

Netflix working way onto US cable company boxes (Update)

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Netflix announced its first alliances with US cable television service companies to make its popular video streaming service available through their set-top boxes

Netflix on Friday announced its first alliances with US cable television service companies to make its popular video streaming service available through their set-top boxes.

Financial terms of Netflix deals with Atlantic Broadband, Grande

Communications, and RCN Telecom Services were not disclosed.

The move will let Netflix members access streaming films and television shows using an application on cable service set-top boxes, eliminating the need to rely on other devices such as video game consoles or Roku boxes plugged into televisions.

Use of the Netflix application will be available to cable subscribers whose service includes TiVo DVR boxes.

"Now, watching Netflix is as easy as changing the channel," Atlantic Broadband chief strategy officer David Isenberg said in a release.

While the combined total of such customers at the cable companies is estimated at less than a million people, the deals signal a Netflix strategy that involves making itself part of traditional viewer habits.

Atlantic Broadband, Grande Communications and RCN have also connected Netflix directly to their networks to provide speedier flow of video and improved image quality, according to Netflix head of business development Bill Holmes.

Netflix already has similar deals in place with cable television services in Britain, Denmark, and Sweden.

In February, Netflix announced a deal with US Internet service colossus Comcast to connect directly to its network and, by extension, to subscribers using that service.

"Netflix agreed to pay Comcast for direct interconnection to reverse an unacceptable decline in our members' video experience on the Comcast network," Netflix vice president of content delivery Ken Florance said Thursday in a blog post.

But he expressed frustration that the deal was necessary, saying "Comcast is double-dipping by getting both its subscribers and Internet content providers to pay for access to each other."

Netflix this week also came out against the proposed merger of Comcast and US cable service titan Time Warner.

Florance argued that Comcast already controls the terms of Internet access for significant portion of people in the United States, and a merger with Time Warner would give it too much power.

A particular worry was that Comcast would begin charging tolls to give data priority in online traffic.

"We're very concerned that a combined Comcast-TWC will place toll-taking above consumer interests and will use their combined market power to the detriment of a vibrant and efficient Internet," Florance said.

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