

Smart home dream could be for all

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Smart homes in which a single button controls lighting, heating, security, music, film - everything digital - has long been promised, but has never quite delivered.

This is partly down to technology that cannot talk to each other. It has also traditionally been a dream that only the uber-rich can make reality.

But with rising broadband speeds and connections, the rise of wireless networks, and cheaper more powerful machines in homes, it is getting easier to realise the smart home dream.

A lot more now can be controlled from one central machine, with one central and easy interface, which is what convergence is supposed to be about.

Hooking devices together, either wirelessly or with cables, is another matter.

Technical know-how is just one of the stumbling blocks many face when trying to work out why one gadget will not talk to another.

Homes that are smart are not just about being able to send pictures and video to different rooms either.

It is also about the more mundane technologies in life, such as heating and lighting, and security technologies.

Central locking for homes, for example, could be all controlled through fobs in the near future, for instance, or even through biometrics.

Will Levy, founder of Touch of a Button, imagines one day soon being able to pick up the phone directory and easily find the equivalent of a registered "digital plumber".

For a reasonable fee, they could come and install your fresh bit of kit, advise on security, and be on hand at the end of an e-mail or phone for aftercare services.

Mr Levy's vision of "digital plumbing" is squarely aimed at ordinary people who want their homes smart and more connected.

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