

## **XCHANGE WEB EXTRAS**

### **DSL Goes Retail**

*By Paula Bernier*

Next year at this time some consumers should be able to purchase their DSL modems at popular electronic retailers. Industry leaders expect the new channel to help boost DSL service penetration.

DSL Forum president Bill Rodey says DSL's move to retail will be a key element in bringing the service to 20 percent (or 200 million) of global loops by the end of 2005, which is the forum's goal. There are currently about 25 million DSL lines in service worldwide. Rodey expects that customers will eventually purchase DSL modems and services at retail stores much like they buy cell phones today - both purchasing the device, getting prequalified and signing up for service at store locations.

Making DSL's move to retail possible is a new technical requirement from the DSL Forum called TR-048. The new requirement, which specifies ADSL bit-rate and distance requirements well beyond the previous ADSL Recommendations, defines technical criteria for interoperability between DSL modems and network-based equipment. TR-048 provides a suite of tests that can be performed by independent test labs to certify DSL equipment interoperability; as of mid August three labs had entered into contracts with the DSL Forum.

But Rodey notes that "TR-048 is a great beginning, but it's not the end." TR-048 is the basis for physical interoperability equipment, he says. The DSL Forum is now awaiting an update to TR-048 or a new technical requirement from service providers to "take us higher up the [OSI] stack."

The DSL Forum was expected to get that input in late August.