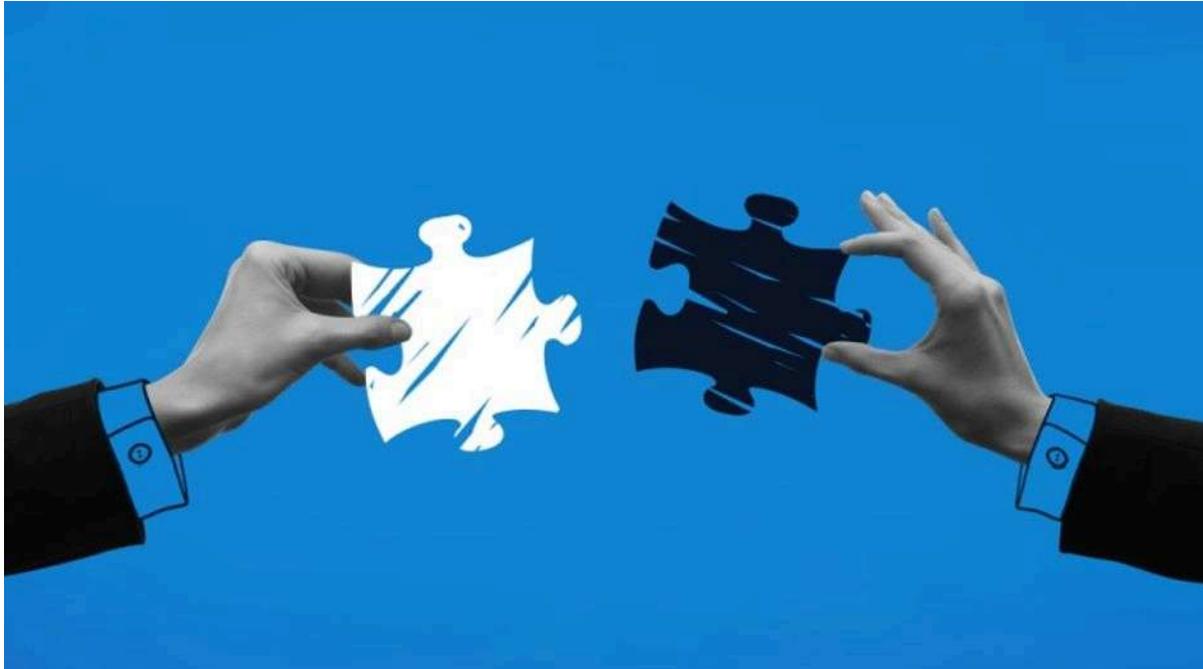




Access Advance buys Via's HEVC, VVC pools

Angela Morris

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The patent pool licensing landscape for video codec technologies became simpler on Monday.

Access Advance has acquired the HEVC and VVC pools of Via Licensing Alliance. This follows a major development in 2023 in which Via acquired the entire business of MPEG LA, including its competing video codec pools. With today's announcement, there is only one pool administrator for all of the HEVC and VVC pools in the market.

The manufacturers of smartphones, tablets, computers and televisions – which utilise video codec technologies – have complained about the fractured licensing landscape for decades. Now with only one administrator for the Advance and Via HEVC and VVC pools, licensing friction should decrease. However, some major patent holders are not pool licensors and will continue seeking bilateral licences with implementers.

In 2023, when Via acquired MPEG, it created history by marking the first-ever merger of two patent pool administrators. The combined entity managed a “pool of pools”

spanning audio, video and wireless technologies, with 50,000 patents, 500 licensors and 10,000 licensees.

Today's transaction is also historic: Via has become the first pool administrator to carve out two of its pools and sell them, while Access Advance is the first administrator to buy individual pools from a competitor.

"Today's announcement reflects Via's commitment to improving the entire licensing ecosystem," comments Via Board Chairman Andy Sherman in a statement. "By simplifying the structure for HEVC and VVC licensing, we will reduce fragmentation across the market and help ensure that essential video technologies remain easily accessible through clear, predictable, and efficient mechanisms."

Implementers in the market have demanded a simplified single pool solution for many years. VVC is still in the early stages of implementation, and combining the pools at this stage may spur faster adoption of VVC technology and future codec standards.

"For licensees, it's good in that it reduces fragmentation, provides far greater efficiency from dealing with one pool, and we are confident it will result in lower costs. For licensors, we believe it responds to what the market has been telling us it wants, which is a single pool solution for HEVC and VVC," says Access Advance CEO Peter Moller. "Ultimately, we are confident that the transaction will lower costs for licensees, and for licensors, will result in greater compensation."

