Telecommunications Standardisation Sector
Study Group 15
Experts Group for ATM Video Coding
(Rapporteur's Group on Part of Q.2/15)

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There remains uncertainty regarding ATM network performance and timescales, and it is clearly difficult for the ATM experts group to make decisions on H.32x matters. Also, there is a dearth of real and viable applications which would derive benefit from ATM transport and which cannot already be provided using existing networks.

Although the introduction of distributive services based on the use of MPEG-2 standards is reasonably clear cut, this is not the case for the conversational services for which H.320 was prepared and towards which H.32x is targetted.

It is BT's view that there will not be sufficient improvement in performance (cf H.261) by using H.26x/MPEG-2 at the lower transmission rates, which customers are prepared to pay for, to justify jettisoning the existing standards and equipment infrastructure. The market for H.320 compliant terminal equipment is now blossoming, with most customers working at 128 kbit/s and almost all finding the quality at 384 kbit/s more than adequate. It would be wrong therefore to initiate videophone and videoconferencing at these rates using H.26x.

However, customers are not entirely happy with existing service offerings. Many have invested heavily in LAN technology, are becoming more aware of the benefits of multimedia, and are in increasing numbers asking for H.320 over these LANS. Meanwhile proprietary coding systems are being offered to PC and workstation users which go some way to meeting these needs.

So, although ATM may offer longer term benefits to both customer and operator, it is BT's belief that there is a significant need in the shorter term to address the needs of customers for H.320 over LANs, and therefore proposes that this topic become a prime focus for the work of SG15. Of course progress with ATM should continue to be monitored so that the Experts Group can be ready to respond at an appropriate time.

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