Abstract

HOMEPNA - ENABLING BROADBAND DISTRIBUTION THROUGHOUT THE HOME

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The Home Phoneline Networking Alliance (HomePNA) was founded in June 1998 by AMD, Intel, IBM, Compaq, 3Com, Tut, Epigram, AT&T Wireless, Lucent, Conexant and Hewlett-Packard to speed the adoption of a unified home phoneline networking standard for data rates up to 1Mb/s (1.0 specification).

Since its founding, the Alliance's membership has grown to include more than 70 leading manufacturers and vendors from across the technology and consumer electronics industries. Many of these companies have successfully launched product lines based on the 1.0 specification and the Alliance has begun work on a second specification (2.0) that will raise data rates up to 10Mb/s. Member companies expect to ship products based on 2.0 within the calendar year.

In the broadband access world, cable companies, RBOCs, CLECs, and satellite providers have focused their energy on the consumer "last mile" solution. These efforts include initiatives for cable modems, xDSL, and wireless technology. While a clear high-speed access winner has yet to emerge (and in fact a single technology may never capture the entire market,) the members of HomePNA recognize the need to build out what Gary Arlen has dubbed the "last five meters."

Growing consumer interest in home networking and in broadband access demonstrate that healthy stand-alone markets exist for each. However, in both cases, the influence and demand for one product set - either home networking or broadband access - will greatly enhance the demand and sales for products from the other.

For example, broadband access on its own has compelling applications for a single consumer accessing the Internet through their stand-alone PC. But, when this access can be easily distributed to multiple information appliances within the home (i.e. other PCs, a set-top box, Internet telephone, and almost any other device with an IC,) the Jetsons-like vision of the networked home suddenly becomes very real and achievable.

Similarly, a stand-alone home network offers consumers compelling applications such as print and file sharing, multi-player gaming, as well as dial-up Internet access. But when these applications are combined with high-speed, always-on connections to the Internet (as promised by broadband access), the phrase "killer app" springs to mind.

While broadband access and home networking can both succeed in the absence of the other, rapid adoption of one is supportive of the growing adoption of the other. This is the mutual opportunity we should pursue. Always-on high-speed access distributed throughout the home enables a multitude of product and service opportunities, while the next generation products that will provide these new services will increase the consumer desire for broadband access.