

Radio Shack's Griffin: BPL is biggest tech ever

FTTH, WiMax to rely on in-home BPL

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“Of all the transformational technologies I have been involved with over the years&ldots; this is the most exciting event that we’ve had, period,” said Peter Griffin.

He’s Radio Shack’s director of corporate technology for the new business development group and he was speaking to the UPLC conference in Dallas this month. BPL offers, “the greatest potential to change lives not only in America but in the world. “This takes down every barrier. It just goes throughout the world. “It is an incredible proposition from the services you can deploy from your standpoint and from humanity’s standpoint,” he told the audience of utility representatives, BPL hardware and chip makers, integrators, ISPs and others interested in BPL.

“Once you get in the home, if you decide to go into [broadband] access, what are you going to do when you get it there,” Griffin asked an audience peppered with utility officials. “What’s Verizon going to do when they run fiber to the home? “You’re not going to re-drill and put a whole bunch of new pipes in the house.” He called wireless the most ubiquitous “thing we’ve got out there. “If I pump enough wireless I can make it everywhere.

“Of course I light-up the whole neighborhood while I’m doing it,” and that invites people breaking into the system, he warned. And they will, he added.

Radio Shack believes that the backbone of home networks won’t be wireless for that reason, Griffin explained. Options for wired backbone include Ethernet cable, cable TV’s coaxial, telephone’s twisted copper pair — and the most ubiquitous of the bunch — power lines.

“You’ve got a plug every six feet,” said Griffin.

Radio Shack got a huge number of returns of WiFi network hubs because they were hard to install and failed to cover the whole house, he added.

“Rather than me buying it back from them now, I can sell them a power line module and say, ‘go home and plug this in and your basement will be lit up’” with broadband.

“This is huge for us. It’s huge for the industry.”

If you were to tell a Pony Express rider in 1865 that you could give him anything he wanted in his wildest dreams to help get the mail from New York to San Francisco, he’d ask for a horse that doesn’t eat, protection from Native Americans along the way, lots of

“way stations” and a more comfortable saddle, Griffin guessed. The Pony Express rider wouldn’t dream of saying, invent an aircraft that will speed the mail through the sky. He’d never dream of asking for the

mail to be cut up “into little bitty pieces, to throw up in the air, and when it gets there to re-assemble it.” “That’s exactly where you are. “We have no idea what this thing’s going to generate.”

Griffin described the evolution of the home from shelter-only to the convenient home with refrigerators and washers, the entertainment home with music and TV to the smart home with controls and sensors to the “intelligent” home that can automatically react to those sensors and accomplish goals.

The smart home security camera gives access to a stream of video, but the intelligent home might be able to identify individuals and react accordingly, he explained. “What you guys are here for is the ‘intelligent’ grid,” he reminded the audience. “Now all of a sudden when my neighbor’s smoke detector goes off I know it,” and can react accordingly.

Radio Shack played a key role in breaking up AT&T’s telecom monopoly because the retailer wanted to sell phones and accessories that AT&T’s service contracts blocked from customer use.

The first PCs in the US were sold at Radio Shack, Griffin recalled, and if they hadn’t flown off the shelves as they did, the firm planned to use them as cash registers.

Is BPL number one sector to invest in now?

It is, said Market Central in answer to its own question as the market analysis firm revealed its new research and market coverage of BPL. “Market Central and its analysts regard the BPL industry as possessing huge growth potential for investors.

“Everyone knows that the oil and gas industry is hot right now, but so is a small tech sector where those knowledgeable believe it could be the next craze as the internet was in the mid to late 90’s,” said the firm’s James Morgan.

Morgan started as a telecom lawyer in Philadelphia, worked on BPL for two years leading up to the FCC’s BPL notice of inquiry adopted in April, 2003 and worked as an independent consultant for various BPL firms, said Market Central. He now works with various investor research firms such as Market Central.

By 2012, 33% of new broadband customers will access their services using BPL and 13% of current broadband users will switch over to BPL, the firm quoted Research and Markets (BPL Today, 11/29).

“But the technology is already starting to catch on,” said Morgan, citing Cinergy’s commercial deployment and noting the firm’s stock is trading at \$44/share (www.rnctech.com).