

# HANA Living-Room Network Spec Due This Year

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Members of the High-Definition Audio Video Network Alliance (HANA) said Tuesday at the Connections 2007 conference here that the specification is still on track for delivery in 2007, theoretically allowing the combination of PCs, storage devices, displays, and other CE devices to be controlled by just one remote.

On paper, both the highway and the High-Definition Audio Video Network Alliance are simple concepts. But the reality is much more complex.

Each CE device in the living room typically requires its own remote; even "universal" remotes, such as Logitech's Harmony line, don't necessarily offer to control all of the available options. HANA would allow each device -- say, a DVD player's navigation menu and options -- to send itself via a Web page to another HANA-equipped device, where it could be accessed.

Although the difference is subtle -- selecting a different input on a

television, for example, allows access to that same DVD player's menu -- proponents say that the resulting experience will greatly simplify the living-room experience. HANA-equipped devices could include devices like camcorders, stereo receivers, DVD players, PVRs and set-top boxes, and PCs.

"The device you control simply appears," said John Kang, senior director of business development for Samsung Electronics. "I select it contextually, and HANA knows I'm talking to that DVD player."

The difference between HANA and existing networks is that each HANA device must contain an IEEE 1394 or "FireWire" port. Instead of connecting via a composite or component cable, the primary device (typically a television) connects to the others via the Firewire cable, which also serves as a control mechanism.

HANA members were careful to position the technology as complementary to another home networking specification. HANA was founded in October 2005, two years after the Digital Living Network Alliance (DLNA) was itself founded by Sony and Intel in 2003. DLNA, however, is designed to connect with virtually all PCs and CE devices; HANA proponents say theirs is a much more focused specification on just entertainment devices. However, in a demonstration of the two technologies by HANA/DLNA member Pulse-Link for PC Magazine, the DLNA interface seemed much more polished.

"DLNA networks will be in the home and we want to connect to it," Kang said.

HANA backers, however, say that their technology offers hidden advantages that DLNA does not. For example, because the HANA devices are networked via FireWire, components that often appear in multiple devices -- such as MPEG decoders -- can be omitted from those

devices that manufacturers expect will be connected to a display, like a TV. That omission reduces the bill of materials, and thus the final price of the product, Kang said.

Furthermore, one member executive said that the HANA development process has been a constant flow of solving technical issues and moving forward. "We've seen progress in this organization that we don't see elsewhere," Bruce Watkins, the co-founder and chief executive of Pulse-Link.

The 400-Mbits/s sustained throughput that FireWire allows provides for six video streams, Watkins added. A subset of the HANA group is also working to extend the FireWire signaling over coaxial cable.

Digital-rights-management will be preserved via a HANA "TrustZone," members said. ARM Ltd., a developer of embedded processors, has developed the technology, which can provide DRM solutions.

The major problem? Lack of backwards-compatibility. Legacy TVs and other devices lacking FireWire ports (or HANA firmware) will not be able to join the network, HANA executives admitted.

"All legacy equipment doesn't network," Kang said. "If you want to gain functionality with sharing devices you have to buy something new."

Unfortunately, the newest HDMI connections can not be used to network devices, Kang added. What Samsung has done, Kang said, was to develop a "TV node" module that combines the necessary Web server and software to attach to a TV. "That way, you don't have to buy a new plasma TV," he said.

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