

Might A Boxing Mogul Attempt the "Vince McMahon Shift?"

Written by Michael Woods

Saturday, 08 February 2014 18:20



How often, my friends, does a company, or a corporation, that you interact with make you an offer, or tweak their service or product in such a way that you end up being mightily impressed, and acknowledge the value of that service or product you pay for?

Not that often, right?

Well, when wrasslin' impresario Vince McMahon announced a month ago that his WWE would be going all in digitally, and on Feb. 24, would be offering their library to their pay-per-view events on a website, for the price of \$10 a month, the reaction was swift and nearly unanimous.

Damn, Vince is hooking us up.

Fans who'd been ponying up for a PPV a month, adding that \$50 to their already bloated cable bill, sang a hallelujah chorus, and thanked the mogul for bowing to the times, and giving their wallets a break. That move left me wondering if a similar sort of deal could be formed in the boxing sphere.

Could one of the promoters pull a Vince, and put their library, and their contemporary bouts, and their PPV-level fare, on their websites, for the cost of a fancy hamburger dinner, per month?

OK, right off the bat we can all realize that McMahon's product and business structure isn't totally akin to what we see in boxing. In our realm, two cable giants, HBO and Showtime, are

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the primary bankrollers, basically, who pay beaucoup to the promoters, who put together, with varying degrees of input, fights for our amusement. The fans, of course, who faithfully buy the PPV shows, are vital bankrollers as well, adding to the bottom line of the power brokers what they can't siphon from advertising dollars, or promotional deals with over-the-air networks. The promoters then take the chunks of cash, and distribute them down the chain, to the fighters. McMahon's business depends more on his sturdy revenue stream of live shows--he runs almost one a day, year in, year out--and he has longer term deals in place with the television platforms which showcase his product.

Further, McMahon sells more merch in a week than the top five boxing superstars do in a month, by far, I'd guess...So, no one is saying that this thing of ours, and McMahon's sports entertainment empire are identical twins, and that whatever model he's employing will or should be copied by us.

But still, I was left thinking on Jan. 9 that McMahon is ahead of the curve in this instance, and that he is telling the world that the future is now, that all content will be streamed or beamed through cables or wirelessly, and be watched on phones and computers and tablets and probably watches which will give you the option of beaming a larger image onto any wall-screen within three years.

So, the 68-year-old wrestling lifer is cutting to the chase, and to a model where less revenue will be flowing to him now, perhaps, but more eyeballs will gravitate to his company, because the monetary barrier to sample is so minute, and he won't have to let the cable and satellite companies keep such a heavy chunk of the take, simply for owning the infrastructure, staging platform and advertising muscle to show his athletes doing their thing. The jury is and will still be out on McMahon's move for three, or six months, or more, but for now, I'm inclined to say his boldness is impressive and I tip my cap to him for giving the customers more bang for their buck.

And, I admit, I'm hoping, maybe, his plan works, because I think the "growing-the-eyeballs" tactic is something our sport needs to do, as it is hidden behind the premium cable and PPV pay-walls, which are among the longish list of reasons our fan base numbers are semi-anemic.

While I had boxing promoter Bob Arum a captive audience on Thursday, I referenced the McMahon move. What did he think of it? And will any boxing dealmakers try to pull off something similar?

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"Todd DuBoef had a plan that was somewhat similar," Arum said, speaking of his wife's son, who is second in command at Top Rank. "Maybe because of the nature of the wrestling, it can be implemented. But boxing, the fights are legitimate, and all that, so it's difficult. But I think Vince may be on to something.

"If you charge ten bucks for a boxing channel, you're still going to have some middlemen," he continued. "For example, how are you going to collect the money? Credit cards? A percentage goes to the credit card company."

But that's a few percent, right, versus about half to the cable/satellite company when the PPV pie cuts sliced, right? "Yeah, OK," he said. "It's interesting to see how that develops. I wouldn't sell Vince short on anything. But then again, I'm not convinced that it works."

Readers, offer your insight and wisdom and POV. Could we or should we or will we see this "McMahon Shift" coming to boxing, or other sports? Weigh in, in our fabulous Forum.

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The Shadow says:

You're welcome, Michael.

deepwater2 says:

I remember going to wrestle mania one at the garden and Andre the giant slammed big John stud and mr t and hogan beat rowdy piper and mr wonderful. I thought it was real stuff back then. Great moment when I was a kid.I don't think you can compare pro wrestling and pro boxing at all. Thank God for the Internet because I watched two ton tony galento vs joe Louis

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and Paz vs roger mayweather earlier on my lunch break . Props to uncle roger for that one. Check it out. It seems every bout is on you tube and maybe McMahon knows he might as well charge a small amount to watch old fights that are already on the Internet for free. As far as ppv and regular content, pro wrestlers perform (not fight) around 200 nights per year . Imagine a pro boxer fighting 24 times a year? Never happen. Sure some boxers can fight 12 times a year fighting cab drivers on the way up but you can't fight tough fights every 8 weeks even never mind 200 times per year. I think some economic laws are relevant for this discussion. The law of supply and demand and the law of diminishing returns. The best thing for boxing is that the top guys fight each other and give the fans what they want. Hbo vs showtime feud hurts the sport. The face of the sport refusing to fight the fighter of the decade for ever changing excuses hurt the sport. Anyway pro boxing can never follow pro wrestling . One is a life threatening blood sport the other a scripted acrobatic soap opera.

the Roast says:

That was a sweet right uppercut that knocked down Paz in that fight. I haven't seen that fight for a long time. I have it somewhere in the VHS collection.

deepwater2 says:

[QUOTE=the Roast;43697]That was a sweet right uppercut that knocked down Paz in that fight. I haven't seen that fight for a long time. I have it somewhere in the VHS collection.[/QUOTE]

It was timed perfect. Paz came out strong but roger withstood it and boxed great . Both guys fought dirty and Lou duva attacking mayweather at the final bell was funny .the cut on duvas face was from a mayweather punch or it Lou scrap his face on the floor ?

