Broadband Forum Pursues 2010's Big Three

The Broadband Forum's Chief Operating Officer Robin Mersh talks to InterComms about the organisation's trio of foci for 2010

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: What are your priorities for 2010?
A: Along with our normal DSL related work, there are three areas that we will be focused on in 2010: 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 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 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.

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