

Using the Techdirt Insight Community to Understand Network Neutrality: A VeriSign Case Study



“The analysis that came out of the Techdirt Insight Community was clear, concise and brutally honest.”

Brian O’Shaughnessy
Director
Corporate Communications
VeriSign

To learn more about the Techdirt Insight Community, visit www.insightcommunity.com or call **1-888-930-9272x88**

Seeking a Better Understanding of Network Neutrality

In the past year, there has been a very loud and very public debate concerning “network neutrality.” The press has mapped out the debate as an issue between telecom providers such as AT&T and Verizon on one side, and internet companies such as Google, Amazon and Microsoft on the other side. Both sides have staked out positions suggesting that if the other side wins, it will irreparably damage the internet. As a company that works with companies on both sides of the debate, VeriSign wanted a better understanding of the real issues involved, the potential benefits and risks of either new legislation or no new legislation. VeriSign also was looking to find out how it could perhaps act as a mediator between the warring parties to come to a solution that might benefit everyone.

The Techdirt Insight Community Provides an Insightful View

Rather than go to a research or analyst firm, which often would appear biased towards one side or the other, VeriSign chose to use the Techdirt Insight Community to get a more honest and objective view of the situation. VeriSign proposed the basic issue, which was delivered to a group of expert bloggers from a variety of different backgrounds, but who all had knowledge and expertise in the field, and who all had written extensively about network neutrality issues.

Within three days, VeriSign had five detailed, thought-provoking and insightful responses, which not only clarified the actual issues, but also gave a much better picture of both the history of the debate as well as the potential outcomes and consequences.

Brian O’Shaughnessy, VeriSign’s director of corporate communications, was blown away. “With all of the rhetoric and politics involved, it was difficult to get a clear picture. It seemed like the telcos and the internet companies were discussing two entirely different situations.”

Reading the press coverage or talking to analysts wasn’t giving the company the insight it needed. “It seemed like we just kept hearing these two sides of the story, without any explanation of a middle ground,” said O’Shaughnessy. “The analysis that came out of the Techdirt Insight Community was clear, concise and brutally honest. Almost every response was clear to explain the pros and cons to each side, even highlighting that the entire framework for the debate -- that it was between telcos and internet companies -- wasn’t entirely true.

“On top of that, the recommendations for action were perceptive, creative and useful. From the responses, we realized that we could stake out a position that wasn’t simply siding with one side or the other -- but that helped to bring both sides together by helping to better define what the debate was really about. The Techdirt Insight Community helped bring out the value and benefits of such a creative solution.”