The Shadow says:

Deep, did you know Vince McMahon promoted that card with Roger and Vinny?

Domenic says:

Interesting. Most of these great old fights are on youtube but many with poor quality and sound. I'm surprised HBO and Showtime don't run their old fights on an all sports version of the network. Run the old fights and great sports documentaries and Real Sports segments 24/7. They both have a massive library of great fights. I remember watching Holyfield as a cruiser on Showtime in the 80s and Honeyghan beating Curry. I remember Starling on HBO get knocked out and he told Merchant he was never down. Molinares was the guy. Point is they've got a massive quantity of gems they could let loose.

brownsugar says:

[SIZE=2][I]My son really loves watching the fabricated convoluted world of professional wrestling,.. I liked it as a young prepubescent teen when Flying Fred Curry, the Sheik and BoBo Brazil dominated the afternoon airwaves.... but the bigger it got the less fun it became for me,

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but I respect those who attracted to it.

Digital distribution is a start. just make it available on the net,

because I'm ditching cable on sheer principle. (paying a small car payment for a non-life sustaining product is ridiculous to me) I know I've said it a thousand times but I really mean it this time... the cable must go. [/I]/[SIZE]

The Shadow says:

[QUOTE=brownsugar;43725][SIZE=2][I]My son really loves watching the fabricated convoluted world of professional wrestling,.. I liked it as a young prepubescent teen when Flying Fred Curry, the Sheik and BoBo Brazil dominated the afternoon airwaves.... but the bigger it got the less fun it became for me, but I respect those who attracted to it.

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B-Suge, you're right. Here's a great alternative:

[url]<http://www.forbes.com/sites/amadoudiallo/2013/10/16/how-to-cut-the-cord-cable-tv/>

Or just go to Aereo, if you can get it in your area. It's on \$8 (!!) and you don't need be to raped by those cable TV crooks anymore.

[url]<http://www.bostonglobe.com/business/2013/05/29/aereo-internet-service-good-scary/sGECft4KQwmT1Ip4ZVbYxN/story.html>

Add Hulu, Netflix, the WWE Network and you've got a dynamic programming combo for \$26-\$34 per month.

FAR BETTER than whatever DirecTV and the likes try to hustle from people.

brownsugar says:

Thanks, I rarely watch any tv shows,... unless the Walking Dead is on. I prefer documentaries, news, true crime docu-dramas, PBS stuff and nature shows. I gave your list a quick look and it appears to have potential... thanks again.

amayseng says:

[QUOTE=brownsugar;43725][SIZE=2][I]My son really loves watching the fabricated convoluted world of professional wrestling,.. I liked it as a young prepubescent teen when Flying Fred

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Curry, the Sheik and BoBo Brazil dominated the afternoon airwaves.... but the bigger it got the less fun it became for me, but I respect those who attracted to it.

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because I'm ditching cable on sheer principle. (paying a small car payment for a non-life sustaining product is ridiculous to me) I know I've said it a thousand times but I really mean it this time... the cable must go. [/I][SIZE][QUOTE]

Bsug I hear ya loud and clear. Me being conservative and naturally cheap , ha, It kills me to pay for cable, hbo and showtime with my bill running around 130 a month,(including internet). However, when there are good fights on I dont find myself complaining. Having said that, I have found myself complaining the last few weeks about paying the high cable bill.

two years ago I cancelled cable for about 5 months, it was after football so was not too hard to take, then I just streamed fights, which was painful at times.

deepwater2 says:

Hey shadow, I knew McMahon promoted a few things other then wrestling like some fights,concerts and such. It was cools seeing a young gene hackman and whoopsie Goldberg in the stands for that mayweather/ Paz fight. Maybe they were their for Leonard Lalonde ? Good for Lara for calling out ggg by the way.

The Shadow says:

[QUOTE=deepwater2;43764]Hey shadow, I knew McMahon promoted a few things other then wrestling like some fights,concerts and such. It was cool seeing a young gene hackman and whoopsie Goldberg in the stands for that mayweather/ Paz fight. Maybe they were their for Leonard Lalonde ? Good for Lara for calling out ggg by the way.[/QUOTE]

Yeah, man. If it wasn't because of the stigma of wrestling, Vince McMahon would be a case study at every business school. He's a genius, a national treasure. (For business people, anyway.)

the Roast says:

[QUOTE=deepwater2;43701]It was timed perfect. Paz came out strong but roger withstood it and boxed great . Both guys fought dirty and Lou duva attacking mayweather at the final bell was funny .the cut on duvas face was from a mayweather punch or it Lou scrap his face on the floor ?[/QUOTE]

I forgot about Duva bum rushing Roger after the fight was over. Lou has such a hothead.