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## The Future of Cable Communications

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Industry Spotlight

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Broadband networks in the mid 90's opened up the possibilities of **cable communications services** including **high-speed internet access through cable modems**, **competitive local telephone**, and **digital cable services** for businesses and consumers.

### Shift in Business Model

According to **Carol Ring, Regional President of Rogers Cable Communications Inc.** in the **Greater Toronto Area**, the internet has opened the door for global expansion especially in the education field. With remote online training courses, seminars and webinars being offered over the internet in exchange for degrees, there is no longer a need to be local or even present as live seminars and webinars are **recorded** and can be **replayed** at the consumers' convenience.

She predicts that "we will see a **shift in business models** where there will be more business consolidations and the formation of business networks to service a global market". Much like the franchising and industry network models, businesses benefit from a well branded name but operate independently of each other. She emphasizes that specialized local businesses like grocery stores and medical practices are necessary, but will be "**redefined by their geography**".

### Regulating the Internet

Since the Internet has become a popular medium for sharing information, **YouTube**, a popular video sharing website has allowed anyone to upload, view, and share video clips for free. With no regulatory body regulating internet content, **Rogers Cable Communications Inc.** has worked with police on keeping child pornography off the internet.

Carol sees their company's role not as the police but as "**the pipe**" and believes that "internet users should be allowed to use the pipe as they choose" and has even encouraged the **Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC)** not to regulate the Internet. According to Carol, "the internet is a medium and Rogers' goal is to provide the best user experience for the consumer".

### Cable vs. DSL Service

While the preferred choice of technology in the United States is **cable** when it comes to high-speed internet access by a margin of **2-to-1 over DSL service** offered by phone companies, the ratio is much less in Canada. According to Carol Ring, "the top five **cable** companies combined serve **4.32 million** high-speed internet customers at the end of 2006 while the top five **telcos** serve **3.86 million** high-speed internet customers", a margin of **1.1-to-1 in favour of cable**.

So which service is better?

As **cable and DSL** internet operate on **different platforms**, each has its limitations. While cable's theoretical bandwidth limits are **higher than DSL** and because it is not dependent on distance from a central office, its performance is based on the **number of users** accessing the internet **simultaneously** in the same **geographical area** which could potentially hamper performance. In addition, unless there is a cable division in the geographical area, cable services are not offered.

With DSL, bandwidth limits are **lower than cable's** and will generally provide **higher speeds** the closer you are to the phone company's central office. Therefore neither service can claim performance victory without considering **geographical location, service availability** and **internet traffic congestion**.

In fact, according to Carol Ring, "there isn't a strong difference in the product as a result of the two different delivery platforms." Since launching Home Phone (land line phone), Rogers now offers DSL internet in areas not served by their cable divisions. In areas where there are cable divisions, Rogers offers customers Home Phone, Digital Cable, and Hi-speed Internet all through the **cable platform**. However, where they don't have cable divisions, Rogers offers Home Phone and Hi-speed Internet via a **telco platform**.

The one product Rogers is excited about is their "**Portable Internet**", a wireless broadband service which competes directly with Bell Canada's **Sympatico High Speed Unplugged**. Such products would benefit road warriors who require the **flexibility and convenience** to literally plug their wireless modems into any power outlet to get unlimited internet access on their laptops in over 50 cities across Canada.

### **Deregulation of Local Phone Services**

And with the deregulation of local phone services, Rogers has also entered a market that was once monopolized by the local telephone companies to give consumers **choice**. According to Carol Ring, Rogers can offer their customers convenience through **one-stop shopping** and **pricing benefits** through the bundling of services such as hi-speed internet, video, wireless and wire-line phone services.

Although Rogers' main rival Bell Canada offers similar services, bundles and pricing, the main advantage they have according to Carol is their **great customer service**:

"Our customer service shines. We have a **24/7 technical support line** and provide **free truck-roll service**. Unlike Bell, we do not charge you a **\$90 service fee** before coming to your door, and make it as convenient as possible for our customers by providing **shorter** service-time windows."

### **Future of Communications**

So imagine having all-in-one voice mail, access to real-time information from your mobile and call screening on your television. According to Carol Ring, this is the future of communications as new applications evolve with **device integration** and **multi-purposing**. However she warns that we may be headed into an age of digital depression and overloaded circuits with the demands placed on us with all this technology.

Carol, also a frequent speaker at organizations, business award functions and convocations on her **Integrated Life™ program**, advises that "**Perspective**", an evaluation of your life from a broad perspective by ranking different areas in your life; and "**Personal Values**", identifying what is really important in your life, will help you to use communication tools **to facilitate** the way you **want** to live your life as opposed to letting it **run** your life!

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#### **About the Author:**

Eleanor Kwan, CSP, is the CEO and Founder of **ShapeYourVision®**. Her company helps companies and individuals optimize their sales performance through sales consulting, custom sales training and coaching. For more information, visit [www.ShapeYourVision.com](http://www.ShapeYourVision.com).