



TECHNICAL COLUMNS

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EXPO 2005 SHOW PICKS

By **RON HRANAC**

How do they manage to do it? I've attended every Cable-Tec Expo since the first one held in Dallas back in 1983, and each year's confab is consistently better than the one before. Cable-Tec Expo 2005 was no exception, with robust exhibit hall floor traffic and well-attended and high-quality technical workshops. Expo Evening and other events provided an opportunity to relax after each day's hectic schedule and catch up with old friends. I ran into one of my coworkers from my TelePrompTer Cable TV days back in the 1970s. Bob Munden, whom I hadn't seen in years, helped teach me to climb poles, do installs and service calls, and even find the best coffee shops (during legitimate coffee breaks, of course).

Expo's opening general session featured top-notch CEO and CTO panels moderated by industry vets Paul Maxwell and Leslie Ellis. The fact that the Society of Cable Telecommunications Engineers was able to attract someone of the stature of Cisco Systems' John Chambers to participate in the CEO panel along with Time Warner Cable's Glenn Britt and Arris's Robert Stanzione says a lot about how Cable-Tec Expo has evolved over the years.

During the general membership meeting, I asked SCTE staff how many of this year's 10,000 Expo attendees are Society members. The answer was impressive: more than 90 percent! Considering SCTE's global membership count is just under 15,000, that says somewhere around 60 percent of all members attended Expo. Add the technical seminars and Vendors Days conducted by the Society's 72 chapters and meeting groups throughout the year, and the vast majority of our membership has access to some pretty decent technical training. But I digress, as usual.

Technology, gadgets, goodies

In what has become an annual ritual, I managed to find some time to wander the exhibit hall floor looking for interesting technology, gadgets and goodies. Here, in no particular order, are my Expo '05 picks.

CablePrep's FOCUS fiber-optic connector insertion and removal tool is a nifty gadget that has long tapered jaws to reach through congested cabling, while supporting the fiber and connector. Best of all, FOCUS has a built-in light, so you can see what you're trying to do. This tool works as advertised—heck, even I was able to plug and unplug optical connectors with it! www.cableprep.com

AC strips with surge suppression and noise filtering have been available at retail for some time. The PSB 5+3 power surge block from Cable Innovations includes eight surge-protected AC outlets—three of which are spaced to accommodate wall warts—and phone jacks. But Cable Innovations ups the ante a bit by offering an installer incentive of \$ 5 for each power surge block installed. The idea is to encourage installers to sell these to subscribers, adding some incremental revenue to the cable company bottom line and a little extra cash to the installer's pocket. www.cableinnovations.com

A better mousetrap? Perhaps. PCT International has a new locking F-connector that incorporates an internal locking ring to reduce the likelihood of the connector loosening over time from vibration and temperature changes. PCT-DRS-59L, PCT-DRS-6L and PCT-DRS-11R are compression crimp style F-connectors for 59-series, 6-series and 11-series drop cables. www.pctusa.net



Here's something for the lab or manufacturing test environment. Applied Instruments' NPR 2200 noise power ratio (NPR) test set is a self-contained instrument for performing NPR tests on active devices such as optical transmitters. The NPR 2200 covers 5-42 MHz or 5-65 MHz and incorporates built-in notch filters. Companion Windows-based software uses predefined test setups to run a power sweep series of NPR measurements and graph the results. www.appliedin.com

RMS's Power Spy Monitor LED is one of those gadgets that's in the category "Why didn't someone think of that before?" The Power Spy Monitor LED is a 5/8-24 port plug with a red light emitting diode (LED) and spring-loaded center conductor contact. Replace a conventional 5/8-24 port plug on line passives or actives with one of these, and you can see at a glance from the street whether power is present. Neat! www.rmscommunications.net

You probably know that Alpha Technologies has been selling batteries for standby supplies for a long time. The 210 GXL-HP, a Group 31 size gel cell battery, has had some tweaks to extend both its useful life and operating capacity. Silver alloy increases battery life by reducing possible grid corrosion, and larger grids extend run time from 180 minutes to 210 minutes in the same battery case size. Something else that caught my eye in Alpha's booth was the CTE series handheld conductance testers. Models 1200, 2200 and 3200 can store data for up to 10 locations of four strings of four batteries—that's up to 160 batteries! www.alpha.com

How about a weather-resistant locking terminator? Corning-Gilbert's GTP-TRM uses a clever design to keep moisture out, long a problem with some locking terminator designs. This new nickel-plated terminator is machined from solid brass and features an integral o-ring between rotating parts. The new design was able to avoid the use of press fit assembly to further enhance moisture migration resistance. www.corning.com/corninggilbert

And my show favorite? Arcom's CPD Hunter. The CPD Hunter is technology that allows identifying the location or the source of common path distortion (CPD) to within a few feet. CPD Hunter transmits radar-like signals in the downstream and interfaces with electronic versions of system maps to help identify CPD hot spots from the headend. A companion handheld passive locator and calibrator called Quiver can be used in the field. One of the features I found particularly impressive is the ability of CPD Hunter to do unattended testing and store the results, allowing location of intermittent CPD even if it's not occurring at the moment you're looking for it. www.cpdhunter.com

See you next year

Once again, a tip of the hat to SCTE staff and the Expo program committee for a job well done. Cable-Tec Expo 2006 will be held June 20-23 in Denver, so start making plans to journey to the Mile High City next year. Oh, in case you were wondering, I managed to reclaim the ribbon title.

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