HGI Sets Out Business Requirements for Media Gateway

Landmark document looks at five use cases which demonstrate vision of interoperable smart home

28 July 2014. HGI, a leading organisation which is shaping the way IP services are delivered, has today set out new high-level Broadband Service Provider (BSP) business requirements for a Media Gateway as it continues in its quest to build a technology-agnostic smart home ecosystem.

The Media Gateway builds on the Home Gateway, adding functions that are traditionally located in a set-top box, such as media acquisition, media protection and optional media rendering. It has storage capabilities to support services like time-shifting and adds new functions such as media adaptation and media distribution, as well as eliminating the need for numerous set-top boxes, therefore reducing power consumption.

Created by the Working Groups of HGI and its members, which include service providers and operators, BWR040 has been released in answer to the explosion of data in the home and the assumption that as users collect more devices they will expect and demand complete flexibility in using different services on whatever device they choose. The document aims to assist the BSP business-developer in identifying the potential benefit of such a Media Gateway and the optimum disposition of the various functional elements involved.

Duncan Bees, Chief Technology and Business Officer, of HGI, said: “Consumer devices such as video-enabled smartphones, tablets and connected TV-sets all consume audio and video data which creates various requirements for storage, adaptation of media formats and Digital Rights Management. This proliferation of data-consuming devices presents both a challenge and a business opportunity for BSPs. BWR040 aims to help them identify the ways that home-located media functions, in particular in the Media Gateway itself, can help to realise this opportunity.”

If realised, the Media Gateway will enable end-users to seamlessly add different devices of different types to their system while maintaining the same user experience. It will also address the potential problem of incompatibility between content format and device capability. Interworking with cloud features is also looked at to allow customers to access their data even when away from home.

The document looks at five different use cases of the Media Gateway – the consumption of premium content on portable devices, particularly mobiles; a home based Personal Video Recorder that serves all devices; a ‘Follow Me’ service, allowing users to suspend the content stream and pick it up again on any device, in or outside the home; extending remote control using non-dedicated devices; and a ‘home cloud’.

“The highest-level differentiator that a service provider must choose is whether to provide streamed content via an IP connection or whether to additionally allow content to be delivered locally through regular Audio/Video cabling such as HDMI,” continued Bees. “Other variables include whether or not to integrate the WAN access technology and the level of chipset integration. There is still a clear need for greater integration at the hardware and low-level software end, although this is going to happen further down the road. It will be possible to build a high-end Media Gateway based on a single chipset in the not-so-distant future.
This will enable a new round of innovation in form factors and another drop in energy consumption."

Philippe Calvet, head of HGI’s Business Group, added: “Today’s broadband consumers expect a very sophisticated media viewing experience on all their connected devices. The HGI Business Group has taken an important step forward with BWR040 in documenting the main use cases that would motivate service providers to migrate to a more central, Media Gateway-based architecture in the home. HGI will continue to focus on the architecture alternatives and help its members to chart the architecture of the future broadband home, in the media, smart home, and other service areas.”

The development and deployment of smart home services has already begun, with some network providers announcing new packages. However, to realise these services and achieve a fully interoperable smart home, HGI believes it is necessary to work with other industry players, such as device manufacturers, to define robust specifications. It will also publish more detailed, lower-level software requirements for a Media Gateway in a separate document.

HGI members approved the new requirements BWR040 sets out in a recent ballot. The document is available on the HGI website for any manufacturer or operator to download at http://www.homegatewayinitiative.org/documents/Current_HGI_Publications.asp.

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About HGI
HGI, founded in 2004 by nine telecom operators, is shaping the next generation of internet and voice services. Starting from use-cases and service needs, HGI sets requirements for Home Gateways, infrastructure devices and the home network. HGI now has members from across the globe, representing the entire spectrum of players in the broadband home area. For more information about HGI or to find out how to become a member, email contact@homegatewayinitiative.org.

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