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PVRs Haven't Recorded Much Yet

By CAROL KROL

OCTOBER 13, 2000 – Despite the level of media industry hype about personal video recorders (PVRs), actual usage of the devices in consumer households this year barely registered on the radar screen, much less the TV screen (see chart at right).

Less than 1% of households surveyed had a PVR, according to Statistical Research Inc.'s Fall Home Technology Monitor, released earlier this week (TMR Oct. 10). Of 2,108 total interviews, 10 households said they had a PVR, and only half of those recontacted by SRI confirmed they owned a TiVo or Replay machine. Last Spring, out of 2,089 households, six said they had a PVR. The sample is nationally projectable.

"There's a lot of advertising and fuss being made about it, and there just aren't many out there yet," said David Tice, director of client services at SRI.

The findings also reveal a significant level of confusion regarding basic definitions of emerging interactive TV technologies, including PVRs. Devices and services have not been positioned clearly and succinctly in ways consumers can comprehend potential use and benefit. Respondents tended to confuse a VCR with a PVR, according to Tice, or digital TV with digital cable and digital satellite service on an analog set. "Technology is outstripping people's ability to keep track of it," said Tice. "They can use it, but they don't necessarily know what

% OF HOMES WITH PVRs

Fall 2000: 0.0014%

Spring 2000: 0.0010%

Source: SRI Home Technology Monitor

they have." A TMR analysis of actual press coverage proves there is indeed a media industry fascination with this topic (see below). TiVo clearly dominates share of media mind, with ReplayTV a distant second. Meanwhile, media coverage of VCRs, present in a majority of U.S. households, actually dipped.

Apparently not even the current level of PVR coverage is enough to satiate client interest, which drove SRI to develop an ethnographic study with Greystone Communications that is currently in the field to explore how consumers use PVR equipment and integrate it into their household. Results are expected in a month or so.

DAILY BRIEFING

Tina Georgeou to VP-corporate development at Meredith Corporation, a newly-created position, from vice chair at Publicis S.A.'s Optimedia International. Georgeou was president of DeWitt Media prior to its acquisition by Publicis earlier this year. ● Paxson Communications Corporation Thursday announced joint sales agreements with six NBC-affiliated, Gannett Co.-owned TV stations. The agreement will provide a sales and marketing infrastructure for local PAX

TV stations and the benefit of Gannett's ad agency relationships. ● Promotions are heating up in the interactive TV space. ReplayTV and NBC Thursday announced a joint promotion designed to encourage ReplayTV digital video recorder purchases. ReplayTV will give consumers a \$100 rebate on the purchase of its equipment, and those consumers are also automatically enrolled in contest, which awards the winner with tickets to any sporting event and a walk-on appearance in one of four NBC-TV shows. Separately, DirecTV Thursday also announced a national promotion designed to encourage purchase. The company said it will waive the \$100 installation fee for customers who purchase a DirecTV system and the Total Choice programming service during the promotion. ● OpenTV Thursday announced its "OpenTV Broadband" initiative, designed to immediately offer a complete digital interactive solution to cable and satellite operators. ● Joseph A. Ripp to CFO at America Online from exec VP-CFO at Time Warner Inc. ● David Manouglan promoted to chief operating officer at The Golf Channel. ● The FCC Thursday released its preliminary agenda for its Oct. 16 on banc hearing, scheduled to examine the public interest obligations of television broadcast licensees, which includes a panel discussion on protecting children from the effects of violent programming.

TMR INDEX: MEDIA COVERAGE OF PVR BRANDS AND TERMINOLOGIES

	Jan.-Oct. 12, 1999	Jan.-Oct. 12, 2000	% Change
TiVo	815	551	+50%
ReplayTV	336	136	+147%
Personal Video Recorders (PVRs)	262	99	+165%
Digital Video Recorders (DVRs)	202	98	+106%
VCRs	2,150	2,273	-5%

Source: TMR analysis of news coverage archived on Dow Jones Interactive.