DigitalXpress And Franklin Telecom Sign Agreement to Increase Internet Communication Capabilities

DigitalXpress and Internet Passport, a division of Franklin Telecom, have reached an agreement on a five-year alliance to develop new technologies that provide leading edge, two-way communication via the Internet. The partnership combines the resources of Internet Passport and DigitalXpress' pioneering satellite-to-desktop direct broadcast services.

Through their joint efforts, Franklin Telecom and DigitalXpress each will develop a new product line - Franklin Xpress and XpressNet - that will be marketed by Internet Passport and DigitalXpress, respectively. Both Franklin Express and XpressNet will provide Internet connectivity for DigitalXpress products through Franklin Telecom's Internet Passport division. Clients of both companies will immediately benefit from both products under the terms of a sales agreement between the two companies.

DigitalXpress specializes in low-cost satellite-to-desktop digital video and data information distribution systems and was established through the joint efforts of Boeing Commercial Space Co., Conus Communications and Computing Devices International. The company continues to develop leading-edge, satellite-based technologies applicable to today's fast-paced business environment.

Internet Passport provides a variety of Internet business products and services including high-speed satellite Internet access products. The company specializes in offering innovative solutions that allow businesses and Internet access providers to address their high-bandwidth needs and expand their product offerings to the Internet community.

XpressNet, a fast-access Internet service, uses DigitalXpress satellite technology to speed the directional transfer of large data files. The system has a customized high-speed Xpress mode that allows the transfer of large amounts of data - via satellite - at rates of up to 2.6 Mbps via the Internet or an XpressNet-established intranet. XpressNet uses the nationwide capability of Franklin to provide local dial-up access or direct 800 service to reach any location in the U.S. The system is expected to increase a user's on-line productivity by eliminating timely delays commonly associated with data-request processing.

The system's browser interface, a proprietary version of Microsoft's Internet Explorer (IE), provides the user with broadcast options prior to downloading data. Based on the selected option, the user can then send the downloaded data directly to the DigitalXpress Store and Forward System for immediate broadcast to any number of designated remote receiving sites.

"Simply put, the transfer of large data files and the time constraints imposed by technological limitations have hamstrung the way companies conduct business," said Joel Wright, DigitalXpress program manager for Boeing. "This agreement, and the advent of XpressNet and Franklin Express, eliminates those restrictions and provides the type of two-way communication options that businesses are clamoring for."

As business use of the Internet continues to skyrocket, a key industry focus continues to be the development and integration of Internet technology that makes user applications more interactive than in the past, allowing Web users to download, send information and search the Internet more effectively, instead of just reading text. Franklin Express and XpressNet services addresses that need and are immediately available on a subscription basis.

The basic service package for both products offers an unlimited amount of conventional Internet and intranet time and 200 megabytes of high-speed download per July, half of which may be used during prime time hours (5 p.m. to 10 p.m. EST). Files are automatically encrypted before downloading and users can choose either the Xpress or conventional Internet modes. Corporate data bases can be connected to Franklin Express or XpressNet via one of three methods:

- through the Internet via a dedicated high-speed communication line;
- directly to the Internet Passport division or Franklin Telecom (FNet) via a dedicated high-speed communication line, or;
- directly to the DigitalXpress Satellite Uplink Center in Minneapolis-St. Paul.

"DigitalXpress is extremely pleased to be able to offer Internet Passport's industry-leading technology to its customers," said Bill Bearry, DigitalXpress president. We are confident, based on our research and market response, that this type of information-on-demand service will further position satellite-based communication technology as the 'wave of today' and significantly enhance the way companies do business via the Internet."

Bearry indicated that the marketing and sales divisions of both companies will continue to work together to cross-reference current and potential clients. Resell agreements are in place between the two companies that will make current DigitalXpress products - XpressVideo, XpressData and XpressAudio - a key component of future intranet designs and reseller programs initiated by InterNet Passport. Additionally, product demonstration areas are being established in St. Paul, Atlanta and Los Angeles to showcase the benefits of both products.

"Our intention is simple and straightforward: We want to develop the most comprehensive and functional satellite Internet services available to businesses today," said Internet Passport President Sparrow Marcioni. "With this relationship, we are well on our way to doing that."

Founded in 1981, Franklin Telecom designs and manufactures communications devices, high-speed LAN and WAN access cards and software. Franklin Telecom has an installed base of more than 100,000 nodes world-wide. The company has its headquarters in Westlake Village, Calif., and can be reached by phone at 1-800 FRANKLIN or via the Internet at http://www.ftel.com.

DigitalXpress offices are located at 2550 University Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55114, telephone (612) 647-5211.

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