

The Future Belongs to Fiber

At CES 2015, the smart-home gadgets of the future vied for attention – but only consumers with FTTH connections will be able to take full advantage of them.

By Heather Burnett Gold / FTTH Council Americas

You know that feeling you get when you realize you should have taken time off before returning to work after a vacation? That is how I felt after the holidays, but there is no rest for the weary and no time to waste – fiber is on fire.

Every January, more than 160,000 technology enthusiasts go straight from celebrating the start of a new year to attending the International Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas, where they peruse the more than 20,000 gadgets that businesses will be bringing to market in the near future. It's the future of the technology industry, where the business leaders and innovators of the world share one space.

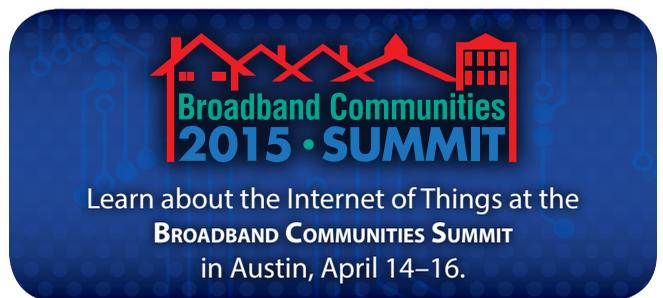
I am among them each year because I know, as **BROADBAND COMMUNITIES** readers know, that without fiber to the home, all these cool, shiny, bandwidth-hogging devices are not going to function in the home the way they do on the show floor.

If I took one thing away from CES, it is that 2015 will be the year of the Internet of Things. In particular, it'll be the year of the connected home, in which everyday devices are networked with one another for ease of management. Think of coffee makers and thermostats that you can control via Bluetooth or Wi-Fi using apps on your smartphone. Attendees were jubilant about being able to control irrigation; lighting and security systems; kitchen appliances such as toasters, refrigerators and ovens; window treatments and entertainment centers from a single device. This is part of the movement to create smarter, more efficient homes.

It's all going to need a lot of bandwidth. If CES 2015 was any indication, fiber-to-the-home deployment will continue to flourish to keep up with such consumers' demands.

POWERING SMART HOMES AND CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

At CES, I was privileged to host a session designed to educate producers and consumers about the importance of high-speed Internet and the benefits fiber broadband offers. My expert panel, consisting of experienced FTTH Council members, all agreed that consumer attitudes toward innovation and bandwidth influence and will continue to influence the deployment of faster, more reliable broadband networks in



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communities across the country. FTTH is the only choice to power smart homes and connected communities.

My panelists also talked a lot about video. According to the Cisco Visual Networking Index, video will account for 79 percent of all global IP traffic in 2018, up from 66 percent in 2013. That number is likely to be revised upward, given the plethora of 8K ultra-high-definition televisions I saw on the show floor.

Live streaming video – such as real-time sports – on these televisions will require speeds estimated in excess of 50 Mbps *per device*. I can only imagine the arguments parents will have to referee when, in addition to Monday Night Football, one teen wants to watch an HD movie, another is trying to video chat with a friend, Grandma is uploading photos of her grandkids to Facebook and everything grinds to a halt.

To round off my stay in Las Vegas, I spent time looking at other innovations that will continue to drive consumers' need for speed. I saw new applications and services in entertainment, education, health care, energy and public safety. I saw devices large and small.

I saw a little glimpse of our future – and it's pretty cool – but only those who are lucky enough to gain FTTH will be prepared to take advantage of all that is offered. ❖

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