

Bay's view of the “Token Ring Summit”

- Participants:
 - Bay, IBM, Madge, Cisco, 3Com, Texas Instruments, OliCom, Cabletron
 - Kevin Tolly, Jodi Cohen & John Gallant
- Agenda:
 - Discussions of Token Ring directions for:
 - Desktop
 - Risers/Backbone
 - Servers

The days highlights

- Desktop:
 - All vendors agreed that the Token Ring adapter prices were coming down in price but that 10/100 Ethernet adapter prices were too attractive to resist
 - All agreed that Token Ring adapter & networking port prices would never reach as low as Ethernet and that the majority of Token Ring Customers were at the very least considering migration
 - The “bundling” of 10/100 NIC’s in PC’s & integration into motherboards were the driving force of Ethernet migration
 - All agreed that many Token Ring shops were not as “pressed” for bandwidth as their Ethernet counterparts because of the nature of Token Rings ability to handle heavy loads & large segment sizes

The days highlights

- Riser/Backbone:
 - All agreed that ATM filled the requirements of the Token Ring Customer for Backbone & Server Bandwidth
 - All agreed ATM was viable, available, and a standards based high speed alternative which could provide QOS and the RAS characteristics needed by this “Mission Critical” Customer
 - Some Vendors felt ATM was “too complex” for some Customers and there was a market for a “Frame based” alternative
 - None of the vendors could really quantify this market ‘s size but some felt it was more conducive to small to mid sized Token Ring Customers

The days highlights

- Riser/Backbone:
 - Some vendors are looking to accommodate the Ethernet migration and see the requirement for a frame based alternative not as a “pure Token Ring” issue - but as a VLAN integration and Leveraging of Fast/Gig Ethernet issue
 - Some didn’t see the need for pure Token Ring high speed options - only Token Frames in Ethernet Pipes
 - It was clear that all these implementations were in some way/shape/form proprietary and wouldn’t interoperate
 - It was clear that it would be in the Customers best interest that a standards based initiative would be required
 - All vendors agreed to begin the discussions on “a standard” of some type(???)

The days highlights

- Server pipes:
 - Again all agreed that ATM offered high speed options for almost every platform; PCI, EISA, MCA, RS6000, AS400, OSA for the Mainframe, other
 - All acknowledged that both Token Ring & Ethernet LANE was available for these adapters today
 - These adapters also accommodate a smooth transition to Ethernet by their ability to service both Ethernet LANE clients & Token Ring LANE clients from the same adapter card
 - Again some felt the fear of “ATM’s complexities” were a barrier to some Customers
 - Most felt there was a desire to deliver access to Fast Ethernet & Gigabit Ethernet Servers from Token Ring clients

The days highlights

- Sticking Points:
 - All agreed that the current implementations of “Token Frames in Fast Enet Pipes” required some “loss of functionality”
 - 17K MTU’s could not be accommodated
 - Fragmentation issues
 - Translational Bridging issues
 - Source Routing issues
 - Token priority issues
 - All current implementations had different problems with some or all of the above

The days highlights

- Vendors positions:
 - Bay & Madge - Stood firm with their commitment to ATM as the “right solution” for Customers. They cited ATM’s recent maturity, availability, standards based implementation, QOS characteristics and ability to integrate with Ethernet as proof points.
 - IBM - Concurred on ATM’s “solving the problems” but also said to be executing a survey with their Customers to gauge the desire for HSTR before committing to the need
 - Cisco & Olicom - Also delivering ATM solutions but heavily favor, and have announced, Fast Token Ring product based on ISL

The days highlights

- Vendors Positions:
 - 3Com - Announced a Fast Token Ring solution as well although different from Cisco's
 - Cabletron - Announced a new Token Ring card that accommodates Ethernet integration. A 3rd implementation which deployed a sort of “translational bridging” at the port level through new ASIC development effort
 - Texas Instruments - No position stated
- Bay Networks
 - At days end proposed all gather at a follow up meeting and that a “standards based initiative” be discussed