

A Thread to Tie Smart Home Devices

Written by Marco Attard
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Nest, Samsung, ARM, Big Ass Fans, Freescale, Silicon Labs and Yale team up in the name of the internet of things (IoT) to present Thread, an IP-based wireless networking protocol to connect smart home devices without need for hub hardware.



According to the Thread Group current 802.15.4-based networking technologies such as ZigBee or Z-Wave have "critical issues" making them unsuitable for the IoT, including lack of interoperability, inability to carry IPv6 communications, high power requirements and "hub and spoke" models dependent on one device. Thread promises to solve such issues, being a low-power wireless mesh network able to simultaneously connect and provide internet/cloud access to over 250 devices.

"A number of networking solutions and platforms have been introduced to address the growing demand for connected products in the home," IHS Technology says. "Built on well-proven standards, including IEEE 802.15.4, IETF IPv6 and 6LoWPAN, Thread represents a resilient, IP-based solution for the rapidly growing Internet of Things."

An early version of Thread technology is already running on Nest products, and the group claims "millions" of 802.15.4 devices can run the protocol with just a software update. The technology can also run on top of other smart home efforts, such as Apple's HomeKit, the Nest Developer program and Qualcomm's AllJoyn.

The Thread Group will also kick off a device certification program, while interested vendors will be able to join the organisation as either sponsors or contributors.

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Will the combined muscle of the Google-owned Nest, Samsung and ARM form the final thread bringing about the tapestry that's IoT-powered smart home of our customers' dreams? We will only know from H2 2015, when the first Thread-enabled devices hit the market.

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