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## A Brief History of DIRECTV

By Gary Davis

Perhaps the most popular satellite provider in the United States, DIRECTV® has a long and impressive history under its belt. So, just who is DIRECTV? And how did they get to where they are today?

### DIRECTV – The Early Years

Satellite as we know it today actually started back in 1984, when Hughes Electronics gained FCC approval to build and operate a direct broadcast satellite system, or DBS. The satellite DIRECTV-1 was launched on December 17, 1993 and in 1994, Hughes Electronics founded DIRECTV and premiered the first North American offering of DBS service. Often called the "minidish", this new satellite dish was considerably smaller than what consumers were used to – approximately 18 inches in diameter – and much more manageable than those large, cumbersome TVRO satellite dishes from our past.

Along with its sleek and compact look, the minidish brought consumers a new way of receiving satellite television transmissions. Older TVRO dish systems were analog only and based on open standards equipment. Minidish systems on the other hand, were digital, offering clearer video and audio, and were operated on a closed system that required special reception equipment. TVRO systems were also mobile, a necessary feature to allow them to pick up transmissions from multiple satellite systems, while minidish systems are stationary and received all of their programming from one specific satellite. In August of 1994, DIRECTV launched its second satellite, DIRECTV-2 and boasted one million subscribers at the end of the year.

### DIRECTV – Full Steam Ahead

In 1995, DIRECTV authorized Toshiba and Uniden to begin manufacturing DBS systems. Committing to \$170 million in advertising, DIRECTV prepared for the expected subscriber growth and launched their third satellite, DIRECTV-3 in July.

In 1997, DIRECTV launched DIRECTV-6 and in 1998, with over 4 million subscribers, DIRECTV

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Satellite entered into an agreement to purchase its partner, US Satellite Broadcasting for over \$1.3 billion in stocks and cash. The merger provided DIRECTV customers with access to USSB's premier movie broadcasting, increasing channel selection from 185 to 210. In July, DIRECTV invested \$250 million in XM satellite radio.

1999 brought even more growth when DIRECTV acquired Primestar, Inc. and their 2.3 million subscribers. As part of the transaction, DIRECTV inherited Primestar's satellite assets – specifically, 11 transponders and two satellites – giving them high-powered DBS frequencies to provide full coverage of the continental United States. In addition to the Primestar acquisition, DIRECTV launched a new satellite of their own, DIRECTV-1R on October 10th.

By 2001, DIRECTV Satellite had gained over 10 million subscribers and in October, announced its intention to merge with its prime competitor, EchoStar Communications, the parent company of DISH Network. In November, DIRECTV joined with Music Choice and Wink Communications to announce a

new interactive music commerce service that would allow consumers to purchase a CD of the song they were listening to directly through their remote control. This 24/7 feature was launched in September of 2002.

The merger with EchoStar's DISH Network fell through in 2003 and later that same year, General Motors sold their controlling interest of Hughes Electronics to News Corporation. 2003 also saw the introduction of a new high-definition video recorder from DIRECTV and TiVo as well as a second-generation model through a partnership with Philips. This was also the second year in a row that DIRECTV was named #1 in customer service by JD Powers & Associates.

On November 11, 2003, DIRECTV enjoyed its 12 millionth customer milestone.

### DIRECTV – Today

Today, DIRECTV offers service to more than 14 million subscribers in the continental US as well as the one million plus subscribers in Latin America. It remains the top ranking consumer satellite provider and continues to expand its offerings through high-definition and special interest packages such as NFL SUNDAY TICKET and TOTAL CHOICE® Mobile programming.

What does the future hold for DIRECTV?

With four new satellites expected by the end of 2007 and exclusive DVR sneak previews of high-ranking premium broadcasting, DIRECTV continues to push the envelope and expand the definition of satellite television entertainment. What will be next for DIRECTV?

If history offers any clue, it's sure to be big!

Gary Davis is owner of

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an authorized DIRECTV retailer, has over five

years experience in the Satellite TV business and has written numerous articles on the subject.

### **How DIRECTV Works**

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#### How DIRECTV Works

It was in the summer of 1994 that DIRECTV launched a service that would revolutionize the way our skies broadcast high-quality multi-channel satellite transmissions back and fourth in geosynchronous orbit with the earth. For the very first time ever, an 18 inch size satellite dish was being used by DIRECTV satellite television viewers throughout rural communities the nation over. DIRECTV transmissions have taken our nation to new heights in terms of telecommunications and satellite tv forever and always. DIRECTV gives the leading quality in digital satellite quality multi-channel television viewing in the country, so power that traditional cable TV viewers are switching over completely.

#### DIRECTV Technology

DIRECTV technology uses a small ovular satellite dish for receiving satellite transmission signals from any one of its six highly powered photovoltaic satellites in geosynchronous orbit around the earth's equator. Each DIRECTV satellite with multiple transponders that relay DIRECTV signals from either of the two broadcasting stations (Castle Rock, Colorado or Los Angeles, California) that receive programming feed from any number of hundreds of content providers that send pre-recorded high-quality programming content through any a number of medias such as fiber optic cable, digital tape and most importantly, via satellite. Once this programming has been thoroughly digitalized and encrypted it is usually immediately up-linked for broadcasting.

#### DIRECTV Transmission

Sometimes pre-recorded shows however need to be screened and digitalized for the high DIRECTV standards. These are stored for later usage, but broadcasting a high-quality multi-channel digital signal from the programming station up to a satellite and then back down to the home is a work of pure genius. DIRECTV has been all about genius and creative innovation from its very foundations. DIRECTV sends a digital transmission from any of the six geosynchronously orbiting satellites above the equator down to the home owner's satellite dish and to ensure a perfect reception, state of the art technology is used. MPEG-2 is the new form of world standards for digital audio-visual transmissions and is the kind of compressed digital information used by DIRECTV. Upon touching the DIRECTTV satellite dish above the home, the special DIRECTV system receives the signal and pipes it down to the family television set.

#### DIRECTV Reception

## A Brief History of DIRECTV

The DIRECTV system uses a satellite dish, an IRD receiver (integrated receiver/decoder) and a remote control. The satellite dish that DIRECTV uses is an antenna to receive signals from any one of the six satellites in geosynchronous orbit around the earth's equator. The DIRECTV digital Integrated Receiver/Decoder separates each and every channel accordingly, decompresses and translates that signal so that a television is able to show it. The DIRECTV remote control is used for interactive interface with the IRD to achieve multiple functions including programming guide manipulation.

How DIRECTV works is easily stated in one word: PERFECTLY. With two broadcasting stations inside the continental United States, DIRECTV is certain to always broadcast clear signals out to any of the six satellites in geosynchronous orbit around the earth's equator and the DIRECTV viewer is absolutely certain to always receive the highest quality digital MPEG-2 service available on the market today. DIRECTV is a world leader in satellite TV technology and one of the fastest growing electronics markets ever. MPEG-2 transmissions give DIRECTV an edge over the competition that will launch the world into a new era of satellite telecommunications and digital storage. DIRECTV costumers receive both high-quality multi-channel digital satellite broadcasting as well as high-quality service.

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