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According to ABI Research's Mike Wolf, "Networking connections have gone from being 'nice-to-have' to 'necessary' for some categories of devices such as portable media players and gaming consoles. We expect that as more devices get tied to content services, other categories will follow the same route, and we are already beginning to see this today."

ABI says the leading devices for embedded networking in consumer electronics will shift from the early market leaders – game consoles – to TVs and DVD players. They forecast the number for networked TV shipments alone will grow to 65 million units shipped by 2012 (from 3.6 million in 2008).

"While many TV manufacturers have been evaluating the integration of networking features into devices for some time, only recently have manufacturers such as LG, Sony and HP begun to ship products en masse with embedded networking," says research director Wolf. "While Japan has had networked TVs for some time, other regions are beginning to receive such merchandise too, as TV manufacturers begin to see the value of future-proofing their products with IP connections."

While portable devices such as portable media players and game consoles will have mostly wireless networking connections such as Wi-Fi, fixed devices such as TVs, set-top boxes and other devices will have a mix of both Wi-Fi and Ethernet connections.

Alternative LAN technologies will also see some penetration, as both HomePlug and MoCA based technologies make their way into STBs. Overall, Wi-Fi media connections will lead with total Wi-Fi-enabled consumer electronics reaching 329 million shipments by 2012.

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