



Digital Tech Consulting, Inc.

NEWS

For Immediate Release

Contact: Myra Moore, (214) 915-0930

myra@dtcreports.com

WITH DIGITAL TRANSITION ONLY STARTING FOR MANY, COUNTRIES FACE EXPENSIVE PITFALLS IN MOVE FROM ANALOG TO DIGITAL TV BROADCASTING

Snap Engineering Decisions Can Lead to Headaches

DALLAS, TX – April 27, 2011 – While a handful of countries in North America and Western Europe have made the transition from inefficient analog to pristine digital TV broadcasting, 70% of the world's countries are still watching TV through old-style analog broadcasts. Making that transition is not as easy as flipping a switch. The needs of government regulators, broadcasters, viewers, community organizations, and even other nearby countries need to be considered before planning a digital TV transition.

“Over-the-air TV reception not only provides entertainment and education, but it also provides mass communication during critical national events and emergencies. TV spectrum is one of a nation's most valuable resources and the efficient use of spectrum is critical,” said Myra Moore, president of Digital Tech Consulting. “A misstep in a digital TV transition can have serious or disastrous consequences, and that's why we encourage countries to plan ahead and learn from the experiences of others.

“In our work helping various countries plan and manage digital TV transitions, we've encountered key viewing habits that must be considered at the earliest planning stages. The issues aren't always technical and are seldom the same from one country to another. One example involves an important viewership that is culturally and linguistically connected to news and 'soap operas' from a neighboring country – a connection that is not trivial and one that is best thoughtfully considered if the end of analog over-the-air analog TV would sever that connection,” said Moore

“In another situation, a government underestimated the number of viewers receiving TV with an indoor antenna. The result was the costly addition of more transmission equipment to replicate the coverage of analog channels with the new digital signals. While the technical plan looked good on paper to engineers, in the 'real world' it didn't turn out as expected and it added costs for the broadcast authority,” Moore said.

70% of Countries Still Rely on Analog Broadcasting

Less than one-third of the world's nations are transmitting digital TV signals today. Many of the countries yet to jump on the digital bandwagon – especially those in Latin America, Africa and the Middle East -- are just now making plans for building over-the-air digital TV systems.

“While trials are underway in some countries, the complete global transition to digital is still many years away,” explained Moore.

Digital Tech Consulting (DTC) has helped countries in the Middle East, the Caribbean, and in North America to carefully plan broadcast transitions. DTC provided the electronics industry’s only accurate tracking service for digital converter boxes sold in the U.S. market, a key tool used to measure the effectiveness of the government discount coupon program that reduced the cost of certified boxes by \$40. In addition, DTC has produced receiver cost analyses for government agencies and educational materials for retailers and consumers that explain how to prepare for an analog-to-digital transition in specific countries.

No “Cookie-Cutter” Approach

It’s likely that the transition for most countries will be vastly different from those that have gone before. Different-sized land masses and populations, regional considerations, and the state of current broadcast infrastructure require customized plans for each country or territory. And if large portions of the population depend on over-the-air TV service, the decisions become even more critical.

There are several questions that countries should consider as they embark on a digital TV transition, starting with “what are the main objectives for building an over the air digital TV system?” The purpose of such a transition must be clearly understood, whether it’s to clear spectrum for other uses, make available more TV programming, create a multiplatform communications system, or cooperate with other countries in the region to maximize efficiencies.

Other considerations include the selection of a transmission standard and key technical specifications, “future-proofing” the system, making decisions about TV receiver specifications, and deciding what role the government will play in distributing new receivers to the public. The best methods to educate a mass audience about the need for a transition and the impending change also need to be carefully weighed.

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