

PTC President's Report

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Remarkable as it seems, PTC'08 will mark our 30th Pacific Telecommunications Conference! This is truly a great milestone for our organization. From its very modest beginnings, PTC's challenge over these 30 years and going forward is similar to what most of you face: Ensuring that we embrace the changes around us. Changes in technology, changes in the marketplace, changes in the regulatory environment, changes in financial structures, and most of all, changes in the ways information and communication technologies (ICTs) are improving the human condition in our region. More than anything else, PTC offers all of us the opportunity to understand and appreciate the dynamism of our sector from a variety of perspectives. We do this through a sterling array of sessions and speakers that tap into the nexus of key changes, as well as through the richest opportunities for networking anywhere in the Asia-Pacific region at our annual conference

What makes PTC really special, and what has enabled us to thrive through thirty major conferences, is you. The PTC Board of Governors and Advisory Council are the elected stewards of the organization, and we refresh ourselves through elections held every year and every other year respectively. We entrust PTC operations to a nimble Secretariat headed by an able Executive Director and committed staff. However, most important is the constant influence of member participation throughout PTC's rich history. We treasure the continuing involvement of those visionaries who established PTC and still participate, and we thrive on the contributions of our newer members, who have also made their own mark on PTC's evolution with their participation and leadership.

Where We Stand Today

The PTC Executive Director position was filled earlier in the year and we are very pleased that Sharon Nakama accepted the Board's offer of promotion to this position. It is already clear that her leadership is making a very positive impact on the organization.

Financially, PTC has turned a corner and is firmly in the black again. The fund balance that had been declining in recent years has turned around and a modest surplus is again expected for FY07-08. This has allowed the Secretariat to fill in a few gaps in staffing to improve operations and services to our members. Continuing attention to sound fiscal management and more efficient operations over the past year have contributed significantly to achieving financial stability once again. We are also encouraged that key strategic decisions for the annual conference have been successful at drawing in greater registration and sponsorship numbers. No doubt the robust state of the industry as a whole is a contributing factor, and our Executive Director's excellent long-term relations with our industry partners have helped us leverage this upward shift.

We are also pleased with the success of the PTC Mid-Year Seminar in Tahiti this past year.

This was the first such event in a number of years, and the vitality and interest in this event was very encouraging. We are indebted to Maui Sanford for not only ensuring the success of this event but for helping to re-establish the role of the mid-year seminar to bring an educational event to an underserved region while creating improved networking opportunities for our members. We are again looking forward to a mid-year seminar in 2008, with plans in the works to organize this event in cooperation with CommunicAsia 2008 in Singapore. Building a strong second event during the year is important for PTC to have both greater reach and significant impact in the region as well as to continue to build member networking opportunities.

The PTC annual conference is the core of our activities, and the primary means through which we address our mission. I'm pleased to report that the Board of Governors has authorized a 5-year extension of our contract with the Hilton Hawaiian Village. So PTC in Honolulu in January will continue to be a cornerstone of telecommunications in the region through at least 2015.

Continuing Progress

Last year, my report included the following items and I would like to report on progress we have made together.

- We need to continue the movement toward more "managed" content in our conference programs in order to maintain and strengthen the focus developed over the past few years. This requires more time, skills, connections and effort than our volunteer members have been able to provide in today's economic and business environment.

PTC'08 was organized with this in mind. We are pleased with the commitment of proposal reviewers and others who gave considerable thought and time to providing quality conference content. We continue to work with a number of member experts in various areas of the broad telecoms and ICT arena to accomplish this. With this in mind, we are now focusing on ways to engage more members into the decision process for PTC'09 and the establishment of clear member committees to focus on the program for inclusive input. We are also looking at ways to bring in a larger quantity of high quality proposals.

- As noted above, PTC needs to create a win-win by finding new ways to create value for our unregistered "networkers" through greater affiliation with the conference.

Several new measures have been put in place this year and by all accounts to this point, they appear to be successful. These include a re-defined "networker" registration category, the reorganization of the traditional exhibit space to be more inclusive of networking meetings (dubbed the PTC Pavilion) and more comprehensive arrangements for suites, other meeting rooms and signage.

- In many ways, PTC still operates as a "legacy" organization. The BG will be looking at how to operate ably and cost-effectively, including through the possible use of strategic partnerships and/or outsourcing relationships.

