

Re: DTV antennas?

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- *From:* Jeff Liebermann <jeffl@xxxxxxxxxx>
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On Tue, 15 Jul 2008 09:37:55 -0700, "Joel Koltner" <zapwireDASHgroups@xxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

"Jeff Liebermann" <jeffl@xxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message news:31hp74l8spkasv6poo3g5eh8japf4tp48t@xxxxxxxxxx

Actually,
that does tend to be a problem as it adds yet another IR remote control. (I have 5 on the table).

I don't have a specific model for you, but I do recall reading the manual for at least one converter box that claimed it used "common" remote control signals that "any universal remote" would likely already have programmed.

Yep. That saves the cost of supplying a remote control.

You seem like you might be the kind of guy who'd have one of those really fancy universal remotes with an LCD, USB connectivity, etc. anyway? :-)

That was last year. This year, I'm into downsizing, simplification, and de-trashing the house.

<<http://802.11junk.com/jeffl/pics/home/slides/LivingRoom01.html>>

The number of boxes in the 19" racks and on the "home entertainment" pile has grown since I took that picture.

I do have a Radio Shock universal remote control buried somewhere in a box. I bought it because it would run some obscure C band satellite receiver I found at a thrift shop. However, for running the TV, I have several Windoze Mobile PDA's setup with IR remote software. I also have a home made IR repeater in an other room. The big advantage is that I can setup the screen with only the buttons I want, and not have to deal with buttons that I'll never use. Macros are also handy so that I have a "shutdown" button that turns everything off.

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It would have been so nice to be able to do OTA (over the air) firmware updates, but that might have added a few pennies to the cost.

Plus a security concern that, if the private keys got out, any kid in the neighborhood with the a laptop and a "black box" could drive around the neighborhood and disable a bunch of the converters.

Yep. Security is a real problem. I'm sure some manner of security arrangement can be contrived, like having the customer go online and authorize a firmware update.

Soon, every kid will have an ATSC 8VSB modulator and transmitter in a black box. Actually, I did a search for a do-it-yourself 8VSB modulator or transmitter, and couldn't find one. Lots of professional broadcast equipment, but nothing suitable for the neighborhood TV hacker. One the kid has the transmitter, he needs to guess the channel the receiver is watching. Since the encryption will probably be keyed to the unit serial number, he also needs to break in and obtain the serial number.

Once upon a time, I personally tested and ran QA on approximately 100 radios prior to shipping. About 5% of the radios were deemed "defective" by the recipients.

This just reflects that fact that, on customer returns, there's usually no differentiation given between "hard defects" (it isn't working as designed at the factory) and "brain-dead designer defect" (it's so cumbersome/annoying to use that it's little better than nothing at all).

True. Most stores do not have personnel that are even capable of determining if it's defective. That's one reason for why the existence of the Geek Squad and Fire Dog people attached to the US electronic retailers. The stores have realized that the abilities of the salesmen are limited and need some expertise.

These days with so much software running the show, the later show up far more often than the former...

My test and example was for a device that had absolutely no software. Today's versions would be exactly as you described, and probably have additional software issues. This was strictly the customer's perception of proper operation. Incidentally, when I traced the source and complaints on the 5 units that were returned, I found 3

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operator errors, and 2 that simply changed their minds and wanted their money back. The only way to do that was to claim the units were "defective" and to not accept a replacement.

I think I've mentioned on here before how much lobbying it took to get some software guys to not use something like a 1/4 second "debounce" for pushbuttons on a standard LCD/directional keypad widget, having to convince them that "expert users" who had memorized the path to their desired function could press buttons a lot faster than four times per second. :-(

I didn't catch that posting, but I can certainly see the problem. User hostile interfaces are all too common. Unfortunately, many such user interface requirements have undesired consequences. For example, one product received complaints that the button labels were too small and difficult to read. The revised model had larger buttons and labels that could be read from about 3m away. The result was that sales dropped like a rock. My job was to figure out why. It didn't take long to discover that the customers perceived anything with huge buttons and labels as something suitable for a child. In other words, it looked like a toy. The buttons were replaced with the older smaller versions, and sales resumed at their normal pace.

---Joel

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