

The Fourth Annual Pacesetter Awards

Execs from Cablevision, Charter, Cox and Sunflower showed how to get it done.

CED announced the winners of its Fourth Annual Pacesetter Awards on June 21, at a reception at SCTE Cable-Tec Expo. The Pacesetters recognize individuals at cable and other broadband service providers who have taken leading positions or innovative first steps with advanced services, applications and technologies.

We introduce you to the 2007 Pacesetter Award winners.

TELEPHONY-COMMERCIAL SIP/VoIP

- **Scott Weber SVP Engineering & Network Management, Cablevision**
- **Robert Covell SVP Program Management & Application Development, Cablevision**



(L to R): CED Editor Brian Santo and Camiant founder/CTO Susie Riley congratulate Cablevision's Robert Covell and Scott Weber.

It sounds like Cablevision employees have it easy.

Whether it's Kristin Gulasy helping to launch digital video, or corporate colleagues and fellow Pacesetter Award winners Bob Covell and Scott Weber helping to launch voice services for the small and medium business (SMB) market, they'll all tell you that Cablevision has been performing massive, system-wide rollouts of varying services for years; that the whole organization is filled with people who are used to planning, organizing, and implementing system-wide rollouts of new services; and that, gosh, really, they're all just humble cogs in a great big wheel.

Well, maybe. But the fact of the matter is that not a lot of other operators that count their customers in increments of a hundred thousand are willing to risk going live with anything throughout their entire footprints all at once. It is possible for things to go wrong. If Cablevision has gotten good at it, that's all the more reason for recognition.

The company began marketing its SIP-based VoIP (voice-over-IP) services about a year ago. The company has yet to provide any statistics on the service, and won't even venture whether or not it's satisfied with results, but maintains that VoIP for the SMB market is a "huge opportunity."

At the Pacesetter reception, the presenter of the award, Camiant founder and CTO Susie Riley, said implementing SIP-based VoIP is actually quite hard.

Covell allowed that it was a challenge to do it correctly, but said, "it all rides on the same network." He spread the credit around, saying that management and marketing were thorough with their planning, that Cablevision employees made it work.

"And we've got a good set of vendors: Siemens with the softswitch, Camiant with the policy servers," he said, explaining that the vendors were extremely flexible and responsive.

That said, the issue was remaining focused on the goalposts, Covell said. "Anything that didn't improve customer satisfaction or overall reliability – those sorts of things tended to get put aside."

Weber said the biggest hurdles were actually people-oriented. The two explained that it was a little difficult to change the mindset of people who used to work with 5ESS switches that took up entire rooms who now were confronted with equipment that only filled a few racks.

"We had to retrain the old telephony people to move a little faster," Covell said.