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Publisher

Who needs educating?

I find that a decent editorial is always tricky to write. It is all about finding an angle that will prove interesting to the reader. The difficulty in this issue is that there are too many angles to choose from. Do we talk about distance learning, autonomous ships, earth observation, launcher developments – or indeed the common denominator – satellite?

If you stop somebody in the street and point blank ask them what benefits satellite brings to today's global economy – their answer would, at best, be vague. Once you have explained what a satellite actually is you might start to get some feedback – but again it is not coherent. The response often follows the lines of 'don't they have something to do with the military, what about TV – I have a dish on the side of my house'. To the average person, satellite isn't something tangible – you cannot see it, you cannot pick it up – it is not ubiquitous like a mobile phone is.

And this is exactly why the satellite industry has a problem. It is at a cross-roads – it has an ageing workforce with a great deal of expertise – that will soon be lost as a layer of experts start to retire. Where is the next group of innovators going to come from? The satellite industry is great at promoting itself to those in the know, but outside of the sector there is little or no education going on as to the benefits satellite brings to a whole host of industries. It is crucial satellite builds for the future and widens its appeal to a far broader audience. For a better and brighter future, education is key.

Education is inextricably linked to social and economic development and therefore it plays a major role in the development of a country's population. Asia in particular is very fragmented in terms of population spread, development, wealth, poverty and opportunity. Satellite solves the issue bringing together pupils and institutions no matter what the distance between them. Using the Internet and satellite based broadband networks – quality educational content is being used to educate communities in urban areas. India has its own dedicated satellite, EDUSAT, which focusses on the delivery of distance education services to its vast population. Without satellite vast swathes of the country would not be able to educate and develop.

Whether it is through TV or computer networks, public safety, transportation, global security, financial markets, health and social care, disaster recovery - satellite permeates everything we do, whether we know it or not. Satellite is vitally important. The problem is that the majority of people aren't aware of this. This lack of awareness creates more challenges for the industry as it moves to become more of a mainstream technology.

Isn't it about time the satellite industry took a leaf out of its own book and started promoting itself to a wider audience. ■

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