

## Readers Say

READERS@FORBES.COM

### Hung Up on Ma Bell

As chief executive of Comptel (Competitive Telecommunications Association), which represents companies that offer communications services that compete with AT&T, I take issue with your repetition of AT&T's claim in "Whitacre's Way" (*Jan. 8, p. 84*) that "net neutrality" is about giving Google and other Internet companies a "free ride" on its network. Net neutrality has nothing to do with a free ride. It merely reinstates basic nondiscrimination rules of the road that prevent AT&T (or other network operators) from taking a free ride at the expense of the rest of the market.

Moreover, Comptel members and Internet companies to whom they provide services pay AT&T billions of dollars each year for access to its network. As you note, this is not a new network—it is based upon "copper lines already laid" that the American public has paid for over several decades and for which AT&T claims billions of dollars in depreciation every year. Instead of heralding AT&T as the Company of the Year, FORBES should raise concerns about the reestablishment of a telecommunications monopoly that will stifle the Internet, reduce innovation and raise prices for businesses and consumers.

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Lord of the rings: Business is looking up for AT&T Chief Ed Whitacre.