

Webcasters capitalize on SEC's disclosure mandate

By Craig McGuire

NEW YORK: In the two weeks since the passage of Regulation Fair Disclosure by the Securities and Exchange Commission, industry suppliers have wasted little time in tailoring their services to the new requirements for disseminating "material" information.

Sensing a rare opportunity to get themselves before a huge potential audience, many Webcasters have slashed the prices on their services – and even offered them for free to IR pros thirsting for new ways to circulate information.

"In direct response to FD, we are offering all public companies the basic version of our Webcasting service for free," said Rob Adler, president and co-founder of CCBN.com. Rival VCall has been offering a similar discount all year.

Both vendors regularly charge around \$700 for their basic service, and each claims to produce some 2,500 Webcasts per quarter. However, given lucrative advertising (VCall) and partnership agreements (CCBN is allied with Business Wire), the offers aren't expected to substantially cut into the bottom line of either company.

Other Webcasters, such as StreetFusion and TVN Com-

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Free Webcasting... Companies like VCall and CCBN.com wasted little time reacting to the SEC

munications, reported increased interest in Webcasting, but at press time had no plans to discount their services.

"Webcasting just became mission-critical, and customers are going to want something more reliable than a free basic product," said Blake Hayunga, VP of

Content Groups StreetFusion, which coordinates an average of 2,000 Webcasts per quarter. "IR pros have been waiting for something like FD to come along so they could justify Webcasting as a necessity, and not just as a luxury."

Given the results of a recent survey conducted by the

National Investor Relations Institute, it seems certain that the market for Webcasting will continue to surge in upcoming months. Sixty-one percent of the 462 IR pros polled already Web cast their corporate conference calls, with another 22% planning to do so within the next year.