

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

Last summer Roberto Saracco, IEEE ComSoc's Director of Marketing, spoke at length at a Distinguished Lecturer Tour in South America about the "Future of the Future." He addressed the important issues that will shape the future of our profession. In his presentation he asked, "What happened to convergence?" He speculated on how disruptive technologies are going to reshape telecommunications architectures of the future. He wondered about some telecommunications business models; for example, he challenged the traditional wisdom and questioned the economics of ever-increasing broadband capacity, and he offered his view of the future as shaped by data and wireless technologies, "mostly voice," and continuation of fixed line.

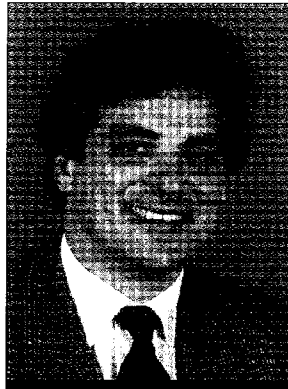
Although only time will tell whether his views are correct, Saracco's presentation was different because it questioned old assumptions and intended to stimulate creative thinking. Such presentations go beyond the scope of understanding complex technical theories and implementations, adding a larger context. It helps us understand communications technology in terms of local/world economics and society.

OUR COMMITMENT

IEEE ComSoc leadership is similarly committed to a creative approach to our view of the profession, the functioning of our organization, and our ability to deliver services to members.

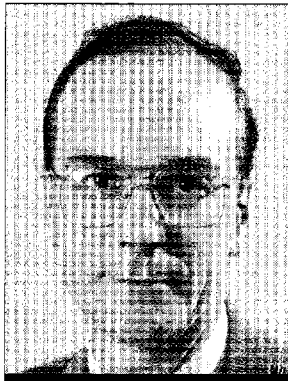
As you know by now, in 2002 the Society will commemorate its 50th Anniversary with a grand reunion (at ICC and GLOBECOM), reviewing successes and highlighting past accomplishments. We have many worthy accomplishments to justify all our congratulatory events and commemorative publications. In the February 2001 issue a word of caution was issued that before the parties begin, we should think creatively about the future. Where exactly is ComSoc going? Who will be tomorrow's members? Where will they work? How can we prepare to address their needs? How do we attract new members who may not share similar backgrounds or employers with current members? What do we need to do to attract new members to volunteer for local activities, conference management, committee assignments, publications, or roles in society leadership? Finding answers to these and many other questions that are key to our continued success in our second 50 years is the primary responsibility of our Marketing Department. The Marketing Department, which is expertly led by staff manager John Pape under the supervision of volunteer director Saracco, is largely responsible for a substantial part of the achievements described here.

In the past two years, the Communications Society has seen its membership ranks grow to more than 60,000. One of the reasons, I believe, is the empowerment of our Society volunteers at all levels of responsibility. We have clearly



Roberto de Marca

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improved the value of membership during the final years of our first half-century.

We continue to make efforts to better understand these new needs and new responsibilities. We strive to better understand the industries that employ our members or prospective members, and we strive to find ways to help members succeed in their careers. Whether members work in academia, government, manufacturing, or services — whether a member manages, designs, or consults — it is our goal to help him or her understand the technical issues, concerns, and changes that are shared by colleagues. And by doing so, we are able to offer an array of venues for exchange and advancement of technical expertise.

From surveys of members' interests, we find kernels of information that improve our self-knowledge and lead to actions and activities that benefit members. The importance of knowing where our membership has come from and where we are now can be seen in the initiatives of our committees and actions of our leaders. What members tell us is important to decisions that affect the services we provide, the conferences we sponsor, and the publications we publish. We are constantly learning from our members; responses and comments. Although we are global in scope, there is always a grassroots element to important issues and pivotal decisions.

Boundaries in communications have become fuzzy, and a variety of industries rely on communications technologies and principles for achieving their goals. ComSoc provides real value by fostering a community spanning a variety of disciplines. We encourage intellectual dialog and debate to bring tough issues into focus. And by attracting members from nontraditional industries and disciplines we are enhancing our service to traditional telecommunications members. Every year over 10,000 new members are recruited to ComSoc and they come to see if what we offer through our chapters, conferences, and publications that meet their particular needs. Not all stay, but we give all an equal chance to discover and contribute and become a part of our Society's future.

SOME EXAMPLES

In 2001, ComSoc teamed with Disney and *Discover Magazine* for a second year to sponsor a roundtable on the future, this year on the future of wireless communications. We exchanged special issues of publications with the Internet Society (ISOC). We advertised for new members in MIT's *Technology Review* magazine. We changed our mail service to an air delivery system to reduce international delivery of our magazines from as much as three months to an average of three weeks. In addition to society exhibits at trade shows such as SUPERCOM and NFOEC, we will exhibit this year at the large COMDEX trade show in Las Vegas later this fall. And all IEEE ComSoc Chapter Chairs have been invited to

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

the Global Chapter Chairs Conference to be held in conjunction with Globecom in San Antonio, Texas in November.

In the publications of the IEEE Communications Society — *Communications Magazine*, *Transactions on Communications*, *JSAC*, *Communications Letters*, *Network*, and *Personal Communications* (just renamed *Wireless Communications*) — members find the intellectual home of the best research and intelligence on wireless, optical, and Internet technologies. Every year these publications attract thousand of subscribers and result in some of the highest citation ratings of any publications in communications or electronic engineering.

Although mostly contemplative of past successes, the 50th Anniversary of the IEEE Communications Society in 2002 will offer members creativity that will impact the future. While the Grand Reunions at ICC and GLOBECOM will help us to commemorate the event, special issues of *IEEE Communications Magazine* and IEEE ComSoc journal publications will focus on the best papers of past years. Commentaries will add current perspective. A DVD with digital versions of all 50 years of ComSoc periodical publications (over 17,000 papers) is the most ambitious and perhaps most useful for anyone who needs to research communications literature. Among the other initiatives planned for 2002, a new dynamic “ontology” derived from IEEE ComSoc communications archives will improve paper/author search and retrieval capabilities on the IEEE ComSoc Web site. This classification scheme learns from bibliographic citations and reclassifies published papers annually based on application of the program.

There are many more great success stories: the Optical Fiber Communications conference (OFC), many chapter ini-

tiatives, and of course, *IEEE Communications Magazine*'s high ratings and great advertising success (Eric Levine and his extensive sales network brought \$2.4 million in advertising in 2000). All contribute to the future of the future for the IEEE Communications Society and the realization of our mission.

SHAPING THE FUTURE...

Roberto Saracco suggests that the perception of telecommunications, in a sense, will fade in the years to come. A profound yet subtle evolution will result in communications becoming universal; embedded in every component, every object, and every aspect of life, and hence no longer noticed. IEEE ComSoc seeks and welcomes those involved in assimilating creative uses of communications into their products, businesses, and processes. The IEEE Communications Society is well positioned for the future!

Note: The IEEE Communications Society office is located in New York City. The tragic events of 11 September 2001 did not result in any damage to the office or injure any employee. We are not aware of harm to any ComSoc member but at least one member gave her employment address as the World Trade Center. The President, officers, and staff of the IEEE Communications Society wishes to extend heartfelt sorrow and condolences to any and all who have friends or relatives involved in this tragedy.

Note 2: I previously wrote we would publish here the views of all three candidates running for 2003 IEEE President on several issues of great relevance to ComSoc operations and financial stability. Subsequently we decided to send the results of these interviews through e-mail to reach our whole membership in the fastest possible way. You should have received them by now. Vote well!