

# INNOVATION THE WAR OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA GIANTS



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I've been following LinkedIn Pulse for a while. It's amazing to see how the great social media giants are battling it out in the "era of customers" through innovative strategies of empowering, engaging and connecting customers. This is the 4th installment of my series on innovation.

## The race to acquire internet space

I was attending the "Digital World Summit" in Bangladesh and heard about Facebook launching free internet in the remotest corners of the world to ensure technology reach for the underserved. The service, which is run by Internet.org with input from a number of telecom industry partners, has thus far been available in a handful of African countries and Colombia, but now it has made its way to Southeast Asia. The app, aimed at low income and rural users, will offer free access via mobile phone to more than 30 pared-down web services – focusing on job listings, agricultural information, healthcare and education in seven regional languages as well as Facebook's own social network and messaging services. Facebook believes "A better world needs a better

internet. A better internet needs everyone; the more we connect, the better it gets."

Now let's discuss Google Fiber. When most people think of Google Fiber, they probably consider the vast number of new opportunities presented by gigabit internet speeds that ensured new innovations, faster downloads or simply streaming videos with no lag. However not many people know that Google Fiber has the option for a free, lower-tiered internet, with speeds up to 5 MBPS downloads and 1 MBPS uploads. Customers only have to pay for an installation. The option was a clever marketing scheme to encourage more potential users to sign up for the installation, but it had some greater implications as well. In recent times Globe Telecom joined forces with Google to further boost smartphone and internet penetration in the Philippines with the launch of Android One – a portfolio of innovative, affordable and quality smartphone devices running on Lollipop, Android 5.1 software. The users got free 100 MB of mobile data connectivity per month for 6 months. Customers also received the option to download select apps from Google Play Store for free, up to 200 MB of mobile data, per month for 6 months.

In mid-2014, I heard about Project Loon, which was actually Google's mission to acquire the internet space by launching a fleet of 180 satellites to provide web access for the 4.8 billion people not yet online. The spending was approximately \$1 billion on the technology, which was to battle Facebook's efforts to connect remote regions of the world.

As per the website, Project Loon tested its newest LTE radio technology at a rural Brazilian school, Linoca Gayoso, which didn't have internet access before.

I just can't wait to see billions of people connecting through Google or Facebook internet across the globe – benefiting from this war of giant marketers to ensure more engagement and more connectivity.

Stay Tuned for the next part of this series to know more about Omni-Channel Strategy, one of the most viral competitive advantage strategies for telecom.

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# BECOME A KNIGHT FOR ONLY 12,000 BDT

RASIM ALAM

How many times have you said something like, "Ei desh-e kichhui hobe na!" while shaking your fist at the TV news or the newspaper? How many times have you told your friends not to come back to the country? Well, they say if you need something done you need to do it yourself. Gather your family and get a big platform that floats. Take said platform over to Hatirjheel. Throw it in the water and claim that it is now your new country. Name your country Shagorland. Make cardboard cut-out crowns and call yourselves royalty. Now, if you think that idea is absurd, I must tell you that this has already been done.

The Principality of Sealand resides, not in Hatirjheel unfortunately, but 12 kilometers off the coast of Suffolk, England. It is an unrecognised, 6000 square feet, micro-nation founded by Roy Bates in 1967 with a subsequent attempt at establishing its sovereignty as a nation in 1975, when Bates wrote a national constitution. The country, previously known as Fort Roughs, was an anti-aircraft fortress built to defend against the German Luftwaffe. After that, it was used as a helicopter landing ground for pirate radio. They just wanted to play "The Twist" by Chubby Checker all day but Roy



Bates intervened. He was more of a Marvin Gaye kind of pirate radio.

How Bates managed to convince his wife and children to leave the comforts of their home, and move to a glorified bucket, is baffling. "Honey, you will only be able to shower once a week for 3 minutes, but you can call yourself Queen of Sealand," said Bates [probably]. The next day they arrived at Sealand.

You can read more about the history of Sealand in their website. They could not get a .gov domain, but the website still

holds legitimacy with the next best thing: [www.Sealandgov.org](http://www.Sealandgov.org)

Recently unclassified documents show that the UK had plans to usurp Sealand from Bates and take over the platform some 30 years ago. But they never went through with the plan, not for fear of loss of life but mostly because of how ridiculous it would sound the next day on the news. Sealand also boasts a heroic "war of independence". Let's just say shots were fired. That's actually not true. Only one shot was fired from one shotgun.

The country has a bustling economy, as they acquire revenue through ingenious marketing. You can become a baron, baroness, lord, or lady for the unbelievable price of 30 pounds! Nando's once tried to sell peri peri chicken for more than that! All those times you bought your boyfriend an expensive cologne he never wore, when you could have given him an actual royal title. He could have been Baron Jaan, royal representative of The Principality of Sealand, known for having the prettiest woman in miles (it's technically true). Now he will forever be just Jaan.

You can also become a knight without any training or unnecessary accomplishments, simply by paying through the website. It will only set you back a 100 pounds. A really sweet deal considering everyone has to call you "Sir" from now on. Imagine the look on your future employers when they see that on your resume: Graduated middle school. Proficient in Microsoft Paint. Honoured Knight of the Sovereign Military Order of Sealand.

Hired.

*Rasim Alam needs a blurb that's funny, charming and subtly hints at his misunderstood artistic side. Send him suggestions at [md.rasim@tufts.edu](mailto:md.rasim@tufts.edu)*