

Technical Corner

Summer Doldrums

I don't wish to sound discouraged, but it is all too common to see people enjoying their family and their summer in the Northern Hemisphere at this time of the year. Why is that a bad thing, you might ask. From a purely quiescent aspect, it's not – it's a wonderful thing. However, this is the time of year when most Task Group (TG) activity comes to an exhaustive, collapsing halt with the activities of summer taking precedence. It is what many people in North America call the summer doldrums – a period of time where the stock market slows, the fish aren't biting, and the sun beats non-stop across the sky. It is also known by a series of other names – and undoubtedly different names in Europe and Asia – but it happens each year nonetheless.

From a purely technical standpoint, it could be a time of innovation and experimentation. With so much regular business disrupted by people on vacation and holidays, it is a great time to focus on catching-up: catching-up on the competition and catching-up on piled up work. But, moreover, this can be a time for catching-up on research and development.

Home Task Group

I spoke in brief about the newly invigorated Home TG in the last Technical Corner article: "Technical Update for 2007, Q1" (Vol. 3, Issue 2). Since that article, the task group has made so much headway that they have decided to have a little party – Silicon Valley style: get people together for a nuts-and-bolts, hard-working, plug fest. And in this case, "plug" is the optimal word,

since they will be testing devices from different manufacturers by plugging them into the walls. The LONWORKS Interoperable Self-Installation (ISI) protocol will be put through its paces when devices are added at asynchronous times with other devices that are already a part of the network, or not part of the network; powered, or unpowered. The combinations are manifold and, therefore, only a real, face-to-face session can provide a good test environment. This is one example of combating those doldrums. Echelon Corporation has graciously agreed to host the plug fest at their headquarters: 550 Meridian Avenue, San Jose, CA-US, on the 17th and 18th of July (2007-07-17 to 18). For more information, LONMARK members should contact the Home Task Group Leader: Jim Hunter of 4HomeMedia (contact information in Member Area of the LONMARK website).

Trade and Standards Groups

Maybe it's my imagination but I tend to think that trade and standards groups feel the doldrums more than individual companies. It's my obviously biased opinion but if I'm correct, these summer months also lend themselves well to catching-up on standards activities that may otherwise be too overwhelming whilst they are active throughout the year. I mention this because readers of this publication likely have a vested interest in seeing LON technologies succeed; and it is you, the readership, that can make an impact in your respective regions/industries by jotting a quick note to your standards-body representatives and sharing with them the importance of LON to your company.

LON is already an adopted standard across continents countries and regions: ANSI (United States), EN (Europe), and GB/Z (China). However, that's just the beginning – we hope. LON has survived and grown over the years for many technical and participatory reasons; and without discounting the critical role of those things, it's important that we recognise the power of this multi-industry protocol as that:

not restricted to just a few, narrow industries. Aside from the regional standards, LON has been adopted or accepted by many industry-specific standards organisations, in one form or another: e.g., AAR, ASHRAE, CECED, IEEE, IFSF, SEMI, etc. It is this multi-industry acceptance that allows the protocol to weather the cyclical storms of individual industry sectors – unlike a protocol that is solely rooted in home automation, or solely in lighting, or facilities, or process control, or transportation.... We broaden our root-span when we become accepted in these different industries and in the different regions of the world. Without those simple, written letters of support, how will your region's or industry's representatives know that you want this protocol to succeed? You can be certain that without your written voice, they will not know the importance of LON to you and they will not think you care. I urge you to take this time to send a quick message to them while they are not too busy to read it.

And please do not forget that the LONMARK Member Forum is always open for discussion. LONMARK Staff are available during these summer months, too. As always, we welcome your participation and ideas for making the LONMARK community a place to beat the doldrums; whatever the season.

Ernst Eder

One last, and exciting thing to announce from the technical side: Our Certification Engineer, Mr. Ernst Eder (Dipl. Ing.), has been promoted to "Certification Director, EMEA" handling worldwide certification of products, as well as taking-on the task of coordinating the LONMARK Certified Professional and Certified Integrator programs (certification of people and integration companies) in Europe, the Mid-East, and Africa. Our congratulations to Mr. Eder.

Jeremy J. Roberts

*Technical Director
of LONMARK International*