

# WinHEC: Day Two Wrapup

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On day two we learned more about the Vista driver rollout, HomePlug networking, and the Windows Home Server product.

On day two of the Windows Hardware Engineering Conference, we were treated to a curtailed keynote about the Windows Vista environment. Windows VP Mike Nash gave a somewhat informative talk about Windows and the importance of designing devices and drivers that just work with Vista.

He defended the Vista driver rollout by contrasting the 20,000 drivers that shipped in the box with Vista back in January with the 10,000 that shipped with XP. He also drove the point forward by stating that Windows 2000 only shipped with 350 drivers. He gave the attending developers a pat on the back for shipping Vista with so many drivers, as well as developing many more drivers over the past few months. Windows Update has distributed millions of device drivers to users around the world.

The demo part of the speech was mostly flash with little substance. True, any time they trot out a new ATI Ruby demo it's a beautiful sight, but aside from the notes that Radeon HD 2000 series is DX10 hardware, the demo was basically a pretty demo. I suppose this is fitting, since ATI/AMD launched the Radeon at other events.

Around the show floor, I saw Monsoon Multimedia's Hava, which is a competitor to the SlingBox from Sling Media. Hava differs from Sling by adding 802.11a/g wireless networking to the mix of transmitting

video from a home source (cable, MCE PC, etc.) to your laptop across your home or across the Internet. Hava also adds the ability to stream to more than one PC, provided your network can handle it.

Speaking of transmissions, I saw demos of HomePlug AV, which will be interesting once it finds its way into devices like TVs and PCs without the need for an ugly wall wart adapter. If they build HomePlug AV into TVs, you'll be able to stream content to them without a set-top box or other wiring (kinda cool for older houses and rooms where you don't want to cut into the walls). HomePlug AV is 200Mbits/sec (theoretical), capable of transmitting HD video around your house over the power lines already there. HomePlug is a good solution for home networking where Wi-Fi signals are just too crowded (like in an apartment building or high-density suburbs).

DisplayLink, already known for the display tech used in USB docking stations like the Toshiba Dynadock, showed off its USB-to-monitor connectors, including a neat LG widescreen monitor with the interface already built in. Using the DisplayLink interface, all a user has to do is install a driver, hook the monitor up to the laptop or desktop via USB, and voila, you have another monitor. The methods used for XP and Vista differ under the hood, but the results are the same: up to six monitors with a huge workspace.

DisplayLink's Vista compatibility extends to the 3D Aero interface, with little loss in performance (at least as little as the 3D graphics solution in your PC allows). The company also showed that the technology works over some prototype Wireless USB devices.

Last but not least we got to speak with Microsoft about the Windows Home Server product. Today they announced that Gateway, LaCie, and Medion will join HP in turning out retail Home Server boxes. Each company will bring some extra functionality to the table (HP with photo

enjoyment plug-ins, and presumably data backup enhancements from LaCie), but the underlying structure will be the same, built on Windows Server 2008 technology, so developers won't have to support a "LaCie-specific Windows Server or a "Medion-specific" flavor. I asked about Mac OS X compatibility, and Microsoft Director Steven VanRokel stated that "Macs can connect to Home Server, like any Windows Server," so theoretically this means that you can setup a Time Machine backup in Mac OS X 10.5 Leopard to a Windows Home Server shared network drive.

Home Server will be aimed at the gearhead in the family, whether or not he wants to customize and granularly administer the Home Server. You can access granular details like the drive composition and status of internal and external drives, but to the non-techie user, the Home Server will look like a huge hard drive on their computer, depending of course on how many drives you connect or install in the Home Server. All that plus remote file access and shared multimedia (photos, videos, music): I'm really looking forward to seeing Home Servers in the Labs and reporting my findings to you.

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