



IPTV Interoperability Forum (IIF)

What is IPTV?

IPTV encompasses service provider network subscriber services that deliver secure broadcast-quality audio and video to devices for display and/or recording. Services may include broadcast type services like Video On Demand (VOD) and Interactive TV (iTV) services. These services are delivered across an access agnostic, packet switched network that employs the IP protocol to transport the audio and video signals. In contrast to video over the public Internet, with IPTV deployments, network security and performance are tightly managed to ensure a superior entertainment experience, resulting in a compelling business environment for content providers, advertisers and customers alike.

-- As defined by the ATIS TOPS IPTV Exploratory Group, May 2005

History

On March 31, 2005, the ATIS Technology and Operations (TOPS) Council announced the formation of the IPTV Exploratory Group (IEG) to examine IPTV's ability to deliver on industry's expectations and user demands, and to assess areas in which ATIS may play a role in the development of industry standards in support of these goals.

Co-Chaired by Kevin Schneider, CTO of ADTRAN, and Bill DeMuth, VP & CTO of SureWest Communications, the Exploratory Group was asked to assess the technical and operational opportunities and challenges surrounding deployment of IPTV on a fast-track timetable.

During its brief time of existence, the (IEG) identified a considerable number of issues that may impede the adoption of IPTV. It also identified a considerable amount of activity in various forums and standards development organizations (SDOs) that relates to IPTV. However, the IEG was unable to identify a single organization that is providing a venue that was addressing all of the issues identified. Therefore, it recommended to the ATIS Board of Directors that a body of subject matter experts be formed under ATIS to give focus to issues that may impede the adoption of IPTV. The ATIS Board voted to create the IPTV Interoperability Forum on June 23, 2005.

Mission & Scope

The IPTV Interoperability Forum (IIF) enables the interoperability, interconnection, and implementation of IPTV systems/services by developing ATIS standards and facilitating related technical activities. This forum will place an emphasis on North American and ATIS Member Company needs in coordination with other regional and international standards development organizations.

The scope of the work in the IIF includes the following areas:

1. Coordinate standards activities that relate to IPTV technologies. This includes providing a liaison function between the various SDOs and forums that are each working on important components for multimedia, but may not have visibility to other aspects of the application.
2. Develop interoperability agreements, technical reports, or other ATIS standards where appropriate.
3. Provide a venue for interoperability activities.
4. Provide a venue for the assessment of IPTV issues in the context of NGN directions.



Objectives (Initial)

These issues will be deferred to the IIF as initial objectives; other objectives may be identified.

1. An industry overall reference architecture for IPTV, including interface definitions.
2. Creation of standardized metrics/requirements for content security (digital rights management) and the quality of content delivery (Quality of Customer Experience).
3. Creation of interoperability standards and testing requirements of components in the video delivery network.
4. Best practices for rapid and complete restoration of IP layer (not just physical layer) connectivity following severe outages (or attacks) of heavily loaded networks.
5. Assuring that satisfactory end-to-end IP performance is actually achieved, which could require seamless signaling of end-to-end QoS parameters across both network and user interfaces.
6. Path establishment (call set-up, channel-switching delays, network server responses) comparable to what users have experienced with non-IPTV services.
7. Reliability and robustness of service components and critical protocols (e.g., routing, especially multicast routing).
8. Operation during, and recovery from, commercial power outages.
9. Establishment of user expectations (e.g., via a user group entity).

Who should participate?

To effectively resolve issues surrounding broadband video deployment, this forum needs to attract participation from all of the relevant stakeholders. In particular, it is important that the middleware vendors and content providers are involved in discussions surrounding DRM, so that they will embrace any recommendations, interoperability agreements or standards produced by this body.

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