

TEAM 2008

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Delbert Wilson

PAC CLUB

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HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2008 TSTCI PLANTMEN'S CONFERENCE

The 2008 TSTCI Plantmen's Conference in Austin, Texas, started off with a Golf Tournament at Falconhead Golf Club's PGA-Signature course. The warm, sunny day couldn't have been more perfect for the 52 golfers participating in the tournament! After the tournament the golfers gathered for refreshments, appetizers and prizes.

Congratulations to Our Winners!

FIRST PLACE: Skip Hirvela, Ed White, Dane Loyd and Paul Moore

SECOND PLACE: Lamar Davis, David Brooks, Richard Dzanski and Mark Washington

THIRD PLACE: Steve Gill, Eric Lantz, Chuck Davidson and Ken Baker

FOURTH PLACE: Jim Harguess, Terry Hodges, J. C. Evans and Robert Parker

CLOSEST TO THE PIN: Jim Harguess

LONGEST DRIVE: David Brooks

THANKS TO OUR TOURNAMENT SPONSORS!

GOLF TEE BOX SIGNS

CHR Solutions, Inc.	Quintrex Data Systems Corporation
Communications Sales Associates	RepCom International
Embarq Logistics, Inc.	Superior Essex
OFS	Telecom America Services, Inc.
Power & Telephone Supply Company	

GOLF DONATIONS

Calix	MP Nexlevel
Embarq Logistics, Inc.	Tellabs
Graybar	Texas Telephone Association

Bright and early Thursday morning, TSTCI President Delbert Wilson welcomed attendees and introduced this year's keynote speaker, **Jack McCall**.

Sharing his life stories, Jack took attendees back to the simpler days of life with memories and visions of childhood antics and innocent rationale. Telling anecdotes of family and friends, Jack gently reminded those present that relationships are the most important and fundamental keys to happiness and balance in personal and professional lives. With laughter and sentimentality, Jack McCall caused all to reflect on their current relationships, consider beginning new ones and reminded them to never forget that people need people to be happy.



Following Jack was **Tony Crow**. Tony, accompanied by his leader dog Rudy, addressed the group on safety and how his accident affected not only him, but the lives of everyone around him. On the job at TXU, safety regulations were always top priority for Tony, who instinctively followed them without hesitation. Tony now wishes that the same dedication to safety would have spilled over to the day he went hunting and was blinded for life. Tony expressed to the group that safety is a critical part of life and that each of them needs to remember it in their professional and personal lives. Open and honest, Tony (and Rudy) touched everyone in the room. Tony founded a non-profit organization, INJAM – It's Not Just About Me, which provides scholarships for high school seniors who have overcome physical, mental or emotional disabilities.



The next speaker was **Greg Williams**, Draka Fiber Optic Cable, who talked about Dry Fiber Impact on Your Network Objectives. Greg discussed the industry standards for gel and no-gel cables and the movement toward totally dry fiber cable. His presentation focused on removing the gel from inside the tubes and protecting the optical fibers. Greg's presentation summarized the benefits and risks of gel-free (dry tube) fiber cable.



Dan Vaters, Communications Supply Service Association, then addressed the group on The Multi-Media WLAN Opportunity – Channel Blanket WiFi. Maintaining infrastructure focus, Last Mile – copper or WiMax; Last Meter – WiFi, how to profit from the “last meter”, profiling the customer (casual or power users) and defining personnel skill sets (networking or wireless) were all components of this insightful presentation.



After lunch the attendees returned to hear from **George Mack**, Cameron Communications, on the subject of Disaster Recovery/Network Security – Real Life Lessons. George Mack brought to life the disaster suffered by Cameron Communications when Hurricane Rita struck in 2005. He explained the processes that were in place to deal with a disaster, how the current processes worked and what needed to be changed. George's experiences showed the importance of putting the necessary recovery and network security components in place in the event of a disaster.



