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What the Industry Reads First

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Women in Technology Winner



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SCTE Cable-Tec Expo 2015: Customer Experience and Beyond

Enhancing customer experience will continue to be the focus at this year's **SCTE Cable-Tec Expo**. With cable becoming more network-centric, many pieces of the network are critical to achieve better user experience, said SCTE pres/CEO **Mark Dzuban**. And the industry's revolution on different parts of the network over the past year, including energy efficiency, network security, enhanced performance enabled by things like DOCSIS 3.1 and the latest WiFi standard, will be embedded into the Expo program.

Dzuban said DOCSIS 3.1 deployment will begin in the first quarter.

SCTE is offering training in 4Q to prepare for the rollout. This week's conference in New Orleans will address what testing equipment and 3.1 products will be available, among other things. When it comes to wireless technology, an area SCTE has been focusing on is training around IPv6, the next-generation Internet protocol. With IPv4 addresses running out, IPv6 provides new addresses to support Internet Everywhere, "opening the door to new wireless applications," Dzuban said.

Energy consumption also will be part of discussions, with the "Energy 2020" campaign front and center. "It's about making sure the power supporting our network operations is sustainable and performing in a way that ensures zero or minimum disruption," said Dzuban. As soon as attendees walk into the exhibit building, they will see Energy 2020's main display, before even getting onto the show floor. Arris is among vendors demonstrating Energy 2020 products. The company, which is part of SCTE's Adaptive Power Systems Interface Specification (APSYS) Committee, will showcase a proof of concept based on its Converged Edge Router platform. The solution, which identifies resources that are under-utilized, aims to reduce energy consumptions in the network by up to 15%. APSIS is a core element of Energy 2020 initiative to achieve double-digit percentage reductions in energy cost and consumption by the end of the decade, Dzuban said. So far, Energy 2020 has led to 8 published specifications, which are being embedded in vendors' purchase agreements and equipment design.

Meanwhile, this year's Expo will see increased global col-

laboration, a strategy for SCTE as it expands through its international-facing brand, the **International Society of Broadband Experts**. Expo is expected to see attendees and exhibitors from some 50 countries. "Every year it's more and more international," Dzuban said. **Liberty Global**

evp/CTO **Balan Nair** is the program committee chair, the first time in a long while that an exec from an international company was selected for the job. Dzuban noted SCTE is hosting Germany's **Association of German Cable Operators** (ANGA) for collaboration on the Energy 2020 program. "Germany is probably one of the most advanced countries on the use of alternative energy," making ANGA the perfect partner for SCTE, said Dzuban.



Packed exhibit floor at SCTE Expo 2014

This year's show will also feature a Pre-Conference Symposium on cyber threats and how they pertain to the industry. Keynote speaker, **Cisco** svp/chief security and trust officer **John Stewart** will address the importance of adopting cybersecurity approaches to protect critical infrastructure, assets and data, and the need for cable providers to view their roles differently to become the protection arm for everyone who connects to them. **The National Institute of Standard** has a voluntary framework to better manage and reduce cybersecurity risk. **Donna Dodson**, chief cybersecurity adviser at NIST, **CableLabs** global cybersecurity initiatives dir **Michael Glenn** and **NCTA** broadband technology vp **Matt Tooley** will give an overview of the NIST framework and, more importantly, how it can be applied by small-to-medium cable ops.

Over the past few years, Expo has seen more attendees in non-technical fields. Every aspects of the business plays a part in improving customer experience, Dzuban said, noting that around 1/3 of attendees over the last few years weren't technical. That will continue to be the case in 2015. And as in past years, Expo will continue to see **WICT's** participation with the Tech It Out Conference, as well as SCTE's own SCTE-Tuck Executive Leadership Program. "Every year I leave the Expo with a greater insight into what my colleagues elsewhere in the industry are doing to push the envelope of innovation, create new products and services, and stay ahead of ever-growing network demand," **Theresa Hennesy**, svp of group technical advisor at **Comcast Cable** and part of Expo's planning, committee told us.

2015 WIT Winner

itaas, a Cognizant Company CEO Vibha Rustagi is the recipient of the 2015 Women In Technology award presented by WICT, SCTE and Cablefax, and sponsored by Bright House Networks. Today in its 20th year, the honor is bestowed upon an individual who has been an exceptional leader to women in technology and exhibited outstanding career accomplishments. The following is an intimate chat with Rustagi about her career and the award.

What does receiving this honor mean to you?

This award is definitely an honor. To me it's a validation of my desire to always exceed my expectations. I was really surprised. And I am now joining a group of women that I respect and hold in very high esteem for their accomplishments within our industry. I've known these women for many years—Yvette Kanouff, Nomi Bergman, Sherita Caesar, Stephanie Mitchko and several others. So it really means a great deal because it's based on my work in the technology field and it represents the hard work and the dedication from not only myself, but from our leadership team and all of the employees at itaas, who are now part of a Cognizant company.

How did your love of technology first develop?

It goes back to my school, where I had a fascination with physics—really a fascination for figuring out and finding solutions. And that fascination was nurtured by my physics teacher, Vaidah, when I was in India—more so in middle school and high school. I have two brothers, both of whom are involved in science and engineering, and they've influenced me and encouraged me and challenged me. And probably the competitive spirit the three of us had keeps me pushing harder to this day to be the very best that I can be.

