

our Pacific Northwest neighbor, Microsoft, has taken advantage of the way your appliance works in order to serve up information, news, and data. Microsoft recently demonstrated its desire to be part of the "screen experience" by paying \$425 million for WebTV and \$1 billion for a stake in cable operator Comcast.

Your future Internet experience—whether at home or at your place of business—will not be rooted in the appliance, but in the value it adds to your work or social life. Business-to-business on-line commerce is already beginning, and structures are now being built to handle grocery shopping, educational material, and banking for consumers. The growth in e-mail tells me that people want to communicate with each other, but it also offers a way to transform learning and education.

Applications will continue to drive the digital marketplace, with technical solutions always playing catch-up to the needs and desires of the consumer. Continuing price pressure and the persistent need to lower costs—whether through falling chip prices or sinking telephone charges—will also spur the digital conversion.

But this urge to go digital isn't without its pitfalls. Efforts and great spending by some of the best and brightest companies has yet to secure a business model where the consumer will pay enough money to make sophisticated, costly technology a worthwhile business investment. Interactive television trials are now showing the promise they once had, though other kinds of digital interactive technology is securing a market. Digital editing and digital transmission of images and sound are no longer revolutionary.

The fact that it is my own inclination to actually go to the movies with my wife, rather than rent a video as our children do, underscores the point that all consumers—and all businesses—don't embrace change at the same speed. The "rush" to replace the analog technology of vacuum tubes with the high-speed elegance of chips and computers has taken time, and that will continue.

My perspective is perhaps a little different than most, because I've been able to see how technology has become more and more a consumer product. Turning out oscilloscopes for the U.S. Navy—our old business—isn't exactly the kind of thing that gets you headlines, unless there is a war on. But the initial concept of testing and measuring the quality and consistency of technology is at the root of this digital revolution—and that just happens to be our business.

THE DIGITAL WATCH

When you see a digital television picture you'll know it. The clarity and quality is downright amazing, and some digital broadcasting currently being received by digital set-top boxes looks almost 3D. Even with current standard televisions, signals transmitted digitally via a satellite make Thursday night's Seinfeld episode shine even brighter.

The big question has never been, "Gee, is this neat stuff?" The real question that keeps companies like Intel, Sony, and TimeWarner up at night is: "How much will consumers pay for this technology?"

Several events have coincided to make this a particularly exciting shift for the industry. Not only are huge sums of money being spent on a variety of new delivery systems, but government deregulation also throws these new technologies into the push-and-pull of the marketplace.

When telephone deregulation started back in the mid-1980s, the personal computer was outside the reach—and want—of most people. Technology issues revolved around speed,

size, and standards. By embracing open standards of technology—a concept similar to that of everyone agreeing on grades of gasoline—the PC business boomed; even the Goliath IBM learned a lesson trying to hang onto standards, while companies like Dell Computer, Compaq, and Microsoft gave new meaning to the mixing of technology and growth.

In terms of going digital, Murdoch's Fox television network is the most aggressive entertainment company. They are using the digital shift to bring costs down as well as to build a satellite distribution network that stretches around the globe. I get a first-hand look at what these companies want to do because they've got to know what the technology can do before they deploy it. Whether transmitting stock prices or television programs, you have to use technology to deliver it to the customer.

Right now, other broadcasters (CBS, NBC, and ABC) are steering a conservative course. There's some good reason for this. They have all been through the cable wars and were told that their traditional dominance would be washed away like Gilligan and his friends. With a massive capital spending campaign to finance this government-mandated switch-over from analog to digital transmission, no one wants a false start.

The market players know that digital will be the de facto standard in the next century. Digital technology will allow companies to provide more information to consumers as well as create challenges relating to costs and development. The digital world will blur the lines between data and video on a computer screen and the entertainment and news we have grown accustomed to on our television sets.

SWITCHING CHANNELS

One clear benefit of the digital world will be greater choice. Individuals will be able to personalize the kinds of information they receive as well as the medium they want to use. Hand-held digital telephones with news, messages, Internet connections, as well as the more mundane tasks of scheduling, telephoning, and electronic files will be packed into small cost-effective devices.

Companies such as Motorola, Ericson, and Sony will lead the consumer charge in this area, but an entire behind-the-scenes technology deployment will have taken place—unseen by the average customer. Digital standards provide the framework for all the information traveling the airwaves. As broadcasting, production, and distribution players battle for consumers, they will all be using digital tools for combat. Traditional broadcasting will be using two-way technology to connect with viewers; production companies will have new video and audio capabilities to engage the audience; and distribution will follow the customer from room to room and from city to city.

Imagine video technology at a reasonable price, bundled, as part of a wider array of technology information choices. One channel might be news; another might be a conversation with co-workers or family members. Digital technology literally unleashes whole new combinations of images and sounds that can go anywhere and be transported for a fraction of their traditional cost. While the corporate landscape will be dominated by some of the same players competing today, it is fair to say that everyone is watchful of new entries. As digital technology becomes more and more pervasive, it also will present new opportunities for startup and new ventures.

Whether it is video browsers that let computer users watch full motion, digital video with sound, digital signals sent via satellites, or new digital transmission towers,

the consumer will be clamoring for the best technology at the best price. The challenge for the consumer electronics industry is to deliver it.

LETTER CARRIERS AGAIN SPONSOR FOOD DRIVE FOR NATION'S NEEDY

HON. GERALD D. KLECZKA

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 23, 1998

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, again this year, as they have for countless years in the past, letter carriers from around the country will collect nonperishable food items placed near their customer's mail boxes on Saturday, May 9. The food will then be given to local food pantries for distribution to those in need. Letter carriers in my hometown, Milwaukee, collected the largest amount of food nationwide in their efforts of May, 1997.

The National Association of Letter Carriers, in conjunction with the United States Postal Service and the United Way, will kick off this year's food drive in Milwaukee with a press conference on Thursday, May 7th, to raise community awareness of this very worthwhile project.

I rise today, Mr. Speaker, to ask my colleagues to enthusiastically support the letter carriers' food drives in their hometowns and districts, and to remind my fellow residents of Milwaukee and Waukesha Counties to consider buying a few extra canned goods and nonperishables while doing the weekly grocery shopping the week before the 7th. Together, we can ensure that this year's food drive is as successful as those which came before.

With a little help from all of us, our local food pantries will be stocked full and maybe even over-flowing, for this summer, a time when pantries are often put to the test.

CONGRATULATIONS TO GIRL SCOUT COUNCIL HONOREES

HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 23, 1998

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, it is with great enthusiasm that I congratulate Janet Haynes, Gail Thompson and the Matsushita Electric Corporation of America for their selection as honorees at this year's Women of Distinction Luncheon, sponsored by the Girl Scout Council of Greater Essex and Hudson Counties. This year's luncheon will take place on April 23 at the Holiday Inn/North in Newark, NJ.

Janet Haynes, who will receive the Girl Scout World of People award, is a native of Jersey City. She serves as country clerk for the County of Hudson. Through her election to this post, she became the highest ranking African-American official in the history of Hudson County and the only African-American to serve as county clerk in the state of New Jersey.

A former girl scout, Haynes is actively involved in volunteer work. She has served as the chairperson and vice-chairperson of the board of directors of the Hudson County