An always popular speaker, **Don McCarty**, McCarty Products, Inc., shared his insights on Provisioning and Maintaining Paired Copper Conductors for Existing Services. Don's explanations of the processes and components, problems and solutions proved to be both technical and educational for those in the industry.

Thursday's sessions wrapped up with the concurrent Roundtable Discussions. The Central Office discussion was facilitated by Don Fendrick, Alcatel-Lucent; Installation and Repair was facilitated by Don McCarty, McCarty Products, Inc., and Construction Issues by Dan Vaters, CSSA.

After the day's sessions, attendees gathered for the Tabletop Trade Show and Welcome Reception. With good food and refreshments, attendees had the opportunity to network with each other and learn about the latest offerings from 40 exhibitors. Ideas were shared, products were discussed, alliances formed and a good time was had by all.





Friday morning started with **Don Fendrick**, Alcatel-Lucent, discussing IP Ethernet – The Future of Your Network. Service delivery environments are changing and blending communications services, and more bandwidth is needed to support IPTV, time shifted TV and Unicast streams. It is important to know that networks are evolving to IP – focusing on services for the individual.



Kent Larsen, CHR Solutions, next shared his thoughts on Understanding the Impact of Revenues and Settlements on a Telco Network. Kent provided insight into the impact various funds have on bottom line revenues. His calculations showed how bundling, pooling and providing the triple play can save money by reducing costs.



Hillary Cherry, CHR Solutions, finished the conference with Beyond Technology – The Vital Importance of the Customer Experience. Hillary explained that businesses today must realize that the end user's experience has an immediate impact on customer loyalty and what they buy. Success is no longer defined by what you offer, but by how it's delivered. The companies that will pull ahead of the rest will be those who never lose sight of their customers.

The 2008 Plantmen's Conference concluded with the drawings for the Grand Prize and the Raffle. **Ray Harrell**, Eastex Telephone Cooperative, was the Grand Prize winner of the \$500 gift certificate from Bass Pro, sponsored by **Texas Communications Expo**, and **Bob Wilson**, Wes-Tex Telephone Cooperative, won the raffle prize, a custom-made hunting knife, sponsored by **CHR Solutions**. The raffle raised \$228 for the PAC fund.



It was great to see everyone's smiling faces and TSTCI staff hopes to see you again at the Marketing Conference, April 3 in Dallas!

Upcoming TSTCI Conferences –

April 3 TSTCI Marketing Conference
Embassy Suites Outdoor World
Dallas, Texas

June 4-6 TSTCI Spring Managers' Conference
Radisson Resort
South Padre Island, Texas

Special thanks to our

2008 PLANTMEN'S CONFERENCE SPONSORS

PLATINUM

Eastex Telephone Cooperative, Inc.

GOLD

La Ward Telephone Exchange, Inc.
Zone Telecom, Inc.

SILVER

Etex Telephone Cooperative, Inc.
Ganado Telephone Company, Inc.

GRAND PRIZE

Texas Communications Expo, Inc.

RAFFLE PRIZE

CHR Solutions, Inc.

DISCRETIONARY FUND

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Richards, Elder & Green, L.L.P.

Taylor Telephone Cooperative, Inc.

Texas Excavation Safety System

Windstream Supply, Inc.

DOOR PRIZES

3M Communications Markets Division

Central Texas Telephone Coop., Inc.

Emerson Network Power

Kenny Humpert

PSA

TSTCI

Mark Your Calendars!

