



Online Overload: Smart Networks... or Net Neutrality?

In September 2004, a *Wired* headline read, “Bandwidth Glut Lives On.” Less than two years later, Telegeography Research reported, “The bandwidth glut is over.” The reason? Data-rich services including video and TV streaming have gone mass-market:

- In December 2007, almost 141 million U.S. Internet users watched more than 10 *billion* online videos. YouTube, which didn’t exist in 2005, streams more than 9 billion videos per month.
- One in five viewers of the September 2007 season premiere of NBC’s “The Office” streamed it online.
- Apple, which has sold more than 4 billion iTunes since 2001, set a one-day record for music sales on Christmas Day 2007: 20 million downloads in a single day.

But there’s a downside:

In January 2004, a well-known CEO predicted that within two years, spam would be “a thing of the past.” Not quite! In 2007, spam volume increased 100 percent over 2006, to more than 120 billion spam messages daily. Meanwhile, nearly 410,000 new malware examples appeared in 2007 – an increase of more than 30 percent over 2006.

Sources: IBM and IronPort reports on network security

Today’s networks, built for email and browsing, aren’t ready for this oncoming crush of video streams, movie downloads and other traffic. ISP’s are investing \$24 billion in needed upgrades in 2008 but given the surging growth of online data, even this by itself won’t be enough.

That’s why America needs smart networks capable of differentiating between a movie stream that needs prioritization and an email that can be delayed a few seconds. But Net neutrality makes these “smart network” improvements subject to federal red tape and legal uncertainty. This will delay Net improvements and hold the consumer experience hostage to bureaucratic oversight. That’s why there’s nothing neutral about Net neutrality!

In short:

1. Net neutrality does nothing to expand high-speed access.
2. Net neutrality threatens the use of “smart” networking to handle the growing demands on the web.