

RESUME OF PRESENTATION

Can Cable System Management and Retreaded Aerospace Engineers
Adapt to Each Other?

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With respect to the subject "Can Cable System Management and Retreaded Aerospace Engineers Adapt to Each Other?", I can only plead for a rewording of the statement and then an unequivocal "yes". There is a connotation of the word "retreaded" which is most unfair to aerospace engineers.

NSPE has just completed a major study funded by the Department of Labor on the skills conversion of aerospace engineers for use in the new priorities of the nation. This study has shown that the skills available in the technological field from those with aerospace experience are usually transferrable to other areas with a relatively short period of additional training in the nomenclature and application of the science and math they have used in their previous employment.

Unfortunately, this study also shows that there are several commonly held opinions relative to aerospace technical personnel which are substantially unjustified. Although of course there are examples which can be found to prove the "myths", it is grossly unfair to use these few examples and generalize to the total aerospace technological employment.

These myths are:

(1) They will consider any new assignment as temporary and if, and when, a resurgence occurs in the aerospace technology they will leave the new employment to go back. The fallacy of this assumption is two-fold: (1) that aerospace will be reactivated at anywhere near the level of its previous activity; and (2) that individuals who may accept a new direction for their careers are not totally committed to this change. No statistics are available which indicate any extensive justification for this myth.

(2) Because of the nature of the aerospace work, all technical people concerned with it are not cost conscious. It is true that the criteria of aerospace work was first and foremost reliability but aerospace technical personnel were very conscious of the parameters within which they worked and would be equally conscious of cost parameters if this be the requirement of their new assignments.

(3) Aerospace technical personnel are too specialized. While it is true that the assignments to which aerospace engineers and scientists were addressing themselves perhaps have no immediate counterpart, perhaps in new assignments 80 to 90 percent of the science and mathematical background they were applying can be easily transferred to similar requirements in another line of work. A current series of pilot projects being conducted by the National Society of Professional Engineers is proving this point.

(4) They are underproductive. This is perhaps the greatest myth of all, and perhaps is generated by the fact that so many engineers and scientists were utilized in this highly technical field. Those who propound this complaint

oftentimes come from low technology areas where it is difficult to conceive of a highly scientific activity requiring a ratio of technical brainpower far in excess of their experience.

(5) Aerospace personnel were overpaid and are therefore too expensive. Repeated salary and income surveys of aerospace personnel show them only slightly above the averages in the entire technical field. For the most part many of these aerospace engineers are quite willing to accept assignments at the going rate of engineers, which is usually within close proximity to similar work in the aerospace industry.

To revert to our original question, projections for the CATV industry indicate that you are going to have great need for technological people. Many of these will require backgrounds in the electronics and communications fields, and even the remote person from the space industry is aware this was a major activity from which there are many engineers available. CATV management would do well to look to the displaced aerospace engineer to provide a very essential ingredient for the expanded programs with which they will be faced.