

At Silicon Labs, represented by Alcom electronics, which is part of the CSA and one of the primary code contributors to Matter, we have been at the front of the Matter parade and have become a one-stop resource for Matter devices, border routers, and bridges so developers can easily bridge Matter to other IoT development platforms like Wi-Fi, Zigbee, Thread, and Z-Wave while leveraging their experience with our hardware and tools, including our Unify SDK, Gecko SDK, and Simplicity Studio.

What Interoperability Really Looks Like for Consumers

The flagship feature of Matter has always been that it will simplify the lives of consumers. Interoperability across devices, ecosystems, and brands would make it easier to introduce new devices into a smart home environment that would play well with others. One of the practical ways this will happen is by reducing the number of apps needed to control devices in a smart home. Some of this consolidation happens today with virtual assistants. For example, you can control your lights, thermostat, TV, and other devices through your Amazon Alexa or Google Nest without relying on an app. And this is the experience most consumers are interested in from their connected devices – simple and responsive interaction while they're at home. Instead of requiring apps for each device or ecosystem, Matter will enable users to reduce the number of apps because it can operate across any ecosystem. No longer will users need device- or ecosystem-specific apps. So, if your smart home network includes Amazon Alexa, Apple HomeKit, and Google Home devices, you can cut the number of apps needed to control all of them from three to just one.

Device manufacturers are still interested in delivering products that differentiate themselves, and this is where the expectation that Matter would eliminate the number of apps needed bumps into reality. It may still be necessary to use manufacturer apps to take full advantage of device functionality. For example, a smart light bulb might have some settings that can be controlled through a digital assistant or Matter, but also features advanced settings that require the device's app to access. Over time that functionality may make its way into the Matter standard as device makers understand the benefits that interoperability and ease of use bring. So, while Matter will reduce the number of apps needed to efficiently setup and run a smart home, it's not likely to come down to a single app to rule them all.

The Important Role Bridging Plays in Matter

This simplicity and ease of adoption has been dominating Matter coverage – and with good reason. The catalyst for these brands coming together in the first place was the realization fragmentation meant that for a lot of consumers, the smart home just wasn't working. However, if Matter succeeds in getting buyers comfortable purchasing and setting up new products but misses by making it difficult to adapt existing devices by customers with lots of devices already, it wouldn't really fulfill its promise. With a large existing install base of Zigbee, Z-Wave, and other wireless IoT protocols, bridges will be a key aspect of connecting Matter to these devices to integrate the technologies and bridge existing sensor networks to interoperate with Matter networks. The vast majority of existing devices will not be moving to Matter.

Instead, they will be able to communicate with the Matter network via a bridge. Many IoT manufacturers are already planning on being able to update existing gateways to support Matter bridging and will be introducing products to support both existing and deployed Zigbee/Z-Wave products, in addition to the newer Matter products.

Matter is Here to Simplify, Not Complicate

Matter 1.0 is the first release of one of the most highly anticipated technologies in years, and it's being championed by some very smart folks with sophisticated ideas about what's possible within the smart home. But it's important to remember that the average consumer is interested in the basics. Are the lights on? Is it warm enough in my house? Is the alarm set? When consumers consider buying a smart home device, one of the questions they have is whether that device will work with their ecosystem of choice. But if the ecosystems are all aligning to support Matter in their infrastructure, then this will significantly reduce the complexity for both device makers and users. Developers will no longer need to design for multiple ecosystems and consumers can rest easy knowing their device will work out of the box the way they expect.