Observations From The 2008 Atlanta MTT-S

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Microwave engineers (and even those who write about the industry) often use the annual IEEE Microwave Theory & Techniques Society (MTT-S) symposium and exhibition, otherwise known as the International Microwave Symposium (IMS), as the equivalent of "halftime" at a sporting event. It is a time to pause and ponder about the first half of the year. And it is an opportunity to take a peek at what competitors are doing, since many companies use the midyear MTT-S as a launching pad for new products.

The MTT-S exhibition floor featured show traffic that, while unremarkable compared to previous shows, was acceptable to most booth personnel who were asked. Although there were no surprises among the new products unveiled in Atlanta, the new-product and technology developments represented on the MTT-S exhibition floor marked a healthy evolution for this industry. Even spending three days packed with appointments generally on the half-hour, one regret for this MTT-S was not being able to see more booths and people in Atlanta. Safe to say that for almost any attendee to the show floor, there was no wasted time spent at any of the booths because they all had something to show.

As with most MTT-S exhibitions, booths from test-equipment suppliers loomed large, among the boldest and the largest on the floor. Most major suppliers were represented, from Agilent Technologies and Anritsu through Rohde & Schwarz and Tektronix. In smaller booths, of course, a healthy cross section of the industry displayed high-frequency components, integrated circuits, discrete devices, materials, design and test software, and even contracting services.

Amidst the activity on the show floor, one negative theme surfaced. It is apparent that the average age in this industry is rising, and many shared a concern for the need for new blood (with their new ideas and ideals). For those who remember intern programs, it might be time to reinstitute such plans to cultivate new talent. And the efforts of true "champions" for new talent for this industry, such as Dr. Larry Dunleavy of Modelithics (www.modelithics.com) device modeling fame and a tireless promoter of this industry to students at the University of South Florida (USF), should be applauded and supported. Because he is as humble as he is talented, Dr. Dunleavy would prefer that other like-minded individuals, such as his USF colleague Tom Weller, or his mentor at USF, Dr. Rudolf Henning, or Dr. Joy Lasker and colleagues at Georgia Tech, receive recognition for fostering this industry's next generation of engineers. Certainly, after witnessing the "graying" of the RF/microwave industry across the MTT-S show floor, their efforts are greatly needed.

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