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Cablers upfront about NYC blurbs

Event to be the first of its kind

By MICHAEL LEARMONTH

Local ad sales teams for Comcast and Cablevision are taking a page from the networks and are throwing a glitzy upfront presentation Sept. 30 to rev up advertiser interest in spot buys.

The New York Interconnect, a joint venture of Cablevision Systems and Comcast to sell local advertising across all their combined 3.5 million-subscriber New York-area systems, claim the event will be the first of its kind.

New York Knicks exec Isaiah Thomas, CNN's Bill Hemmer and ESPN's Jeremy Schapp will be among the local celebs at the event.

The venture is part of Cablevision and Comcast's effort to gain a greater share of the local TV ad pie. Cablers generally reserve two minutes per hour for their own advertising sales. New York Interconnect covers Cablevision and Comcast's markets around Gotham. Their local competitor is Time Warner's City Cable, which covers Manhattan.

"A lot of our clients don't get invited to the upfronts," said New York Interconnect general manager Ed Renicker. "They're spot buyers. We don't want the network to overshadow what we want to do, but we want to use their programs to sell our time."

Local cable ads account for only 8%, \$5.4 billion, of the \$60 billion TV advertising pie, but revenues have grown 16% annually, according to Bernstein Research.