

Consumer Groups, Tech Firms Ally on Copyright, Anti-Piracy Issues

Event

On 23 January 2003, the Alliance for Digital Progress (ADP) formally debuted. The ADP is a coalition of technology companies and consumer organizations dedicated to developing private-sector and market-driven solutions to the problem of digital piracy.

GartnerG2 Analysis

The ADP marks an important shift in the relationship between technology companies and the political and legislative ecosystems. Tech companies have tended to look after themselves in the lobbying wars, focusing on trade and business regulation issues. By reaching out to consumer groups, the tech companies are linking with a new set of allies.

In the copyright/anti-piracy struggle, copyright holders, media companies and artists are confronting the inadequacy of decades-old business models in the face of consumers armed with powerful PCs, the Internet and peer-to-peer networks. Turning to the legislators with whom they've developed long-standing relationships, media companies and copyright holders influenced development of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act and proposed legislation such as Consumer Broadband and Digital Television Act (CBDTA). As much as any other development, it was the CBDTA (and its requirements that technology manufacturers put copy-protection schemes in any device that played digital media) that sparked the ADP's formation.

The new group's disparate membership includes Apple Computer, Intel Corp., IBM, Microsoft Corp., the American Electronics Association, Digitalconsumer.org, Consumer Alert, the Digital Media Association and Citizens Against Government Waste.

The ADP's mission statement emphasizes the importance of private-sector, market-driven solutions to protect digital content. It also encourages limiting government's role to enforcing existing copyright law in the United States, and global anti-piracy treaties. Another significant aspect of its mission includes creating educational programs designed to raise consumer awareness about the harm piracy causes copyright holders, artists and the overall economy.

Mike McGuire

"The ADP marks an important shift in the relationship between technology companies and the political and legislative ecosystems."



Any political coalition is a fragile entity, and this uneasy mix of technology companies, consumer groups and free-enterprise/limited-government policy groups could fracture along a number of faults. Then again, that very diversity could be the ADP's greatest asset on Capitol Hill.

GartnerG2 Recommends

- **Technology companies: Support the ADP.** Back its efforts to fight government technology mandates while supporting broad-scale efforts to educate consumers about their rights and responsibilities regarding digital copyrighted material.
- **Media and content companies: Let cooperation be the watchword.** The combination of consumer groups representing significant numbers of your customers, as well as the companies that are developing the current and next-generation of media-playback devices, is a potent force that needs to be leveraged, not fought.
- **Legislators, political strategists: Heads up.** The ADP could quickly develop into a potent lobbying force on Capitol Hill, as well as in state and local governments.

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Outside Sources

Alliance for Digital Progress: www.alliancefordigitalprogress.org

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