

# Broadband Forum pursues 2009's Big Three

The Broadband Forum's Chief Operating Officer Robin Mersh talks to InterComms about the organisation's trio of foci for 2009



Robin Mersh, Broadband Forum Chief Operating Officer, ex-officio member Broadband Forum Board of Directors.

**Robin joined the Forum as Chief Operating Officer in July 2006 and is the senior full time executive.**

**He has worked in the telecommunications industry for over 14 years, starting in sales and sales management for Cable & Wireless and then moving onto BT before meeting his wife and moving to the US in 1999.**

**Robin has worked in business development and alliance management for various OSS software companies in the US. Mostly in network and service provisioning and activation for companies like Astracon, TTI Telecom and Evolving Systems, where he negotiated and managed several large OEM agreements.**

*He is originally from Cambridge in the UK. He received a B.A. degree (with Honours) from Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London in 1992. He now lives in North Carolina.*

**Q: How has the name change been nearly twelve months on?**

**A:** In the middle of 2008, the DSL Forum changed its name to the Broadband Forum to better reflect the extended scope of the Forum. Our work had become increasingly access agnostic, and specifically new fibre work had gained ground. We have also experienced industry success with the digital home remote management protocol that we developed, Consumer WAN Management Protocol (TR-069), which we continue to evolve to address new device requirements. The name change has encouraged a great number of new members and their technical contributions continue to strengthen our work.

**Q: What were your successes for 2008?**

**A:** The previous year was very IPTV focused. At year end, we were able to release BroadbandSuite 3.0, the latest in our solution sets. This release includes the method for integrating fibre into the traditional broadband architecture as well as specifications that empower quality IPTV delivery and management all the way to the set top box (STB). Having just hit a major industry milestone of 20 million IPTV subscribers, our forum is intent on continuing to deliver specifications that help service providers trouble shoot IPTV service, as well as personalize service offerings effectively.

**Q: What are your priorities for 2009?**

**A:** Along with our normal DSL related work, there are three areas that we will be focused on in 2009: fixed

mobile convergence, energy efficiency and continuing to build on our fibre specifications. I don't really like that phrase- fixed-mobile convergence; it's a little too wide and doesn't precisely convey what we believe our role is. You could arguably use the term broadband convergence, but even that doesn't seem quite right either.

These three areas are very much driven by current industry and particularly service provider requirements. As our work empowers real world deployment best practices and common standards, we work with our liaison partner organizations to ensure the global industry stays aligned.

**Q: Let's unpack those three areas, starting with fibre.**

**A:** The fibre work really builds upon what we had already achieved in architecture and remote management specifications. Providers wanted to implement a single architecture regardless of the transport method. Technical Report 156 (TR-156) shows how to implement GPON with IP-Ethernet access aggregation- the same access aggregation structure that was originally implemented for DSL with TR-101. That work has just been completed. The next stage of broadband architecture evolution is based around Working Text 145 (WT-145) that addresses the multi-service next generation network. This is where we see the next real paradigm shift as networks converge. There is also some other related work around WT-178, which is to do with nodal requirements of WT-145.

Looking at another perspective of fibre, we developed TR-142 which provides the framework for implementing remote management of PON termination devices in the home. We will continue to strengthen the ability to monitor, troubleshoot and manage these local

► PON deployments successfully. Finally, we have new work launching around EPON and point-to-point fibre.

**Q: What about the convergence issue?**

**A:** Broadband convergence is definitely happening. What makes it a bit complicated though is that everyone has a different definition of what convergence is! Providers are rolling out hybrid networks, but want a single architecture to support. The delineation between wired and wireless networks is becoming very fuzzy as dual mode phones continually cross the line between home and network. There are so many new devices/applications coming online, yet providers now have the tools via TR-069 to provision and management them all through a single remote management protocol. All of these are valuable areas that we are empowering through our work. To drive seamless end-to-end network specifications, we are even seeing work convergence and coordination across standards bodies and industry organizations.

New relationships with organisations such as the Femto Forum, 3GPP, WiMAX Forum and Home Gateway Initiative are bringing a great deal of new work into the Broadband Forum. An exciting output of this type of collaboration just happened, as we completed the Femto device data model (TR-196) to work with TR-069, which incorporated both 3GPP and Femto Forum requirements. This collaboration and new specification brings our work to a new audience- the mobile operator. Convergence work today is by no means as big as it will probably become, but we have made some significant progress there and it will probably become one of the biggest stories this year for the Broadband Forum.

**Q: What are your priorities in the area of energy efficiency?**

**A:** Everyone has been talking about energy efficiency for the past couple of years, but we are seeing a real push in the telecom industry to get things moving in the

right direction now. Our European members have been at the forefront of this movement, and over the last couple of months, the Broadband Forum has evaluated where we bring value to this effort. The first commitment we made was to ensure all new technical reports clearly indicate the energy impact that implementing each specification would cause. This knowledge is power as service providers are beginning to assess ways to reduce not only their carbon footprint, but also their overall energy cost.

Now we have launched two new areas of energy management work; ADSL2plus Low Power Mode recommendations and energy efficiency tests for network and CPE. These two areas are clearly within our scope and there is a great deal of excitement around our role in moving the industry forward in this critical area.

**Q: Why these three?**

**A:** The Broadband Forum is not a think tank- we focus on real world requirements, and these three areas are the key areas that need to be addressed to empower the next stage of broadband evolution. Each of these initiatives are not just discussions, they are not just talking points or flavours of the month. With over 300 technical contributions coming in from a membership of 200 of the top broadband companies in the world, we know that these initiatives are on target and will have immediate implementation and impact on the global market when approved.

**Q: Beyond this year's 'Big Three', what is next?**

**A:** Broadband growth is steadily approaching 500 million customers, and fibre will capture an increasing large percentage of this market. IPTV will really take off this year and new initiatives will focus on moving to address non-traditional IPTV to assess the network impacts and opportunities around over the top IPTV. We will continue to drive interoperability, both for VDSL2 and TR-069 management. Transition to IPv6 is also an important area of focus for network and digital home preparation. As the market continues to grow and evolve, we can anticipate many new areas of work to launch in order to match industry requirements.

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