

## Convergence... On What?

Is it really part of a master plan??

By Fred Ampel

**B**usiness commentators, so-called analysts and the like spend huge amounts of time creating and using cute-sounding, punchy terminology or shorthand phrases (read "buzzwords") to make themselves appear knowledgeable.

Is convergence the harmonizing of concepts and ideas from the IT and A/V markets, or is it the CT (Computer Telephony or Communications Technology) and A/V markets, or is it the Pro Audio and IT for A/V markets, or... The pairing of your choice.

its viable. In order to do this, they must have lots of applications for the same basic hardware across what they see as largely artificial market segmentations.

Thus the individual markets - whether they be A/V, CT, IT or whatever - are ignored. And this results in similar functionality of products from widely variant origins. For example, smart refrigerators and smart PDAs.

### LITTLE FOR MUCH

At the same time, customers want to pay as little as possible for as much technology as they can get (or think they need). This means producers need to control costs and re-use or adapt their technology to as wide a palate as conceivable.

This fact of life results in cars ranging in price from \$15,000 to \$60,000 offering very similar displays and identical connections for interrogating their internal service and maintenance computers. (Although the \$15,000 model will indicate "check engine" while the \$60,000 model will tell its owner to "call dealer for service appointment.")

The point is that convergence of any technology or product within our tiny industry is driven by much larger (and more mundane) realities outside our space/time bubble. There is no great "master plan" to make things meet at some junction of high intellect and stunning vision - regardless of what the commentators tell you.

Yes, on this, I believe we can all converge. ■

---

*Fred Ampel has been involved in the A/V industry for 35 years. His career has included work in sound reinforcement, studio, A/V system design, installations and equipment development. Reach him at [fampel@mindspring.com](mailto:fampel@mindspring.com).*



One of the most abused and assaulted buzzwords is CONVERGENCE. (And it's now seeking shelter at an undisclosed location in the federal witness protection program.)

Poor convergence. It used to be defined simply as, "The property or manner of approaching a limit, such as a point, line, function, or value; the point of converging; a meeting place." (*New American Dictionary*)

For example, if lines, roads or paths (or ideas and opinions, for that matter) move toward the same point where they join or meet, they converge, gradually becoming similar.

Now, however, convergence carries such an extended burden that it is also seeking therapy, especially as the term is applied to technical disciplines.

### STRANGE BREW?

Or is convergence some strange alchemist's brew of a little of each (a pinch of bat wing, a sprinkle of frog toe and a dash of snake oil powder), plus some secret ingredient known only to the pundits and prognosticators who wastefully spew ink in industry trade publications and *The Wall Street Journal*?

I maintain that it's none of these pigeonhole definitions. Rather, convergence - at both operational and practical levels - is simply a recognition of some absolute facts of manufacturing and technology.

Those producing chips and integrated circuits want to make them in quantities with nine zeros - it's the best way to keep prices low and prof-