

Cablevision service lets customers see PCs on TV

(AP) -- Watching online video and other content on a television screen typically means buying a special device such as an Apple TV, or plugging lots of wires into the right holes on the PCs and TVs. Cable TV provider Cablevision Systems Corp. is testing a service that promises to eliminate that hassle.

It would let you watch movies, view photos or even read your e-mail from the TV screen. The television is essentially a mirror display of the computer monitor.

You begin by downloading and installing Cablevision's software on your computer. Although Cablevision won't provide details on it, the software works much like remote-access programs already available for troubleshooters to diagnose your PC from elsewhere.

Then, whatever you activate on your computer screen, whether it's Internet video on YouTube or photos from an attached camera, will appear on your TV. It gets sent from your computer back over Cablevision's cable lines to its network, which then sends the image back in real-time to your TV screen as a cable channel that only you can watch.

Cablevision, which serves more than 3 million households in the New York City area, isn't saying much about when its customers will get this service, or whether there will be an extra cost. It's only announcing a limited trial for now, to begin by June. And it'll only be available to customers who have both Internet and digital cable services through Cablevision.

The service, known as PC to TV Media Relay, does have some limitations.

You won't be able to control your PC with your TV remote, meaning you'd have to get up to switch video or pause it.

And the software is designed to capture whatever is on the screen, including e-mails you may have open in a background window. Cablevision insists that its system is secure, but you'd have to trust the setup given that the signal does leave your household before returning.

But for non-sensitive content, such as the latest episode of "Lost," the new technology gives users more flexibility over how and where they watch.

"We are putting an end to the need for families to huddle around their laptops or PCs to watch content together," said Tom Rutledge, Cablevision's chief operating officer.

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Published on Electronic Component News (<http://www.ecnmag.com>)

Source URL (retrieved on 06/18/2013 - 11:55pm):

<http://www.ecnmag.com/news/2010/02/cablevision-service-lets-customers-see-pcs-tv>