

IEEE

# Broadcast Technology

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ATSC 3.0 News



***IEEE goes 'Martian' at CES; complete story on p. 9***

# President's Message

**Bill Hayes, BTS President**



Greetings BTS members!

I recently attended a series of meetings with the presidents of the other societies that make up the IEEE. One of the themes discussed in various ways was the “graying” of society members. For those not familiar with “graying,” it means that the average age of society membership is increasing. Aging is something we all do, but the fact that our society average age is increasing also points to a problem or a challenge, depending on how you look at it. Fewer young engineers are joining professional organizations such as the IEEE and therefore our average age is increasing while simultaneously our total membership is shrinking. I don't bring this up out of panic, but I am

concerned for our society and other professional societies as well.

At the above-mentioned meeting, data was presented concerning how society members rated the value of membership, and BTS was significantly above the IEEE all-society average. We also scored very high in providing members with opportunities to connect with the technical community. The first metric indicates that the vast majority of our members think BTS is a great value to them. The second metric speaks to one of the key functions of a society which is to promote connections between the members. So on the surface, we are doing things that our members value and appreciate, yet somehow these values and benefits are not evident or sufficient to garner enough new members to promote the growth of the society. So what is it that we are missing or failing to do?

I've postulated for some time that membership in a professional organization such as the BTS goes through stages. We initially join for what I will call transactional reasons. Some new members join because of publications such as our **Transactions on Broadcasting** or other magazines. Some join to get a discount in attending our conferences and symposia. Some join as students, as it's required by their professors as qualification to receive a degree. All of these are transactional in nature in that we join and pay our dues in order to receive something such as a publication or conference discount. Initially it's a value proposition of paying money in exchange for product.

If the transactional value proposition is viewed by the member to be worthwhile, it continues and a subtle change begins to happen. Additional value elements begin to appear. They may be new colleagues and mentors that are met in person at a conference or event or electronically through an exchange about a question or perhaps an observation on a paper that was read. In any case, valuing these elements is much more subjective and may not be immediately discernible. Sometimes the epiphanies happen during the conversation, and sometimes it's later on, but however it happens, we consciously or subconsciously associate it with the fundamental elements that created the conditions. In this case it's the society that created and nurtured the initial relationship.

As more of these subjectively valued opportunities occur, the change continues and things becomes less transactional and more relational, and for lack of a better term, emotional. I think we start to see more value in ourselves through our participation and involvement. This doesn't supplant the value of the items we first saw when we joined; it augments them, and eventually may become more important than the transactional items. That is the essence of what leads to volunteering and the concept of wanting to give back as a way of helping our younger colleagues and expressing our gratitude for the values and benefits we've garnered based on our involvement.

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# From the Editor

## The Big Auction, A Big Winter Storm, And Broadcasting's Place In The Scheme Of Things

James E. O'Neal, BTS Newsletter Editor



That controversial and much-talked-about “Broadcast Incentive Auction” is now getting into high gear. This was brought home a couple of weeks ago (I’m writing this in late January) when I attended a local SBE meeting and attendees were all reminded that it was now officially a big taboo to discuss certain parts of the auction proceedings with your TV

broadcaster brethren. As the FCC put it:

*47 CFR 1.2205(b) provides that, subject to specified exceptions, “beginning on the deadline for submitting applications to participate in the reverse auction and until the results of the incentive auction are announced by public notice, all full power and Class A broadcast television licensees are prohibited from communicating directly or indirectly any incentive auction applicant’s bids or bidding strategies to any other full power or Class A broadcast television licensee or to any forward auction applicant.”*

That was January 12. Before you know it, March 29 and the “initial commitment deadline” will be upon us, and then the announcement of the band clearing plan and initial target.

Eventually, we’ll get to the repacking process and that’s where the fun should begin in earnest. We certainly live in interesting times!

I can’t help but think about how relatively worthless television broadcast spectrum once was. Early in my career I worked for an old-line television station (it went on the air in 1948), and there was a story that the “old timers” there liked to relate about how the station came into being. (After some 70 years, there’s really no way to prove or disprove it, so I offer it for what it’s worth.) It seems that within a year or so after World War II ended, the owners of one of the AM radio facilities in the city became interested in the new form of broadcasting that was beginning to be taken seriously, FM. One of the station’s owners journeyed to Washington to see about obtaining a construction permit that would allow them to add FM service. He was supposedly told in some amount of confidence that the FCC was so interested in seeing television develop that the FM CP would be issued *carte blanche* if the AM licensee would agree to take along a TV CP in the bargain. Again, there’s no way to substantiate this, but one can’t help but wonder if there wasn’t some amount of truth in the legend. At the time, many saw television only as a novelty or passing fancy—something that certainly would never

replace radio as *the* entertainment medium. Constructing a television station was expensive and a highly speculative investment at best. However, several of the big broadcast equipment manufacturers had a lot invested in developing television and wanted a return on their investments, hence the pressure to get stations on the air. (RCA, which had led the television R&D program in the 1930s, was especially interested in seeing some black ink, and its leader, David Sarnoff, in the post-war years reportedly advised larger market NBC radio affiliates that the network might reconsider such affiliations if the stations didn’t take steps to add TV.)

How times have changed! But one thing hasn’t; it’s still all about money!

I’m hopeful that television broadcasting will survive at close to the level that we now enjoy and that the broadcasting business will continue to prosper after the spectrum auction and repack, but only time will tell. As I’ve remarked before, “nothing is certain but uncertainty itself!”

As I mentioned, I’m writing this in late January and the Washington, D.C. area—my home for the past 40 years—is still digging out from one of the worst snowstorms ever (it made the top five such storms since record keeping began). My wife and I weren’t affected that much, as we had no travel plans lined up and there was plenty of food on the shelf and in the refrigerator. The storm began right on schedule Friday afternoon and continued to hammer the area until early Sunday morning. It was a blizzard by definition, with very high sustained winds and a lot of drifting of the 24 to 40-inches of snow that fell over the area. One of the really nice things about this storm (if you can say such a thing about something that spawned property damage, some deaths and massive amounts of cleanup work) was being able to sit back and watch and listen to the storm coverage that the D.C. area TV and radio stations were providing. During such a storm, you don’t get many callers (not even those people who are forever wanting to sell you a siding job and new windows), and after being cooped up this way for a while, you began to long for a little bit of diversion from the howling winds and snow piling up against the doors and windows. Thanks to broadcasting, we had it. I have to take my hat off to all the men and women who worked long shifts and took personal risks in reporting and airing (and I know what this is like as I used to be one of them) the wall-to-wall storm coverage. We were watching and listening off-the-air and never worried about a tree taking down a cable feeder or snow piling up over a VSAT dish. It was nice too to be able to listen during the evening hours to reports on the

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