



# Key Issues Liberty Global Embraced G.hn a while back, forgets to mention it

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Wandering around the stands of IBC there is evidence of business that is still supposed to be a secret, everywhere you look. Most companies have a list of logos on the side of their stand, and often list companies which you have been waiting for years to declare which vendor they work with. But looking closer at devices is sometimes also rewarding.

The G.hn HomePlug war has been waxing and waning for years, and coming across a WiFi extender device which was earmarked as Liberty Global, we noted that it was a G.hn plug, signifying that this was a design win for that technology, whereas in the past it had used HomePlug powerline as a connector in European homes. This device was a WiFi extender, out of the family of devices which are led by Celeno's underlying WiFi architecture.

It is part of the multi-Access Point revolution that is going on throughout pay TV operators, either putting another AP into the set top as well as the Home Gateway or strewing them about the home. Usually it is using 5.0 GHz for each Access Point to connect to one another, but in some cases, notably Celeno's great rival AirTies, which supplies such a system to Sky, it is HomePlug based.

We were told this was "old news" and that it had been out for 6 months. We asked HomeGrid President Len Dauphinee, currently at MaxLinear, if this had been announced and he told us that it was a MaxLinear chip, in a Comtrend produced device and there had been no clearance to announce it.

We have to go all the way back to June 2015 to find that Comtrend had built such a device, and the only reference to the deal on the entire internet seems to be previous HomeGrid President, Donna Yasay's summary in December 2016, where she talked about the Arris deal for a G.hn Powerline adapter at Bell Canada, and as an afterthought mentioned Comtrend's G.hn win at Liberty Global.

It's not so much that Faultline Online Reporter missed this snippet of news, but that everyone missed it, buried as it was at the end of a speech that was not widely distributed.

Perhaps the reason is obvious – that HomePlug has sort of curled up its toes and is no longer in play, since January this year it closed down the HomePlug Alliance and effectively ended its roadmap at HomePlug AV2, something G.hn expects to get past in performance terms.

In January we wrote that both Qualcomm and Broadcom had dropped all extraneous personnel involved with HomePlug, canceled their HomePlug Alliance Membership and have put out end of life statements on HomePlug lines.

Interestingly, events seem to have overtaken both those companies – Broadcom is now run by Avago management, with its tight focus on profitability and its keenness to close down extraneous campuses and cost; while Qualcomm is freshly focused by activist investors to get out of every unpromising technology and stick to its knitting (the cellphone).

Both moves have created a refugee problem, and in silicon where do refugees go? Usually to IBC, either with their new jobs, or looking for one. We met countless ex-Broadcom talent at the show, each one either supporting a different chip company, or fronting a start-up. Broadcom still has full spec HomePlug AV2 products, using spectrum all the way up to 86MHz, but no plans for any new HomePlug product lines. Qualcomm Atheros in January (part of Qualcomm Technologies) did much the same, and its last HomePlug chip came out in 2015.

When we asked new HomeGrid President Dauphinee about the Liberty Global piece all he said was that it was now out in all Liberty properties using five different socket versions to cover all the countries it operates in, and that we should stay tuned for more operators to adopt G.hn powerline as a backhaul for WiFi, using its own version of a protocol similar to the IEEE 1905.1, designed initially to shut G.hn out of acting as a backhaul for WiFi, and instead focusing on putting MoCA and HomePlug into the role.