

Home users force behind voice, data convergence

By HEATHER WRIGHT

HOME USERS will drive the convergence of voice, data and video networks according to Steve Jumonville, director of large enterprise marketing for American networking company 3Com.

Oregon-based Mr Jumonville visited New Zealand last week as part of an Asia-Pacific tour to discuss network convergence.

Converged networks enables voice to travel over a data network, rather than on a separate network.

Mr Jumonville says the home market has been the driver for many other advances, such as low-cost easy-to-use personal computers.

"Until we got home PCs we didn't get plug and play. Until we got home PCs we didn't get low-cost PCs. It becomes the economic driver."

Mr Jumonville says home networking is the next explosion point in networking.

"This really is a major inflection point in the industry," he says.

"What we're talking about is the commoditisation of networking.

"For every technology, when it becomes a consumer technology is when it becomes low-cost and easy to use."

In an effort to drive network convergence, 3Com has teamed up with software maker Microsoft in an alliance which will see co-branded 3Com/Microsoft networking products.

Mr Jumonville says the convergence problem today is that anybody can build "a converged network".

But no one is using them, he says, and the reason is for networks to be converged, the end systems have to be part of the network.

"Voice and video goes to the desktop, not just the wire closet.

"The only way you can deliver end-to-end convergence - and convergence is end-to-end - is if the desktop is an integral part of the network."

3Com has already built a 25,000 square foot development centre near Microsoft's Redmond campus and the two companies are now working on more than 100 projects including many for home networking.

The companies are collaborating on wireless and cable products as well as those which run over existing power and phone lines.

Mr Jumonville also has a warning for companies that are sitting back waiting for convergence to "come of age".

"Voice, video, data is built into the operating system, it's built into the network.