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In 2001, I became founding president of the Joint Powers Telecommunications Board (JPTB), which was empowered by two city councils to bring fiber optics to the home (FTTH) and to businesses (FTTB) in both Rock Springs and Green River, Wyoming. At the time, I thought that providing high-speed Internet, outstanding-quality TV, and crystal-clear voice would be a slam-dunk. I thought, ***“Who wouldn’t want voice, video and data services delivered faster, cheaper, with better quality, more capacity, and more reliability...for less money?”*** I soon discovered that it isn’t the boxes and wires that is problematic; rather, success in deploying fiber optics *“over the last mile”* has everything to do with local politics — the problem is being prepared for huge opposition from incumbents, and perhaps other key stakeholders, who have a vested interest, fear competition, and who do NOT want the price for delivering telephone, television, and access to the Internet to come down.

As a result, our two-city FTTH/FTTB project, SWEETNET, has run into numerous snags, complications, and heavy opposition from incumbents. We have experienced the Opposition’s back-room politics, disinformation campaigns, out-and-out lies, scare tactics, and calling in favors from key Power Brokers and Influentials. Despite all of the aggravation, I’m still convinced that SWEETNET is the most important project that I have ever worked on. I hope you can learn from my experiences about FTTH politics.

I have compiled a list that includes **Opposition Tactics**, and **Pro-Active Strategies** that every Broadband (FTTH/FTTB, Wireless, BPL) deployment should know and prepare for prior to the Feasibility Study.

Opposition Tactics

- Opposition comes from everyone in the Telecom business.
- Opposition will be in your face constantly.
- Opposition will never run out of lies.
- Opposition is ready to strike at any time and at any place.
- Opposition will engage in back-room politics against you.
- Opposition will try to get Power Brokers and Influentials on their side.
- Opposition will spend as much money as needed to defeat you.

Pro-Active Strategies to Diffuse Opposition Tactics

- You need a Political Plan with Pro-Active Strategies BEFORE the opposition strikes.
- You need to inter-twine FTTH with Economic Development strategies.
- You need 3-5 key talking points, don’t talk “techie”, and remain on topic.
- You need to know your Opposition and prepare for their political tactics.
- You must build Consensus among power Brokers, Influentials, and other Stakeholders about the benefits of an FTTH deployment BEFORE the opposition unleashes its disinformation campaign.

- You need Power Brokers and Influentials to publicly support your deployment.
- You need to build coalitions
- You need to mobilize advocates, and ...
- Never believe your opposition is sitting quietly by; if they are quiet, they already have their next move planned to derail your deployment.

If you are not prepared and don't have political pro-active strategies in your FTTH/FTTB Plan of Action to counter the Opposition, you will soon be **acted upon** by the incumbents and other stakeholders. You will find yourself, and your FTTH/FTTB project, being branded as being the "bad guys" ... trying to destroy local businesses and the local economy by taking jobs away from the local cable company, the local phone company, and the local ISP. The Opposition will attack the deployment; and, then they will attack you personally... and they don't care if they ruin your reputation in the process.

The Opposition will say, "Wireless is the future, not fiber"; Opposition will say, "A new technology will come along that will make fiber obsolete"; Opposition will say, "We can get broadband over power lines now"; Opposition will say, "Our existing infrastructure can do everything you need." You have to refute these arguments over, and over, and over again. Your opposition will oppose you at every corner, and will call in all of their political favors to derail your FTTH/FTTB project.

The advice I would give to any FTTH/FTTB deployment is simple and straightforward.

Prepare, in advance, for the Opposition. We were so focused on technology and our Feasibility Study that we neglected this important point. When the Opposition struck, it was hard and fast. We took advice from our tech consultants, instead of our political and marketing consultants, and the Opposition hammered us. We are still trying to recover from it. Right from the start, you need to prepare politically, as well as, technologically. You need to get the Power Brokers and Influentials from your community on your side, and have them publicly speak out in favor of the FTTH/FTTB deployment. You need to form coalitions, and mobilize your advocates because the **Opposition can, and will, do anything to derail your project.**

I want to publicly recognize the Mayor of Green River, WY, for his tenacity in dealing with small town politics.

Please feel free to contact me via email to discuss FTTH politics.

P.S. I want to thank **Strategy Research Institute (SRI)** for providing this forum to discuss the political realities of an FTTH/FTTB deployment. For more information on this topic, you can visit their website at: WWW.SRI-CONSULTING.ORG .