Via created a new business entity and transferred the administrative contracts and responsibilities of the HEVC and VVC pools, and Advance has acquired that new business entity. The financial terms of the deal are confidential. For now, Advance will operate its existing pools and the Via pools separately, but with combined administrative functions like royalty disbursements and collections. Licensees shouldn't notice changes at this stage. But in the next six to 12 months, the company will work with the licensors of both sets of pools, looking for a seamless transition to combine them into one.

"Licensors make the decision – not us. We can't wave a magic wand and say, 'We are now one pool'. We must work hard to build their trust," explains Moller. "We are going to need implementers to play a role as well in joining a combined pool."

Even if the pools combine, the transaction will not change the royalty rate structure at Access Advance, he mentions.

Next chapter for Via

Via is a subsidiary of Dolby Laboratories that operates under independent management (and has a couple of co-owners). The rationale behind its decision to sell its codec pools is to simplify and reduce fragmentation in the video licensing environment, thereby creating a more efficient marketplace for licensors and licensees.

Access Advance, which now holds a significant portion of the market, is expected to enhance the licensing process by streamlining administration for licensees.

The deal does not change Dolby's participation; it remains a licensor in Access Advance pools, and those programmes will continue operating as-is.

By divesting the video codec pools to Access Advance, Via can concentrate on programmes that are likely to generate the most value for licensors and licensees. This strategic move helps streamline operations and resources, allowing Via to prioritise and enhance its ongoing pools. It will continue operating its programmes covering Qi wireless charging, audio codecs, electric vehicle charging, ATSC 3.0 broadcasting and its new offering, **semiconductor memory** technology.

In November, Via called for patents for its inaugural semiconductor patent pool focusing on Dynamic Random Access Memory (DRAM) technologies including DDR3+, LPDDR4+, GDDR5+ and High Bandwidth Memory. Via will host pool formation meetings in early 2026 to establish terms amongst patent holders and licensees. The initiative represents a strategic shift from traditional DRAM licensing at the manufacturing level to targeting data centre operators like Microsoft Azure, Google Cloud, Amazon Web Services, OpenAI, Anthropic and Palantir. This may help to address vulnerabilities from patent assertions as the data centre market anticipates double-digit growth potentially reaching trillion-dollar investments. Via Vice President Willy Chang stated "the importance of DRAM to today's AI technologies has fundamentally changed the value of patents in this space". The goal is to cut litigation risk, considering major holders like Samsung, SK Hynix and Micron have historically sold substantial portfolios to non-practising entities that have already filed infringement actions.

However, as Via charts its new path, it will be under new leadership starting in 2026.

Via President Heath Høglund announced on Monday that he would **retire** at the end of 2025. He will pursue a new opportunity, revealing it after the holidays. Høglund spent 18 years at Dolby starting as the company's first chief patent counsel before leading Via through its 2023 industry-first merger with MPEG LA. Høglund credited part-owners Philips, Mitsubishi Electric, and GE Licensing (a company Dolby bought in 2024) for supporting the combined entity that achieved wins including TCL joining the ATSC 3.0 pool without litigation and success in Qi wireless charging. Under his leadership, Via significantly expanded in China where he emphasised relationship-building as "critical for our success". Via also partnered with Japan's ULDAGE to attract EV charging market share.

Via appointed Kevin Mack as its new president effective on 15 December. Mack, formerly the vice president of IP and legal strategy at Dolby, has 20 years of experience in intellectual property and technology licensing, deeply understanding the media, semiconductor and audio licensing landscape.

“Kevin’s appointment as President of Via reflects our continued focus on organizational strength and long-term strategy. Via remains committed to supporting partners and advancing our broader technology licensing mission,” Sherman says in a statement. “We are grateful for Heath’s leadership and contributions he has made over many years.”

At Dolby, Mack supervised global IP protection, brand protection, licensee compliance, revenue generation and technology security. He has negotiated multimillion-dollar licensing agreements with the world’s biggest consumer electronics companies. The announcement of his appointment says the board is confident Mack can capture the next wave of growth, guide Via in the future to stay ahead of market shifts and deliver for partners.

“I’m honored to step into this role at such a pivotal moment for Via,” says Mack in a statement. “Via’s history of leadership in collaborative licensing is unmatched, and I look forward to furthering our mission while supporting innovators and manufacturers around the world.”



Angela Morris

Deputy editor

IAM

angela.morris@lbresearch.com

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