As a woman in tech, did you always feel like you had the same opportunities?

I've never considered myself different, all along, to this day. In our family, education was encouraged consistently—the more the better. That was always a means to do more, for yourself, for the community. Even my dad had won many awards for his caliber in math during college, and pursued a career in finance. Being part of a family that encourages each other, challenges each other, and believes that you can accomplish anything if you work hard and persevere, has been my rock.

How would you evaluate the state of women in technology today in cable?

The cable industry isn't really any different from other industries. There's still a shortage of women in technol-

ogy and engineering, and the increase is very slow. There's still a shortage of women in technology and leadership roles. I'll site you a statistic from a CNNMoney analysis. Only 14.2% of the top five leadership positions at companies in the S&P 500 are held by women. Out of 500 companies, there are only 24 female CEOs.

That's less than 5%. So we still have a long ways to go.

How can we inspire young women to get involved in the field?

It's about seeing the possibilities and creating your own opportunities. We need to continue to shine a light on possibilities for women, and this award, to me, is an example of shining a light. I'm honored to be an example, both to men and women, for taking risks—like starting a technology company. Taking risks brings opportunity. The WICT

Tech it Out series is impressive and is another example of shining a light and bringing focus on the importance of women in technology roles. Women don't get leadership roles without being fearless and courageous, and at the same time being very good at what we do. So personally, I'm spending more time with women in this industry in an informal mentoring role, giving advice when asked, and also being available as a sounding board for women in the industry, sharing my philosophy. I want to give women a glimpse of the value that they bring to the workplace, and the ways to have even more success. And I think the more of us that do that, the better the state of the industry with respect to women can become.

You created an opportunity for yourself that wasn't initially available to you when you worked at Scientific-Atlanta, now Cisco. Can you talk about that?

I was in engineering at the time, and after a few years I wanted to get into the business management side of the industry. So I asked my engineering manager if I could move to marketing. At the time he said, "It's not a good idea. I don't think you're going to be very successful in the business aspect of this industry." So while it may have been disappointing for a few seconds, I followed my desire and approached the busi-



Rustagi speaks at WICT's Tech it Out conference.

ness team. At the time, Mike Hayashi was leading the digital video business, and I asked him to give me an opportunity to prove myself in marketing. He gave me a project, and said, “if you can do this successfully you will have a chance to come on board.” So I did just that and moved to the business management side. I was very persistent and this persistence gave me an opportunity for the biggest break I landed.

You're very active in the community on panels and industry events. Do you consider that part of your mission to inspire?

Yes, and I'm doing more and more of that as time permits. I think it's important to create possibilities that women can leverage. It's important for younger women, students, as well as women in the industry, to see the possibility for themselves.

You are one of the co-founders of itaas. What were the greatest obstacles to getting it off the ground, and how did you meet those challenges?

The first challenge was really taking the first step. Taking risk, being fearless and courageous, and taking the action to start the company. Certainly this was easier because of my two partners, Jatin Desai and Jaspal Bhasin. We made a great team. One of the other challenges was timing. We started itaas in 1999, beginning of 2000, and then in 2001 the state of the economy fell. 9/11 happened and there was a technology bust in the cable industry. There were hundreds of companies, especially those that had web-based solutions, trying to get into the interactive TV market. Our vision was to provide solutions around the digital ecosystem for organizations, both around services and products. Some of these companies that launched businesses went out of business. We continued to maintain our commitment to success and decided at that time to focus on the services segment and continue to expand that segment in the marketplace. Today itaas, a Cognizant Company, excels in providing services to this industry. Having the right people on the team really allowed us to have success. And of course, adding to that is hard work, persistence, focus, dedication—and all of that is

very important.

What's your position on work/life balance?

I get asked that question often. Ironically, women especially always get asked that question, “how do you balance?”—as if we're the only ones who need to do that. To me, there is no such thing as work/life balance. I really juggle priorities on a day-to-day basis, and there are times obviously that you can't be at every one of your child's events, and you can't be at every meeting as well. So you have to decide what is your priority for the day, for the week, for the month. So my husband and I sit down every weekend and figure out who can do what between the family and the work. And sometimes you do have to sacrifice a certain thing—but you do it knowingly because you love to do both. This is really critical to understand—there's no secret around the work/life balance.

Tell us about your efforts to encourage STEM education.

Our family has sponsored schools in India for underprivileged children and we encourage and reward science and technology at these schools. And as much as I can, I also volunteer to speak at high schools and for organizations that encourage entrepreneurship, focused on technology, at the high school level.

What would you say to young women looking to break into the tech industry today?

I think it's not about getting breaks or specific opportunities; it's more about the possibility. Not limiting yourself. Taking risks. And going for what is truly possible. It's really having a dream and being willing to work to fulfill that dream. From an early age I knew that anything was possible as long as I was willing to work hard and be persistent and consistently get better. And I think that's very important for young women to know that—that if they're persistent and hard-working and have a dream, they can accomplish it. I focus on knowing my subject matter; being prepared is very important. Being determined to do what it takes; being passionate about everything I do and also being fearless.

SCTE Society of Cable
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Congratulations

Vibha Rustagi

Recipient of the
2015 Women in Technology Award

The Women in Technology Award is a joint effort of WICT, SCTE and Cablefax.

The 2015 Award is sponsored by Bright House Networks

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