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Microsoft signs on Alcatel for IPTV

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Microsoft and telecommunications gear maker Alcatel have created a development and sales partnership for software that delivers services to TVs over the Internet.

The two companies said Tuesday that they will act as preferred suppliers for services designed around Microsoft's Internet Protocol television (IPTV) software, which telecom operators use to send video and data services to consumers' TVs via set-top boxes.

Alcatel said it will support Microsoft's IPTV software in its network gear for sending video over broadband networks. It will also provide systems integration services for installing IPTV systems and build applications for the Microsoft TV IPTV Edition software.

The goal of the pact is to accelerate the adoption of Internet Protocol-based video services to TVs, according to executives from both companies.

"By aligning the efforts of both companies, we can provide a complete solution...and significantly raise the bar for consumer services in the home," said Moshe Lichtman corporate vice president of the Microsoft TV Division. "We think IPTV is the future of TV, bar none."

Microsoft has already signed on a number of telecommunications companies for its IPTV software, including SBC Communications BellSouth and Telecom Italia.

Paris-based Alcatel will continue to support customers of its homegrown Internet TV software, called Open Media Platform and offer them a migration path to the Microsoft software system, said Alan Mottram, president of Alcatel's fixed-solutions division.

As part of the partnership, engineers from the two companies will work jointly on improving the back-end software for delivering video services to TVs. Executives said any interfaces required to connect to their jointly developed products will be published to encourage third parties to build add-on products and services.

"What (operators) want from Microsoft and Alcatel, in combination, is assuredness at a technical level that it's all going to work," Mottram said.

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