EXPO 2008

April 8-10

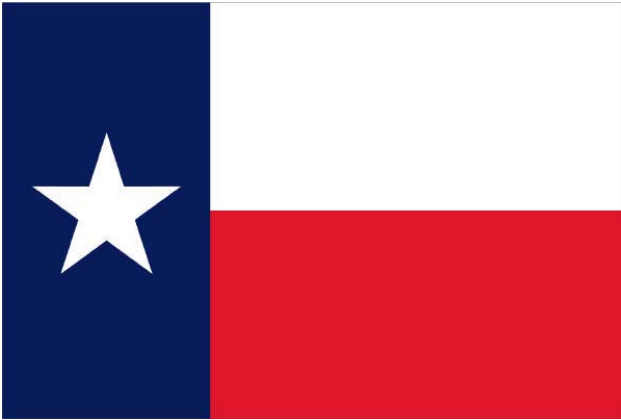


**Texas
Communications
Expo., Inc.**

Bell County Expo Center in Belton, Texas

For registration information, visit www.tcei-expo.com!

TSTCI PAC EXPERIENCES SUCCESS IN 2008 PRIMARY ELECTIONS



This year's primary elections can be summed up in two words – Record Setting! The turn out of voters for the Presidential nominations surprised everyone and affected certain down ballot races in a positive, or in some cases a negative, manner.

There were a total of 31 incumbent primary races. Two races were in the Senate with both Senators easily winning their districts. The Senators, both supported by TSTCI PAC, were Senator Craig Estes of Wichita Falls and Senator Tommy Williams of The Woodlands.

All 150 State Representatives were on the ballot with Republicans holding a 79-71 majority. Eight incumbents chose not to seek re-election, the majority of those members being House Committee Chairmen. There were 29 House incumbents with challengers – 17 Republicans and 12 Democrats. TSTCI PAC participated in 12 House races and supported 8 Representatives who won their elections; unfortunately three lost tough races with Buddy West of Odessa awaiting a runoff. All these races were affected by either the record voter turnout or the millions of dollars which poured into the races from supporters that were “Pro Speaker Craddick” or dollars contributed by the “Anti Craddick” groups.

We are now entering the general election cycle and, based upon the dollars spent during the primary races, it is going to be a very expensive election. We must step up our fundraising efforts on a statewide basis so we will have the necessary funds to support our friends. Remember, the individuals elected in November will become the “decision makers” of the 81st Legislative Session. As we are keenly aware, we need 76 votes in the House and 21 votes in the Senate to pass good legislation and more importantly to defeat any bad legislation.

Please help spread the word of TSTCI PAC's success during the primary races and encourage your fellow members to invest in TSTCI PAC for the general elections. There will be many opportunities to participate with the PAC prior to November. There are a number of upcoming golf tournaments, fundraisers, the Annual Membership Meeting, and the individual pledge card commitment for the **TEAM 2008** program.

Remember, if we do not invest in our industry, who will? If not now, then when?

TEAM 2008

TOGETHER EVERYONE ACCOMPLISHES MORE!

HILL COUNTRY TELEPHONE COOP. HOSTS RECEPTION HONORING COMMISSIONER TODD STAPLES



Hill Country Telephone Cooperative hosted a reception honoring Texas Department of Agriculture Commissioner Todd Staples. The reception, held February 26 at the Inn of the Hills in Kerrville, is part of a new coalition building program developed by TSTCI. Commissioner Staples delivered a message, *Rural Texas – The Foundation of Our Great State*, to those attending.

The reception provided a forum for members of the agricultural community, as well as other industries represented in rural Texas, to become united in support of issues such as economic development, transportation, health care and communications in rural Texas.



News from Associate Members

UDP Announces New Licensed Software Model for Billing Services

UDP, a national provider of operational support systems and billing solutions, announced they are now offering a licensed hosted version of its end-user and access billing services. Traditionally, the San Antonio-based company provides COMET, its end-user billing platform, and GALAXY, its carrier access billing platform, exclusively through a software as a service (SaaS) model.

Today, UDP has introduced a new option for customers. Communication companies can now choose a licensed hosted model if they prefer a long-term solution that amortizes their initial investment for OSS and billing operations.

According to Chief Information Officer Joel Daniels, UDP wants to offer its customers multiple choices to help meet individual business needs. "Via this new model, our client-partners can actually reduce their monthly billing operational expenses, and partners choosing this option, can book the software license as an asset."

