

The Resurgence of Powerline

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Running the network across inexpensive electrical wiring instead of cable, fiber or copper was such a simple idea that I.T. executives sniffed it away. Now “PowerLine” is back and its commercial “voltage” is simply humming. PowerLine is gaining ground because utility companies are developing “smart grids” to meet regional mandates to conserve on energy. In some parts of the world, these utility grids already support streaming to home devices through a mix of Broadband-over-powerline on large utility power lines and low-speed communications on standard electrical wiring in and around the house.

At both Connected Home Europe and at CES, you could see the sparks from PowerLine. IO Gear, GigaFast, Tatung, and Russound -- each showed their own new PowerLine audio systems.

And, at CES 2008, Sharp became the first company to prototype a product that can stream two simultaneous HD feeds and internet content over existing power lines.

Sharp’s Network AQUOS uses PowerLine Communication modems to connect the TV and PC, and transmit high-quality audio, video and online content over Homeplug AV, a high-speed networking standard. At its booth, Sharp showed how you can watch NASCAR, for example, on an AQUOS high-def LCD TV, and simultaneously download ticket information and directions (via Yahoo! Maps) through the computer and view it in the living room, without getting up off the couch--all through power lines.

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