

Connecting the Home to the World

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In 2003, the number of worldwide Internet users reached 688 million. During that same year, there were 1,368 million mobile telephone users, a figure that surpassed the total number of fixed telephone lines found worldwide in 2002. In addition, the growth of broadband connections to the home has been increasing rapidly, mainly attributed to the emergence of broadband technologies that utilize cable TV networks, ADSL (asymmetric digital subscriber line), fiber-optic cables and others. Furthermore, with the recent commencement of terrestrial digital TV broadcasting in Europe, North America and Asia, expectations are running higher than ever for the start of a new era in which digital consumer electronics, broadcasting and telecommunications networks are converged into one.

Throughout its history, Sony has always been a vanguard of technology by introducing unique technologies and products such as the tape recorder, portable transistor radio, Trinitron color TV, Walkman and camcorder. Starting from the 1980s, Sony led the charge for the digitalization of audiovisual products by developing technologies such as the compact disc. And in the late 1990s, Sony revolutionized the game console and PC industries with the introduction of "PlayStation" and its audiovisual-centered personal computer, "VAIO."

From an early stage, Sony has always had its sights set on creating a unified home network for audiovisual appliances. As time passed, we witnessed the progressive shift of consumer electronics from analog to digital. Along with this transformation we realized great performance improvements in these products. Now we live in a time when a +10 Mbps broadband connection into the home is becoming commonplace. In addition to the realization of high bit-rate communications, Internet technologies are also rapidly improving — especially in areas such as connectivity and ease-of-use. With these pieces in place, the time is ripe for the introduction of a unified network connecting all home's digital appliances and devices. The Digital Living Network Alliance (DLNA) is just one example of the current efforts being pursued towards the realization of such a "home network" vision. The following is one possible scenario that Sony foresees how digital consumer electronics, media broadcasting and telecommunications will converge.

In phase 1, various digital devices such as advanced TVs, DVD recorders, personal computers, digital still cameras and printers will be interconnected to a home network via a combination of technologies such as Ethernet, wireless home LAN, i.LINK (IEEE 1394), USB (Universal Serial Bus) and power line communications (PLC), etc. Having digital products that are interoperable and interconnected will naturally lead to the development of a variety of new appli-

cations. Also during this time, the shift from standard to high definition video and images will drive demand for broader bandwidth and higher quality networks, as well as larger data storage capabilities.

In phase 2, the home network will be connected to external networks via public wireless LANs, mobile telephone networks, and other communication technologies. This will lead to the creation of many more diversified applications such as those for controlling consumer electronics and for exchanging data with the home server.

In phase 3, well-interconnected broadband networks both inside and outside home will enable users the ability to transmit and receive high-quality multimedia content (e.g., video, audio, voice, etc.) wherever the user is located. This flexibility is certain to expand the possibility for greater business opportunities.

Yet, despite this advancement, as technologies evolve, issues associated with device interconnectivity and interoperability, copyright protection and network security will — without saying — become much more complex. In order to overcome these challenges and take into consideration their global impacts, efforts for international standardization of technologies are more important now than ever. Thus, Sony has been an active member of various international standardization organizations, including the ITU, to contribute to these efforts.

From its early stages, Sony has participated in the standardization activities of broadcast technologies by being a Sector Member of ITU-R. As a member of this group, Sony has been contributing to a list of Recommendations related to imaging, recording, program interchange, and others. Sony also participated in ITU-T's standardization activities as regards multimedia coding. Moreover, Sony has been a part of, and contributed to standardization efforts at IEC, ISO/IEC JTC1, ETSI, 3GPP, 3GPP2, IEEE, IETF, Ecma International, SMPTE and other various international organizations.*

In addition to its core electronics business, the Sony Group has been engaged in developing a broad range of diverse global businesses such as games and entertainment content (movies and music). As a unique corporate group with an unmatched portfolio of assets ranging from hardware to content, Sony is committed to the expansion of new business domains while continuing to cooperate with international standardization efforts.

It is my hope and wish that Sony will continue to be a company that can offer new dreams and exciting experiences to people around the world.



* Refer to list on p. 17