Many discussions have ensued during the year and a greater variety of trade-out arrangements with partner organizations have been made. We will continue in this productive vein as we build and strengthen win-win partner arrangements.

- Any look at our operations must also include a review of our governance. Some have questioned whether the current PTC bylaws, adopted in 2002 based on concerns that developed in the 1990s, are capable of supporting the kind of nimble organization PTC needs to be today.

A bylaw review committee comprised of BG and AC members worked during the year to produce recommendations for modifications which are being discussed and acted on during the Board of Governors meetings at PTC'08.

Where We Are Headed

There are a number of areas in which the organization is making improvements and changing with the nature of the industry. We continue to make progress with networkers surrounding the annual conference and with efforts to align the needs of those with business meeting agendas and the conference that attracts them in the first place. A new networkers registration category was included this year that allows for greater participation in conference activities along with business meetings. Uptake on this has been encouraging, and we will continue to improve this component of PTC as we move forward. New suite/meeting room arrangements with the Hilton and a meeting scheduling system available to all participants have also contributed significantly. All this is leading to better engagement across the two major aspects of the annual conference, namely, content sessions and networking activities.

Into 2008, there will be a renewed focus on improving our web presence and capability. This will include the incorporation of better membership accessibility and networking utility. As online social networking continues its phenomenal reach, the utilization of available tools and those we might customize to our purposes are being developed with the intention of providing a means by which membership can be more fully engaged.

We also hope to attract greater participation from the Advisory Council, Board of Governors and our membership at-large. While we are indebted to those PTC members who contribute significantly to various aspects of PTC, notably in conference planning, proposal reviews and this past year in the bylaw review, we hope to find ways for the Advisory Council and others to contribute even more to the strategic development of PTC. Of course this requires engagement from the Board of Governors and Secretariat to structure more opportunities for participation.

As noted above, for PTC'09, our intention is to engage greater member involvement in conference planning. A number of new committees are being established for this purpose with the inclusiveness desired focused in particular areas of conference development. Key areas such as the overall steering committee do require a substantial commitment while other areas may allow more modest contributions as members are able to provide. All however require a sustained involvement throughout the year and we look forward to more members engaging in these critical activities in the coming year.

There are also works in progress to re-invigorate the research/education and development dimensions of the organization. These are two areas in which PTC affords members the opportunity to focus particular attention and to contribute to the larger building of civil society through sustained activities enabled by telecommunications and ICTs. I'd like to briefly focus on these as part of how PTC is developing beyond the annual conference event.

Role of research:

Research roundtables at PTC'08 have been organized by a number of PTC members to discuss the role of research in PTC and to develop new means of engagement of the academic research and education community with corporate/industry membership interests that constitute the larger majority of PTC members. How best to encourage and incorporate valuable contributions of meaning to the industry is high on the agenda along with meaningful and sustained engagement from the research community and PTC's research committee.

We are also pleased this year that PTC members Yale Braunstein and Richard Taylor have stepped forward to firmly establish two research paper awards. Presented for the first time to two well-deserving recipients at PTC'08, these awards offer the potential to continue to attract top quality, relevant research to the annual conference.

Role of development:

Long an area of interest for many members and a theme around which the 2007 mid-year seminar in Tahiti was organized, development issues and the role of telecommunications and ICT in development strategies and programs continue to have saliency for many members. A Development Special Interest Group (SIG) has been re-constituted with a new chair, Dr. Stephanie Rolfe. The group is preparing an agenda for the coming year with a focus on a number of potential areas in which PTC can have an impact and members can participate including greater interaction with other organizations.

This past year, PTC also established a partnership with Carnegie-Mellon University's Technology Consulting in the Global Community program. The partnership affords PTC members with interests in building human capacity in underserved and remote Pacific Island nations to become involved in a program that sends talented students to the Pacific region to bring ICT consulting expertise to governments and non-profit organizations.

In addition, PTC continues to offer waivers through our Development Assistance Fund for those participants from developing economies to attend the annual conference. We are pleased to have 15 people at PTC'08 whose participation was made possible through the generosity of contributors to this fund.

Membership is Our Hallmark

Although it consumes much of our attention and is our main vehicle for progress, PTC is more than just an annual conference. As with any membership organization, the members and our involvement are the most important success factors. I hope each of you can take a few moments to consider how you can participate more actively in PTC and add value to your own membership through your engagement in PTC committees, activities and events.

Best wishes to you and your families for a healthy and successful 2008!