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Whirlpool co-hosts first annual Digital Home Conference

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Whirlpool is taking great strides to create business opportunities as the home becomes a digitally connected space.

Whirlpool collaborated with the Internet Home Alliance to host the first annual [Digital Home Conference \(IHA\)](#). Held in Chicago's Palmer House Hotel on May 24-25, the invite-only event was attended by some of the industry's most senior leaders. Participants gathered to discuss the latest trends and issues associated with the connected home, and brainstormed ways to bring their innovative concepts to consumers. The conference also held networking sessions and panel discussions where best practices were shared and alliances created or strengthened.

The groundbreaking conference was Whirlpool's brainchild. Jurgen Heuer, director of Aquarius: The Connected Home approached the Internet Home Alliance with his idea to host a conference on the connected home industry. "We wanted to lead this industry, which is currently unfolding in a very fragmented manner," said Heuer. "Leadership is not taken but given. We decided to act as a guide by creating a neutral discussion ground where our trade partners could meet, even with the participation of some competitors. By setting such an example, we will then be perceived as a leader – someone who will drive the maturation of this industry."

The event was composed of industry "[ecosystems](#):" [Family](#), [Entertainment](#), and [Office](#). Whirlpool's Hank Marcy, vice president of Innovation and Technology, led the interactive panel discussions for the Family group – widely perceived as the least developed of the three. "There was a lot of opportunity behind the panel discussions," said Marcy. "Our diverse discussion panel exchanged thoughts with

an audience composed of very different perspectives, including large retailers, homebuilders, software and networking corporations as well as service providers to create a forum of discussion rather than a venue of presentation."

Whirlpool's session followed the conference's consumer panel, where participants gathered comments and suggestions from consumers. "The panel discussions were a great source of research," said Heuer. "Demonstrating our IHA [pilots](#) at the conference helped to disprove the many misconceptions about how difficult these complex products are to use. Public opinion can and will be changed." Panasonic, Philips, Cisco, and Microsoft also held similar presentations.

Whirlpool's exciting and informative presentation opened the eyes of many conference participants, who formerly perceived the Family ecosystem to be lacking in opportunity. Following the conference, senior leaders at Invensys invited Whirlpool to speak at their upcoming innovation conference. "Participants are looking to us to see where the Family ecosystem is moving," said Heuer. "We've solidified our leadership position." Marcy credits his team for their recent progress. "We've routinely received positive comments on our innovation initiatives," said Marcy. "People are interested that Whirlpool is so involved in this space. Our small team is really having a large impact on the market and how our consumers' thinking is evolving."

Feedback survey results show that the first annual Digital Home Conference was a huge success. "Satisfaction rankings were at the top quartile among participants," said Heuer. "Furthermore, our concept has gained staying power - the IHA is determined to hold another conference next year. It really shows how we are making our mark." Marcy plans to have Whirlpool participate in future conferences. "We'll continue to be a sponsor of this event and we will work to lead thought in the Family ecosystem," said Marcy. "That's who we are."

Whirlpool is a principal member of the Internet Home Alliance - a network of leading companies working to advance the home technology market. The non-profit organization provides members with breakthrough research about the industry and provides companies with the opportunities they need to launch their home technology products quickly and efficiently.

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