CES Gadget Show Host Drops CNET as Awards Picker

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The industry group that hosts the annual gadget show known as International CES is dropping reviews website CNET as the picker of its "Best of CES" awards. It says CNET reviewers' objectivity was compromised by the site's corporate parent, CBS Corp.

The Consumer Electronics Association also elevated the CNET writers' initial pick for the best gadget of the show, Dish Network Corp.'s Hopper with Sling, to co-winner along with a gaming tablet called Razer Edge.

CBS had annulled an earlier vote by CNET staff to award the Hopper because it is in a legal dispute with Dish over the product. The Hopper allows users to automatically skip commercials from prime-time TV shows, undercutting a key source of revenue for CBS, advertising.

After CBS removed the Hopper from contention, CNET staff re-voted and chose Razer Edge as the winner.

The association says it is looking for a new partner for its awards.

The association's president, Gary Shapiro, blasted CBS in an opinion article in the USA Today newspaper on Wednesday, saying its interference damaged its own editorial integrity. CBS also owns TV shows such as "60 Minutes," ''CBS Evening News" and "Face the Nation."

"It not only tainted the CES awards, but it hurt one of the world's classiest media companies," Shapiro wrote.

The association, which has hosted the gadget show since 1967, had contracted with CNET to pick the awards since the 2007 show. It normally chooses not to get involved, partly because of its relationship with its many exhibitors.

Mark Larkin, the general manager of CNET, said in a statement the website is "committed to delivering in-depth coverage of consumer electronics" and will continue to cover the show, as it has for more than a decade.

Dish appeared to bask in the controversy, which drew more attention to its device.

"We appreciate the International CES' decision to stand with the consumer in the acknowledgement of this award," said Dish CEO Joseph Clayton in a statement. "I regret that the award has come in the face of CBS' undermining of CNET's editorial independence."

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