

Engaging within Emerging Markets in the United States

Michael Wong 24 October 2012

With today's challenging economy placing even greater pressure on companies, how have leading entities been able to design innovative value propositions that quickly secure engagement from their intended audiences? The following interview shares insights gleaned from my interview with Mr. Bret Perkins, Vice President, External and Government Affairs of the Comcast Corporation.

What is Comcast's Internet Essentials program and how does it provide value for your firm's multitude of stakeholders?

Bret: The heart of Internet Essentials is to help "serve the unserved". According to the Pew Internet Project, unfortunately one in five Americans does not use the internet and those earning less than \$30,000 per year are often those most impacted. So, with our conviction that people should be empowered by tools that can help them achieve their hopes and dreams, our program was designed with the consumers in mind so that they can easily tap into this offering. To directly confront America's digital divide, Comcast Corporation provides affordable access to quality home Internet service, a discount-priced computer, and training to low-income families. For \$9.95 per

month, participating families receive: XFINITY Internet Economy Tier Service, an option to purchase a computer for under \$149.99, and access to online, print, as well as in-person digital literacy training. The benefits include no additional fees such as modem rental charges, deposits, and activation fees. While doing some good for society, we also know that we are building rapport with people, a number of whom will eventually join the existing fans of Comcast's service offerings. As a number of management consultants have recently commented on, the lower layers of the consumer pyramid are quite attractive for those creative firms that can develop compelling engagement models with them.

Who is eligible to participate?

As for eligibility, there are four main parameters:

1. Has at least one child receiving free school lunches through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).
2. Has not subscribed to Comcast internet service within the last 90 days.
3. Does not have an overdue Comcast bill or unreturned equipment.
4. Participating families will be able to benefit from Internet Essentials for the entire life of their child's pre K-12 education, as long as they remain eligible

What are some other interesting aspects of this program that have been uncovered over time?

Besides the direct impact the program is having on

the individuals who enroll, we have built stronger ties with a number of entities that have regular engagement with this segment of the U.S. population. These groups include support entities like:

- Schools – public, private, charter and parochial
- Educators – teachers, principals and superintendents
- Community Centers – libraries, recreation centers, etc.
- Government Officials – federal, state and local
- Ecumenical – churches, synagogues, mosques, etc.
- Community-Based Organizations – national and local

So, by doing good for society, our team is doing well for Comcast Corporation's long-term sustainability to serve its consumers and shareholders.