

Cable Comments

By LARK L. SAMOUELIAN
Executive Director,
SW Oakland Cable Comm.



The theme of the Fourth Annual State of Educational Technology Conference was 'State of the Future.'

The conference, hosted at the Westin in Downtown Detroit, was co-sponsored by the Michigan Department of Commerce, Michigan Department of Labor and the Wayne County Intermediate School District. The cosmopolitan setting enhanced the acceptance of innovative and progressive information.

At the conference Governor James Blanchard announced the results of a two year study entitled "Connections - A Strategy for Michigan's Future Through Telecommunications." Over the past two years the Task Force held Public Hearings throughout the State to learn of existing plans and the need for developing services via communication technologies. Business, industry, Education and Government factions were heard. Next, a Task Force Resource Group was formed consisting of 250 participants throughout the state. The Task Force along with EDS, did a nationwide study of what other states were doing. The Task Force gathered the information and then met on several occasions with the Resource Group and compiled a 'Use Assessment' Survey.

EDS then prepared a "Use Assessment of Michigan's Telecommunications Systems Project Summary." From this consolidation of information, the Governor's Telecommunication Task Force, chaired by Mrs. Janet Blanchard, prepared the submitted Strategy.

I quote a portion of the Governor's message. "Connections: A Strategy for Michigan's Future Through Telecommunications", presents a vision for Michigan that focuses on technology as a means to ensure Michigan's children, workers entrepreneurs and government officials access to the high-tech tools of tomorrow - tools which will enhance the quality of life in the Great Lake State and assure the personal and economic success of its people. The Telecommunications Task Force's strategy will guide our state in meeting the challenges of the information

Age and propel our work-force into the 21st Century."

The Comprehensive List of Task Force Recommendations may be capsulized to include the following areas.

1. Educating youth and training workers; 2. A new tool for Michigan business; 3. Promoting service and change in government, and 4) Improving the quality of life.

The highlighted recommendations include:

- encourage telecommunication partnerships between businesses, communities, governments and schools.

- provide training programs to those who use telecommunications to deliver.

- use telecommunications as a classroom tool to foster new teaching methodologies.

- provide incentive and competitive grants to encourage deployment of the new technology.

- establish a Division of Educational Technology within the Michigan Department of Education.

- assist & support Michigan's post secondary institutions in training a marketable workforce.

- encourage the establishment of new entrepreneurial ventures that draw upon this technology.

- develop the state as a hub of information services thereby attracting new businesses.

- provide incentives for Michigan's private communications industry to deploy the latest technology in every region of the state.

- devise a strategy to use telecommunications to market Michigan products and services to the world.

- transform the state government into a model "telecommunity".

- encourage a state of the art, hybridinteractive, switched telecommunication backbone system of multiple broadband technologies to serve all institutions and every Michigan citizen.

- designate two state departments as pilot information innovators.

- recruit and maintain corps of skilled information workers for state government.

- initiate a schedule for states' infrastructure.

- work with local governments to aid them to manage their information resources and improved services to citizens.

- solidify the state's role as an information clearinghouse.

information clearinghouse.

- establish Cabinet Council on Information Technology.

- promote use of technology to eliminate handicappers isolation and bring them into the center of Michigan's workforce.

- encourage telecommunication policy for individuals not able to be physically present in classrooms or the workplace.

- support the concept of connecting homes, offices and schools through a network of switched broadband technologies.

- devise a telecommuting policy for state workers, encouraging the private sector.

Implementation of these recommendations will "help Michigan secure a competitive edge in the new global information society for the leaders and workers of the next century."

Interestingly enough, throughout the many learning sessions, our human reaction to accessibility was a much talked about subject. One of the keynote speakers, Dr. James Crupi summed up beautifully. He stressed that industry and geographic boundaries will become irrelevant. "The Jobs will follow the People. Through the telecommunications highways of the future, our definition of time and distance will change. Competition will not be with price, but with service." He emphasized how people will not be in pursuit of knowledge for knowledge sake but for the pursuit of significance. Our work ethics would also change from living to work to work to live.

Much has been written on society's preoccupation with more leisure and a shorter work week. I have often agreed with this desirable concept. However, one cannot help but wonder how much leisure is too much. We are an adult society known for apathy beyond our front door. It seems that with such a proactive plan such as the Governor's Telecommunication Task Force Strategy in place, opportunity will be knocking on those doors. I don't know about you, but I am very excited at the opportunity to learn all I can about the new technologies. Those in Community Access Television have already taken the first step to being receptive to learning. Congratulations! What do you think? I would love to hear from you! <