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Are you ready to cut cable? Probably not—yet.

That pains me to say, both as tech columnist and someone who watches enough TV to own a Snuggie. Many of us are rooting for the Internet to upend our indecent cable bills. Surely Silicon Valley's brightest can figure out a better way to get us the stuff we want to watch. Why are we still paying cable for a "live" channel of back-to-back "Bewitched" reruns?

An advertisement for Cablefax Daily. The top half has a yellow background with the text "Get a FREE 3-WEEK TRIAL to Cablefax Daily" in black and red. The bottom half has a teal background with the text "STAY AT THE TOP OF YOUR GAME. Get the cable industry's must-read, daily insider summary of all that is important, including programming, operations, ratings, people, regulations, financial news and more..." in white and yellow.

But after reviewing pretty much every available Internet TV service, streaming box and smart TV, I've yet to find a replacement that covers all the TV bases while costing less. Instead, I recommend "shaving down" your cable-and-broadband subscription and supplementing it with streaming services such as Hulu, Amazon and Netflix until this all shakes out.

There are reasons to be hopeful. I believe 2015 is the year the Internet becomes a serious alternative to cable. The PlayStation Vue service that made its debut last week breaks new ground by streaming big networks—if you've got Sony's game console.

Cord-cutting is already a phenomenon among early adopters or people with narrow TV needs. But completely saying goodbye to cable doesn't add up yet for the rest of us. Here are the four big reasons:

1) You need fast, affordable Internet...from guess who! Getting TV over the Internet requires a download speed of at least 5 megabits per second. (Check yours at [speedtest.net](http://speedtest.net).) College students and moochers may not have to worry about paying for fast Internet. But for many of us, the best deal comes from the likes of Comcast, Time Warner, AT&T or Verizon, which push TV-and-Internet bundles that make stand-alone service look pricey. You may have more options than you realize. To check,

[GOP's Martina White wins Philly House District](#)

[Pittsburgh Tribune-Review Editorial: Open contract negotiations: Let the sunshine in](#)

[Allentown Morning Call White House says GOP budgets would hurt Pennsylvanians](#)

enter your address at [broadbandmap.gov](http://broadbandmap.gov) and be sure to click “Show Wired.”

2) You'll miss some popular TV. Cable gets you accustomed to a never-ending buffet of shows. Streaming puts you on a TV diet—at least for current-season fare. Sling TV broke new ground earlier this year by streaming live channels from cable—but only about 20 of them.

So far, only PlayStation Vue can really compete with basic cable's channel lineup. It offers between 50 and 80-plus live channels, including NBC, CBS and Fox. (Expect more channels to join soon.) But Vue is missing ABC—no “Modern Family,” no “Scandal,” no “Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.” My dream TV would be downloadable a la carte, with app-like channels. Yet so far, only CBS and a few other networks are available for streaming without a cable subscription. Meanwhile, Sling TV and Vue bundle many channels together, including plenty you may not care for, just like the cable you're eager to ditch.

Another way to get the shows you want is to wait for them—potentially for a long, long time. A cable-cutter who still can't miss being part of the water-cooler chatter would need a live streaming service like Vue or Sling TV. Hulu Plus can fill in the gaps with some of the latest shows from Fox, NBC and ABC, if you can wait a day. Netflix and Amazon Prime may require you to wait a year or more for all but original shows. There's hope: Broadcasters and show creators are cooking up cable-free options fast. HBO Now launches in April for the new season of “Game of Thrones.”

3) Internet TV means juggling gadgets, too. Assuming you can find the shows you want online, chances are you won't find them all on one service. Or even one remote control. Streaming services are using deals with certain channels and gadget-makers to differentiate themselves. Want ESPN? You'll need Sling TV on a Roku or Xbox. Want Fox News? Only on Vue with a PlayStation. Want HBO Now? That requires owning an Apple TV—a total of three pieces of hardware if you want them all.

No combination of devices is as easy as just changing the channel, or choosing shows saved on the DVR. And saving shows to watch later is another problem. Streaming services like Amazon Prime and Netflix give you shows on demand (albeit often last season's). The newer live services have more limits: Sling TV only lets you find shows from the past three days—and even then only on a few channels. Vue lets you record anything, but will only store it for 28 days. There's hope: The Apple TV streaming device is due for a major refresh. And Roku simplifies things with a universal search tool to find shows across lots of different on-demand services.

4) All this effort may not save you money. Now, we do the math. The average cost of the video portion of a U.S. cable bill is \$80 to \$90 a month (including pay-per-view movies and premium channels), according to telecom analyst Craig Moffett. Broadband Internet adds up to \$50 on top of that in a bundle, he estimates. Your price may vary, especially with discounts for the first two years, but let's say the combo costs \$130.

But cutting cable and buying Internet alone is more expensive, about \$60 a month. It isn't hard to match the cost of cable with Internet streaming services—and actually end up with less TV. Get Vue (\$50 to \$70, depending on your package) and HBO Now (\$15) and you're already at \$125. Alternatively, a decent package of live and on-demand content could include Sling TV (\$20), HBO Now (\$15), Hulu (\$8) and CBS All Access (\$5)—you're up to \$108. And if you still wanted live broadcast networks, you'd need to get an aerial antenna.

