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Intellon-Enabled SlingLink™ Adapters Connect Award-Winning Slingbox™, Creating Exceptional Out-of-Box Experience



“The customer experience is all about ease of use and performing above expectations. The Intellon-enabled SlingLink adapter delivers that without question. We’ve achieved best of class return rates by having an outstanding out-of-box experience.”

*Rich Buchanan, Vice
President of Marketing, Sling
Media, Inc.*

Business Challenge:

With portable electronics like cell phones, laptops and PDAs, we can now communicate and work just about anywhere. But until recently, access to our own TV programming has been confined to the living room.

Sling Media, based in San Mateo, Calif., is changing the way people watch TV. The digital lifestyle products company created the award-winning Slingbox™, a device that allows consumers to access their living room television programming at any time, from any location, using displays such as laptops and desktop PCs, handheld computers and smartphones.

With the Slingbox, users can tap their own TiVo for a night of *Lost* at a friend’s house, cook step-by-step alongside Emeril in the kitchen, or watch the World Series from a hotel room halfway around the world. Viewers can see live TV via their home cable box or satellite receiver, or programs recorded on their digital video recorder (DVR).

As Sling Media developed its ground-breaking technology, the method of Internet connectivity was central to creating a smooth, plug and play customer experience. However, some homes lack Ethernet jacks where TVs are located and encrypted networks, wireless can be a little more challenging for the average consumer.

“When you’re selling to the heart of the consumer electronics channel, a good portion are not tech geniuses,” said Rich Buchanan, vice president of marketing at Sling Media. “For our product to succeed, we have to maximize the out-of-box experience for customers.”

Intellon Solution:

Powerline communications (PLC) technology, which relies on existing home electrical wiring for connectivity, emerged as the perfect solution. Using powerline, every electrical outlet in a home becomes a potential Ethernet jack or Internet connection point. Additionally, the technology delivers Internet-class connection speeds, exceptional reliability and simple installation for the customer.

“Everyone has an electrical outlet behind their TV, so it was an easy choice to select powerline as the primary alternative to wireless,” Buchanan said. “It’s the ideal solution because it literally just plugs into a wall jack.”

Sling Media selected Intellon’s global standard HomePlug ICs to enable its new SlingLink network adapter product line, which provides the connection between the Slingbox and the broadband gateway or home router. As the global leader in HomePlug IC sales and product enablement, Intellon was able to help Sling Media bring its SlingLink adapters to market quickly. By developing its own adapters, Sling Media created an optimized solution to power the Slingbox’s streaming media. At the same time, the Sling Media-branded adapters enhance consumer confidence.



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"If a customer at the store picks up the Slingbox and sees the SlingLink adapters next to it – an optimized solution that's tested and works – then they have a much higher level of confidence," Buchanan said.

SlingLink adapters allow consumers to connect the Slingbox to their home network quickly and easily in the amount of time it takes to walk from one room to the other. Users place the Slingbox in their entertainment centers and connect it to the video source. Then they establish an Internet connection to their Slingbox with two simple steps by connecting one SlingLink adapter into the wall near their router and the other into an outlet near their Slingbox.

Customers load SlingPlayer™ software onto their computers as the final step to allow them to control their TVs from anywhere. The software lets customers remotely change channels, set their DVRs to record specific programs, adjust picture and quality, and create shortcuts to their favorite channels.

Business Benefits:

Launched in July 2005, the Slingbox is now available in 3,000 retail locations, as well as from leading online electronics retailers. The product has quickly gained popularity among consumers as well as with the media, racking up coveted industry awards – Business Week's "Best Products of 2005;" Time magazine's "Best Inventions of 2005;" Popular Science's "Best of What's New 2005;" and Popular Mechanics' "Breakthrough Awards 2005."

According to Buchanan, ease of use has been key to the product's success, and Intellon's HomePlug-enabled solution serves as an essential foundation for the Slingbox's simple setup and smooth customer experience. In fact, customers choose to connect with the SlingLink adapters over wireless at a ratio of six to one.

As further evidence of the simplicity of the Slingbox and SlinkLink adapters, the products have achieved best-of-class return rates at retailers like Best Buy. In fact, the Slingbox leads the category for the metric, a feat unheard of for such a new technology.

"The customer experience is all about ease of use and performing above expectations," Buchanan said. "The Intellon-enabled SlingLink adapter delivers that without question. We've achieved best of class return rates by having an outstanding out-of-box experience."

As Sling Media looks to develop a family of consumer electronics products for today's digital way of life, the company plans to further leverage HomePlug technology.

"We're absolutely thrilled with the technology," Buchanan added. "It's easy to use and deploy, and drives high levels of customer satisfaction. We will be using HomePlug technology in a number of products in the future."

About Intellon

Intellon is the world leader in powerline communications, providing HomePlug® compliant and other powerline integrated circuits for home networking, networked entertainment, BPL access and commercial applications. Intellon created and patented the baseline technology for HomePlug 1.0, and is a major contributor to the baseline technology for the new 200-Mbps HomePlug AV powerline standard. With over three million HomePlug ICs sold, Intellon holds the dominant market share of the rapidly growing HomePlug market. The company was founded in 1989 and is headquartered in Ocala, Florida, with offices in San Jose and Toronto. For additional information, visit www.intellon.com.

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