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1. POWER OVER HDMI

The one thing that's conspicuously missing from HDMI is 'meaningful' power availability through the port. 18Gbps is tough enough to achieve over about 7m; 48Gbps is a whole other beast! Active cables must be the way to go, whether it be copper or fibre based, but the HDMI 2.1 spec effectively locks down power draw by any cable assembly to a puny 0.025W. This could change in 2019 with the proposal for decent integer wattage — 1W? 5W? 10W? ... Who knows? But enough to be really useful, and do away with external power supplies. But it could mean a new HDMI cable category too.

2. WIRELESS IN LINE FOR A SPEED BOOST

While the ramp up towards 4G speeds was denoted as LTE, places like Queenstown in New Zealand last year launched '4.5G' as a step beyond the decade old 4G specs. Next is 5G. There are already test sites for 5G around Australia, but they're a mash-up of the new telco technology and existing WiFi. It'll be quite a while before we see finalised 5G specs, let alone compatible devices, but 2019 will be a busy year. And then there's the new 'WiFi 6', being the consumer-friendly name for 802.11ax for multiple-gigabit WiFi with greater range. The spec is due for release in 2019 (currently at Draft 3).

3. SVOD TAKES HOLD

A/NZ viewers have been slower to take up subscription video-on-demand (SVOD) than places like the United States. Over there, IP content is already dominating viewing hours, as revealed at the recent CEDIA Expo keynote. 2019 is expected to be the year where the number of local households pay for streaming services exceeds 50%, with our viewing habits preparing to see the likes of Netflix, YouTube, Stan and Foxtel Now overtaking broadcast TV, Foxtel IQ and Sky.

4. GAMING TO FURTHER INCREASE INFLUENCE ON AV DESIGN

Xbox One X and Sony PS4 Pro both already support 4K gaming, but user settings in the consoles are required to drag the performance down to match the capabilities of even the best TVs out there. In 2019, expect to see new displays that could unleash 4K gaming with variable refresh rate and 4:4:4 HDR (console HDMI output dependant). This has huge implications on bandwidth, far more than any other source out there. So always identify gaming enthusiasts when you're in the client discovery phase, as that will hugely influence the decisions for devices and cabling for maximum bandwidth upgrade path, without reliance on compression.

5. CYBERSECURITY MORE THAN JUST RECOMMENDED

The greatest vulnerability with connected devices is the user; the 'wetware'. And the main user interface is the good old username and password, the trouble being users (or integrators) not changing the default credentials in devices like routers. The State of California has just passed a law that bans default passwords in devices, instead requiring unique IDs for every MAC address. We'll see more of this in 2019, but don't wait for the manufacturers to implement it — if you're not already changing your clients' passwords, and preferably usernames too, then start doing so today!



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