Cable companies are onto this. Comcast is offering new customers Internet and 140-channel cable TV—including HBO—for \$80 a month, with prices rising after a year. Last year, I shaved my family's Comcast plan from \$213 a month to a \$75 no-contract service called Internet Plus that includes broadband, basic local cable channels and HBO. Other cable companies have similar deals.

There's hope: Now that Internet companies can make their own channel bundles, perhaps we'll see some designed for specific interests that can save us money. Classic movie-lovers shouldn't have to pay for baseball games they'll never watch. Sports junkies who don't care about nature documentaries shouldn't pay for them, either. At some point, a smart company may figure out a way to make everybody happy. – *Wall Street Journal*

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The California Public Utilities Commission has delayed until May 7 its vote on Comcast Corp.'s proposed takeover of Time Warner Cable. The regulatory group also rescheduled a hearing in Los Angeles to receive public comment on the proposed media consolidation. The four-hour meeting now is scheduled for April 14 in the auditorium of the Public Utilities Commission's building at 320 West 4th St. in downtown Los Angeles.

Last month, opponents of the proposed Comcast transaction criticized the PUC for holding its public hearing in San Francisco rather than in Southern California, where the merger would have its most dramatic effect. The PUC initially had scheduled a hearing in Los Angeles for Good Friday but then changed the date to April 14. If the merger is approved, Comcast would become the largest cable TV and high-speed Internet provider in Southern California with about 1.8 million homes in the Los Angeles region.

In addition to picking up customers currently served by Time Warner Cable, Comcast has a separate deal pending that would consolidate homes in Southern California now served by Charter Communications. The Federal Communications Commission and the U.S. Department of Justice separately are scrutinizing Comcast's proposed \$45-billion acquisition of Time Warner Cable. This month, the FCC postponed its informal deadline to review the matter. The federal government is expected to make a decision in the next couple of months.

California's PUC is involved because it must approve the transfer of licenses to Comcast from Charter and Time Warner Cable. Already, an administrative law judge, who is advising the PUC, has recommended that the commission approve Comcast's takeover — but with a lengthy list of conditions. State officials would like Comcast to aggressively expand its program of providing low-cost broadband Internet service to low-income families. Comcast offers a \$9.95-a-month Internet Essentials program to eligible low-income families. The Philadelphia giant says more than 350,000 families participate in the program in its current service footprint.

One proposed PUC condition would ask Comcast to sign up 45% of the targeted low-income homes within two years after absorbing Time Warner Cable systems. Comcast has said it would accept many of the conditions proposed by the administrative law judge. However, company executives have said proposed time frames for wide adoption of Internet Essentials in Southern California might be unrealistic. "We are looking forward to prompt approval by the Commission," a Comcast spokeswoman said Monday in a statement. "Comcast continues to agree with the fundamental conclusion of the proposed decision — that the transaction is in the public interest and that the applications should be granted." – *Los Angeles Times*

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Google's big business is online advertising — figuring out how to use behavioral data to market you to commercial entities. So it's no surprise that it's turning that expertise to its television offerings in Google Fiber. In Kansas City, Google is planning to roll out targeted TV ads that will change depending on the viewer's "geography, the type of program being shown (eg, sports or news), or viewing history," the company wrote on a [forum post](#) dedicated to Fiber TV.

Users can opt out of the targeted ads using their remote control, according to [Ars Technica](#), which added that once you've done so, the company will stop collecting your

data for advertising purposes. For Google, this hints at a broader strategy to leverage its advertising prowess in all sorts of physical-world platforms, such as driverless cars and mobile phone service.

While this is a no-brainer for Google and simply applies the same formula to TV that we're already familiar with when it comes to Gmail, YouTube and other Google properties, it's a significant development for TV viewers that for decades were served advertising in a shotgun-style blast whether they were receptive to the messaging or not. The bulk of today's TV ads can be targeted by market, but generally not down to the level of a household.

In fact, it's part of a **wider trend** that became a factor in the last political election cycle. Cable and satellite operators are all racing to offer targeted ads — or as they're called in the industry, "addressable" advertising — the theory being that a candidate can maximize their budget by sending ads only to those people who are likely to be persuaded or mobilized as a result. This is the future of TV: Channels that know exactly who you are, where you live, where you've shopped, how you've browsed, which brands you buy, and on and on. — *Washington Post*

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Tennessee's attorney general wants a federal appeals court to set aside a recent decision by the Federal Communications Commission to allow cities such as Chattanooga to offer municipal broadband beyond their normal service area. State Attorney General Herbert Slatery said in the filing with the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that the FCC had "unlawfully inserted itself between the state of Tennessee and the state's own subdivisions." Slatery had been among several prominent Tennessee Republicans who had urged the FCC not to override a state law that blocks Chattanooga's electric utility from expanding its super-fast Internet network. Other letter writers included Gov. Bill Haslam and the state House and Senate speakers. The FCC nevertheless voted 3-2 last month in favor of the utilities in Chattanooga and Wilson, N.C. — *Nashville Tennessean* ([more here](#))



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