his \$1 billion. "Trying to have influence on TCI is more difficult," Aust said. "Its chairman, John Malone, is too determined and wily to let Gates in."

On the other hand, US West's cable concern, **MediaOne**, has developed a modern network and a technologically adept management. It also needs the money and is small enough for Microsoft to be a significant shareholder.

But if Gates's wagers that the future lies in cable broadband fails, those bets are hedged with WebTV. If cable operators don't move forward with high-speed networks, Microsoft can pursue WebTV across a number of different platforms, according to Aust.

If they do move forward quickly, Microsoft will be able to foist the evolving WebTV standards onto cable operators. WebTV will be a platform for influencing the outcome, Aust said.

Moreover, if cable turns out to be a bust, digital broadcast satellite is another area where Microsoft has done some hedging. Last year, the software giant became a digital satellite service licensee with **DirecTV** and Thomson Consumer Electronics. At a developers' conference earlier this year, DirecTV said it wanted to be the first direct broadcast satellite company to deliver video, audio, and data via the PC or TV.

Participants at the conference received the tools required to develop content for the new platform, which included a software development kit for Microsoft's broadcast architecture.

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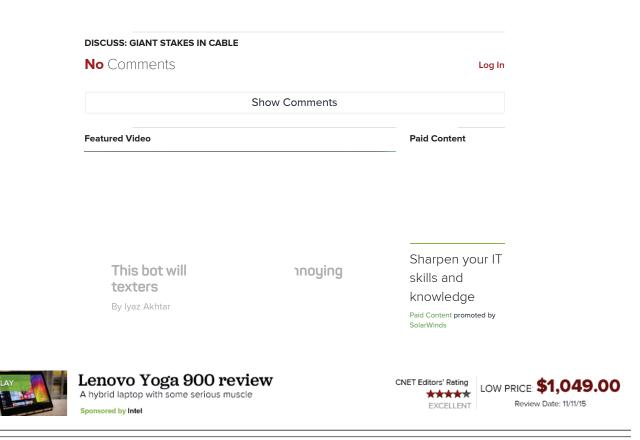


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Pokemon Go -- away: Players are ticked off at world's most popular game

An update to Pokemon Go changes the game so much that people are in revolt.

Gaming August 2, 2016



by lan Sherr Jones: The internet has found something to seethe about other than your role in

Good news, Leslie



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"Ghostbusters."

do with the

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Pokemon Go may be a certified hit, but can it keep players happy? Josh Miller/CNET

Instead, people are in a snit about a change

And it has nothing to

presidential campaign.

made to Pokemon Go, the hottest mobile game since -- ever.

To recap: Pokemon Go, released July 6 in the US, encourages you to walk around in the real world with your phone and find mythical creatures called Pokemon. When you do, they leap onto your screen, where they appear to be sitting on a stoop or standing in the middle of the street in the real world. Just swipe on the screen to throw a ball to "catch" and collect them all.

How much do people love playing Pokemon Go? Well, in less than a month, Pokemon Go has **shattered download records**, been **used more than Twitter or Facebook** and been pegged as the **next techie trend**. Pokemon Go has become a hit on a scale not seen since FarmVille, Candy Crush Saga or Angry Birds.

It's now been released in other places including Japan, England, Hong Kong and Australia, making it official that Pokemon Go fever has spread across the globe.

But then last weekend and with no warning, Pokemon Go developer Niantic removed a key feature that helps you track how close Pokemon are to your location. As if that wasn't enough of a burn to people who liked getting the help, Niantic reportedly told other app makers to shut down apps designed to help people identify Pokemon in their neighborhood. (Niantic was staying mum on whether it did this). That's apps like Poke Radar, which help you more easily find special monsters hanging out near you in your quest to "catch 'em all."

To say people are ticked off is an understatement.

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