A set license fee, applied in this option, would eliminate monthly charges associated with recurring license fees based on volumes for COMET and GALAXY users. Businesses choosing the licensed version continue to benefit from UDP hosting the OSS and billing platform applications as well as supporting data security. Hardware expenditures are also avoided. The new option provides many benefits of the application service model, but with the advantage of the choice to purchase the software license, versus paying to have monthly access to the software.

Daniels emphasized, "The licensed model we have introduced to the market empowers our clients to choose what is best for them. Our partners can focus their knowledge and resources on supporting and growing their core business, instead of worrying about the demands of billing procedures. General Managers and CEOs hire us because we are well known for our accuracy regarding billing processes and output."

Applications are provided from a secure, state-of-the-art data center that follows industry standard safeguards, including disaster recovery resources. Processes and procedures are routinely evaluated by an independent auditor and have received SAS-70 Type-II certification. In addition to its customer care/order management systems for end-users, CABS billing, and message processing, UDP is also a veteran in bill presentment and fulfillment. UDP is an end-to-end OSS and billing solution provider for the telecom and communications industry.

For more information on services offered by UDP, visit their website – www.udp.com.

Martin Group Expands IP Staff to Better Serve its Customers

New Hires Reaffirm Martin Group's Commitment to the IP Industry

(Mitchell, S.D.) – Martin Group, a leading provider of BSS|OSS software solutions, next generation engineering, and business services that address the operational and marketplace challenges faced by today's communications providers, today announced the addition of Eric Blissmer and Michael Smith to its Telecommunications Consulting and Engineering (TCE) department.

"Mr. Blissmer and Mr. Smith bring in-depth experience in IT, telecommunications, and network systems design, as well as extensive IP expertise," says Steven Angerhofer, Vice President of TCE. "The addition of Mr. Blissmer and Mr. Smith to Martin Group's team of engineers demonstrates our commitment to IP and its importance in present and future technology deployments," adds Angerhofer.

Blissmer and Smith bring over 20 years of combined experience in firewalls, Cisco routers, switches, and networking. As Technical Consultants, Blissmer and Smith will be responsible for administering Internet services, firewalls, routers, switches, and security systems in support of multiple global architectures. They will provide

hands-on support of production systems including networking LAN/WAN, internal/external security systems, email, and remote access systems.

Mr. Blissmer brings a track record of proven in-depth knowledge of IT network systems design principles, methodologies and approaches used in planning, developing, testing, installing, operating, administering and maintaining network services. For the past four years, Mr. Blissmer was an instructor at Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi, Mississippi. Prior to Keesler AFB, Mr. Blissmer held several positions within the United States Air Force including Network Administrator, Space-Command-Network Operator, and Jet Propulsion Aviation Maintenance Technician.

Mr. Smith joins Martin Group bringing over 16 years of experience in the computer industry. Most recently, Mr. Smith has been the owner of 1up Computing in Sioux City, Iowa, where he was responsible for providing remote and local network administration and enterprise-level virus and spam protection. Mr. Smith has also served as a Senior Network Support Technician and Senior Technical Support Technician for several companies, including Fiserv, Western Iowa Tech College, and Gateway.

With more than three decades of experience in the communications industry, Martin Group's engineering team provides next generation solutions backed by extensive IP/data experience and knowledge. For additional information, visit www.martin-group.com.

Mapcom Systems and Centina Systems Announce Strategic Alliance

FEBRUARY 28, 2008 – RICHMOND, VA and RICHARDSON, TX – In a move designed to enable telecommunications providers to significantly enhance their ability to prevent and respond to network disruptions, Mapcom Systems and Centina Systems announced today the integration of their respective software solution suites and the signing of a joint marketing agreement. Mapcom Systems, based in Richmond, Virginia, is the developer of the M4® Geographical Operations System; and Centina Systems, headquartered in Richardson, Texas, is the developer of the NetOmnia™ Customer-Centric Service Assurance System.

