

# Convergence Groups Merge

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Posted on: 05/18/2009

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In what may be a convergence of convergence groups, [The Broadband Forum](#) and the [IP/MPLS Forum](#) announced Monday the organizations will merge, meeting in the middle on their respective standards and interoperability work around next-generation networks. The IP/MPLS Forum historically has focused on the core and aggregation parts of the network while the Broadband Forum has focused on the access and home networks.

The new organization, which is meeting this week in Valencia, Spain, will take the Broadband Forum name and will include 220 members, including service providers, equipment manufacturers, chip vendors and industry bodies. In net increase in membership is only about 6 percent to 8 percent, said Broadband Forum Chairman and President George Dobrowski in an advance press conference, noting the overlap as one of the compelling reasons for the merger.

Dobrowski will head up the combined group. Andrew G. Malis, IP/MPLS Forum chairman and president, will serve as its vice president. The boards of directors for the groups will be combined into one 15-member board. Broadband Forum had 11 directors and the IP/MPLS Forum had seven. Three seats were eliminated due to cross-over.

The Broadband Forum's Technical Committee will add a new IP/MPLS and Core working group will be established to continue the MPLS protocol work and to address all core-related work brought in by the IP/MPLS Forum.

And, the group's Marketing Committee will add a new IP/MPLS focused vice chair and new IP/MPLS Ambassadors to represent the organization via the speakers' bureau.

Member dues will be normalized and will conform to the Broadband Forum structure, beginning in 2010. The Broadband Forum's bylaws also will prevail.

Malis, speaking to reporters Friday, said the transition is eased by the fact that the two groups were using the same management companies and had similar methods and policies. In addition, both are registered California non profits.

In addition, both organizations are no strangers to evolution.

The IP/MPLS Forum's roots go back 18 years with two separate groups – the ATM Forum and the Frame Relay Forum. In 2005, the Frame Relay Forum joined with another group, the MPLS Forum, which was founded in 2000, to form the Frame Relay Alliance. The alliance merged with the ATM Forum to form the MFA Forum in 2005. The group was [renamed the IP/MPLS Forum in 2007](#).

The Broadband Forum started in 1994 as the ADSL Forum and later became the DSL Forum. Last year, it [changed its name to the Broadband Forum](#).

Dobrowski said the expected benefits of the merger will include increased resourced, shared expertise, end-to-end specifications and a shortened development time for specifications. The Broadband Forum's focus areas of "access," "control" and "home" will now be renamed "network," "management" and "user" to encompass the broadened charter.

"Verizon has been an active contributing member of both organizations, and we applaud this decision to unite," said Stu Elby, vice president of Network Architecture for Verizon Communications, in a press statement. "As broadband convergence continues, the Broadband Forum will be a key organization to ensure providers' needs are met with a holistic end-to-end perspective, ensuring no gaps in critical network specifications. We look forward to continuing to provide technical expertise and leadership to this organization."