

NEWS RELEASE

for immediate release

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DTG launches world's first trial system with new TV Anytime and DVB standards based on an open free to air platform.

In their usual style the Digital TV Group have wasted no time and set up the world's first open platform TVAnytime test bed project. The first level of the TVA specifications have only just been submitted for acceptance as ETSI specifications and the UK DTT platform is working on just how these can be used to enhance the viewing experience.

A number of key DTG members representing the heart of the end to end system are taking part in the project which is intended to understand just what a TVA service can deliver. One of the key features will be working out exactly how each of the players in the end to end broadcast chain will benefit from the investment of providing a TVA service. The partners include broadcasters, receiver manufacturers and data service providers. The project is funded by the DTG TVA Test bed project members and facilitated by the DTG.

The project's aim is to show multiplex operators what needs to be done to enable a foundation service to be trialled over-air possibly as early as 2006. Commenting on the project Allen Mornington-West said: "Quoting time lines is very dangerous on a project as complex as this, because in a real working broadcast system you have to consider the issue of change from all points of view. The DTG TVA Test bed represents a significant step towards the deployment of these exciting new broadcast services".

What is TVA? Well, it could be seen as a Personal Video Recorder (PVR) only with wheels on. So, rather than stumbling across a program which, may or may not be available to watch or record, the TVA enabled receiver can capture exactly the content you want when it is broadcast. And, unlike an old style analogue TV broadcast, the content will be captured at whatever time and whatever rate it is being sent.

One really great feature is that any shows that are recorded will be automatically given a meaningful title and a name. Say goodbye, then, to that old VCR cry of "where's that tape with the ##**#!# programme on it gone. The TVA enabled hard disc recorder will make it really easy for you to manage the programs you've recorded. In fact it even makes it easy for you to keep track of even the small sections you want to keep. That key goal, the cracking good joke or the priceless out take ... they'll never be lost again.

For the broadcaster there's the real promise of keeping hold of the business in a way that the analogue PVR simply can not manage. This is particularly a concern for the free to air commercial and public service broadcasters because the usual analogue PVR simply allows the viewer to skip any of the adverts or promotional bits. No manufacturer will pass up the chance to provide the viewer with exactly the features they want in their products they are buying with their own cash.

And there is nothing that a broadcaster can do to prevent the viewer from zapping past adverts. It's true, of course, that some adverts are designed so that the brand image is established even on fast forward but the new breed of PVRs already allow viewers to assemble their program in the order they want so that it can be seen seamlessly. It's not hard to see that with the increase in processing power even a modest digital recorder will be able to automatically recognise the adverts form the brand image and simply skip that segment.

What TVA offers is that, in return for providing the viewer with a rich set of information about the programs in the schedule – both today and over the next month or more – the viewer will accept that the broadcaster could consider using the TVA tools in order to allow adverts to become a part of the viewer experience which will be attractive to the viewer once more. This will require some creative thinking because, in an open market, there's simply no easy way to coerce a viewer's choice.

What's clear is that broadcasters who either interfere with the viewer's watching or make it difficult or costly for the viewer to watch what they want when they want and where they want will find that their business models will become marginalized. Providers who can provide viewers with rich information and allow the choice to be made reliably and accurately will gather the market.

"This project is a real advance for both the viewer and the broadcaster," says Simon Waller of Sony and chair of the project's steering board, "it offers the only interchangeable description for programs and content which can work whatever the delivery platform because it is free of dependence on any of the APIs." "As such", he adds, "it offers the current generation of broadcasters who adopt it a true migration path into a new future in which their business revenue earning capacity can be given a new lease of life."

Richard Lindsay-Davies, the DTG's Director of Public Affairs, who was responsible for launch the first UK DTT PVR, went on to say: "TVAnytime standards give real power to the plain PVR, to both the viewer and broadcaster. It will revolutionise television for advertisers, broadcasters and viewers. It is critical that the entire media industry engage on this one – that's assuming they want to survive".

New participants in the DTG TVA test bed project are welcome and should contact the DTG office on +44 20 88 91 18 30, office@dtg.org.uk.

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ABOUT THE DIGITAL TV GROUP

The Digital TV Group (DTG) is the industry association for Digital Television in the UK: an independent body facilitating the rapid roll-out of digital television and convergence across the communications industry. Its membership stretches from camera to consumer; from the BBC, BSkyB and OFCOM to Sony, Philips and Panasonic, Dixons and Comet through to the Consumers' Association, RNIB and RNID. Its agenda covers all aspects of future technology, public affairs and the setting, promotion and interpretation of standards and good practice. For further information please see www.dtg.org.uk.

Over **100 member organisations** value the business benefits that arise from first-hand participation in DTG activities.