The integration of the Mapcom and Centina software applications provides their joint customers with extraordinary capabilities for monitoring, managing and measuring their networks from within the same geographically-based operations platform that enables visualization and management of their overall serving area, including physical assets, employees and customers.

“The level of integration achieved between Mapcom and Centina represents an important breakthrough for telecommunications providers who wish to manage their operations on an end-to-end, fully visualized basis,” said John Granger, CEO of Mapcom Systems. “This basically brings the power of a carrier-class network operations tool and extends it in an easy-to-use, map-based format to employees responsible for customer care from across many different departments within a telecommunications operation.”

One of the most important benefits the integration of M4® and NetOmnia™ provides is the ability to aggregate element management systems from various vendors deployed within a telecommunications network and enable overarching common-point-of-failure analysis. With the ability to remotely “see” the various network components in correct geographic space on the system map, even front line customer service representatives can readily determine which customers are affected by network disruptions.

“Waiting for customers to report service problems is too risky for service providers today,” explains Anand Gonuguntla, CEO of Centina Systems. “With IPTV convergence, managing service levels is the key to soliciting and retaining customers. Integrating billing, inventory and network monitoring systems can provide significantly faster resolution of network issues, which is what customers demand. This is the key to proactively resolving issues and gaining customer loyalty, and this is what the integration of M4® and NetOmnia™ brings to our joint customers.”

For more information, visit www.mapcom.com.

SJI, LLC Selects Quintrex Billing/OSS Solution

Cedar Rapids, Iowa – SJI, LLC of Larose, La. recently selected Quintrex Data Systems Corp. to install its highly integrated Billing, Customer Care, Marketing and Plant package.

Requiring a Billing/OSS solution to meet the needs of its current operations as well as future business needs, SJI conducted an extensive selection process that encompassed vendors with in-house, service bureau and hosted solutions. Using a committee-devised list of software requirements, the evaluation consisted of numerous demos and RFPs prior to determining the Quintrex solution best accommodated its needs. “Without a doubt, SJI conducted the most extensive search process we have ever been involved with,” said Gary Brendes, vice president, Quintrex Data Systems Corp. “They have a tremendous amount of knowledge and experience behind them and are a great group of talented individuals to work with. We are excited to build upon our existing relationship with them.”

SJI noted the decision was based on several factors including Quintrex’s ability to meet a detailed list of software requirements, offer favorable customer references and display a positive interaction with SJI employees. In addition, the Quintrex solution allows for more productive utilization of existing employee resources which, in turn will assist SJI in being able to achieve business goals relating to sales, marketing, employee productivity and overall customer satisfaction.

As both companies prepare for the conversion and implementation process, SJI is especially looking forward to the consolidation of two billing platforms into one system. Utilizing the assistance and knowledge of the SJI Information Systems Department, Quintrex is confident an efficient conversion can be achieved having previously converted a total of seven platforms into a single system.

Adding to the solid, user-friendly Customer Care, Billing and Plant Solutions, the Quintrex Marketing Solution will assist SJI in developing notable customer awareness of new business markets and available bundled services. Utilizing a targeted marketing approach, SJI will be able to direct promotions toward customers who meet a specific set of criteria. The ability to more effectively market to customers will not only save them time and money, but maximize ROI.

For more information, visit www.quintrex.com.

Upcoming Events

April 2008

- 3** **TSTCI Marketing Conference – Dallas, Texas**
- 8-10** **TEXAS EXPO 2008 – Belton, Texas**
- 9 Texas PUC Open Meeting
- 10 FCC Open Meeting
- 25 Texas PUC Open Meeting

May 2008

- 8 Texas PUC Open Meeting
- 14 FCC Open Meeting
- 22 Texas PUC Open Meeting

June 2008

- 4-6** **TSTCI Spring Managers’ Conference – South Padre Island, Texas**
- 5 Texas PUC Open Meeting