Comcast says it loves net neutrality, hugs it to death

The FCC is racing to a vote tomorrow to reverse net neutrality, and the ISPs are thrilled. That includes Comcast, which continues to pretend like it *loves* net neutrality while at the same time arguing that the only rules currently making it a reality ought to be killed.

In a post published today, Comcast EVP David Cohen promised that his company would not block, throttle, or discriminate against "lawful content." That makes sense, since the company is bound to observe those rules by virtue of a separate consent decree it entered when buying NBCUniversal. So Comcast *will* fulfill those promises when net neutrality regulations end – at least until next year when that consent decree expires.

Comcast's real problem is that its position on net neutrality is contradictory.

> *This is not the end of net neutrality. Despite repeated distortions and biased information, as well as misguided, inaccurate attacks from detractors, our Internet service is not going to change. Comcast customers will continue to enjoy all of the benefits of an open Internet today, tomorrow, and in the future. Period.*

Let's assume Comcast is telling the truth, and that it really will police its own behavior and abide by net neutrality principles. Why, then, if this commitment to net neutrality is so genuine, is there any need to kill the existing regulations?

Comcast's dual position here is even more suspicious when looking at the company's example of alleged regulatory harm.

Cohen’s example of “innovation” that was stunted by net neutrality rules is a scheme in which Comcast planned to deliver internet TV that didn’t count against customers’ data caps – meaning competitors like Netflix and Hulu would be at a disadvantage to Comcast’s own offering. Comcast justified this by arguing that the service traveled over its managed IP network instead of the public internet. ISPs want net neutrality rules to disappear so they can avoid being scrutinized for these edge cases.

Claiming to support something it actually opposes is part of Comcast’s playbook. When it tried to acquire Time Warner Cable, it argued it was doing so to promote competition. But if Comcast actually wanted to compete, it would have just entered Time Warner Cable’s markets instead of trying to buy it.

It’s possible that Comcast will voluntarily extend net neutrality protections beyond a legal mandate to do so. But if that intention is true, it simply makes no sense to endorse repealing legally-enforceable net neutrality rules.

Disclosure: Comcast Ventures is a minority investor in Vox Media, The Verge*’s parent company.*

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