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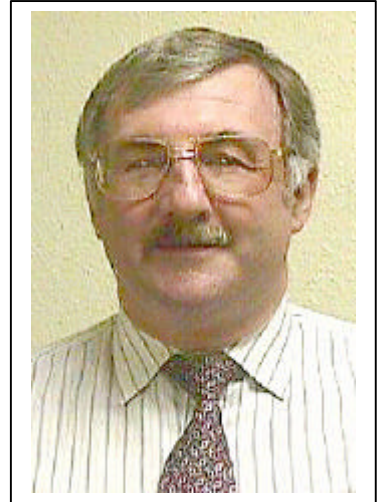
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The Way Forward for the FIA - Chairman Mike Phillips Plots the Strategic Route

Since its formation the FIA has continually endeavoured to provide more and more services to Members as well as ensuring that it stays in the forefront of fibre technology. In the last year alone, several new initiatives have been launched including the:

- ◆ Approved Training Provider Scheme.
- ◆ Up-date of the Approved Installer Scheme
- ◆ Arbitration service
- ◆ Audit service

plus others now being formulated including the exclusive **Insurance Scheme** announced on the back page of this *Newsletter*.



FIA Chairman Mike Phillips stresses, however, that as a trade body the FIA must continually examine its objectives and, where necessary, change these to reflect changing times. Below, he outlines some of the major steps now being taken to ensure that the Association is well equipped to meet the increasing demands of one of industry's most volatile sectors.

Questionnaire

Three years ago, Members were sent a detailed questionnaire relating to the services the FIA offered at that time as well as to new services that could be introduced. Following a detailed analysis of the large number of responses received, the Association has carried out a continuing programme reacting to the stated needs of Members.

Strategic Working Group

As part of this programme, the FIA formed a Strategic Working Group last year that was tasked with a re-examination of the strategic direction of the FIA. The Group comprises Council Members Mike Phillips (Fibre Optic Solutions), Andrew Watson (3M), Mike Gilmore (The Cabling Partnership) and Gary Kibblewhite.

The first document to be produced was a Strategy document by Mike Gilmore. This provided an excellent lead-in to a more detailed strategy review held in December last year.

The facilitators for the review came from a London based PR company specialising in Strategic Direction analysis.

Discussions and Conclusions

An intensive question and answer period, led by a facilitator, resulted in the feedback reproduced below. The timing was excellent as we have entered a new FIA year with fresh faces on Council.

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Andrew Watson – Commercial
(3M Technical Centre)

Industry Sector Directors

Laurent Amestoy – Passive components
(Mod Tap)

Paul Bateson - Test & Measurement
(Optical Test and Calibration)

Andrew Richards
(Electra-Net (UK))

Colin Snook - Training & Qualifications
(CableNet)

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Peter Thompsett - Installation
(Ensign Communications)

Chief Executive: Gary Kibblewhite

Secretary: Lady Helen Long

FIA Administrator: Jane Morrison

The FIA is a Company Limited by Guarantee

WELCOME

to the following NEW MEMBERS

Corporate

- The Cable & Wireless College (388)

Overseas Corporate

- Temple Sales and Distribution (387)

Personal

- Ms. Jenny Miller (389)

The issues that can now be debated could well lead to a new era for the FIA and vastly improved services for its Members.

Further inputs from Members would, of course, be warmly welcomed.

WORKSHOP RESULTS

An analysis of what has been achieved or is now being done by the FIA can be defined as follows:

- A unique world-wide industry body
- A technology-specific trade association
- Enhances prospects for fibre optics in the market place
- Provides services to both Members and non-Members
- Provides information and documents on fibre optics and standards issues
- Provides a world-class Web site

Who knows about the FIA?

- Fibre optic industry suppliers
- Members, i.e. manufacturers, installers, suppliers, training providers, some consultants
- Almost all workers within the fibre optic industry
- A few corporate end-users
- About 800 companies a month (roughly 50% in the communications field and roughly 50% of them UK-based) access the Web site
- The Association needs more input regarding its presence in the market place - market research

What do we do best and how do we do it?

- We are generally self-tasking and not totally governed by specific requests from Members. Individual elected Members of the Council represent individual industry sectors and greater interaction with Members is now a goal
- Sometimes we are supported by the fibre optic industry; sometimes we encounter apathy; sometimes our self-tasking role risks accusations that the Council lives in an ivory tower. However, where there is adverse criticism, this usually emanates from individuals rather than companies
- We have about 10% p.a. Membership churn - often due to company closures or changes in a company's direction. The level of Membership, however, remains constant
- We have created training schemes
- We constantly address major issues in industry
- We create and administer codes of practice and provide checklists for covering contractual obligations related to supply and installation
- We provide a unique Standards Forum as well as comprehensive guides and guidance notes

Where do we under-achieve?

- We only represent part of the fibre optic industry: many single-mode/non-premises cabling companies are currently outside the circle
- We need to organise more seminars etc. to attract the industry's customers - the end users
- It has been difficult to attract the right audience to seminars
- Tasks are undertaken voluntarily, which makes it difficult to impose stringent conditions on completion dates of tasks

What useful actions should be taken?

- Interface with politicians, civil servants and regulators, especially Oftel
- Pursue proactive comment opportunities regarding national fibre optic issues, e.g. the National Grid for Learning. Do this through pursuit of PR opportunities
- Seek recognition across the whole fibre optic industry
- Spread Membership base to include broader fibre optic world e.g. OEMs, transmission, music and broadcast industry etc.
- Dispatch FIA Members 'out of the circle' to gather data on unexplored areas of the fibre optic industry, such as the above.

Who else should know what we do?

- Specifiers and consultants world-wide
- EU regulators and civil servants
- Action: investigate possibility of using the services of a Brussels-based public affairs consultant to liaise on behalf of the FIA with EU regulators, especially in the area of NVQs

How can we improve the areas in which we already achieve?

- More outsourcing - as opposed to voluntary - implementation. The FIA council to do more decision-making and commissioning and less implementation e.g. in the interpretation of standards.
- Enhance Member services - negotiate discounts for Members on Membership of organisations such as the AA, RAC etc., holidays, computers, insurance etc.
- Look again at structure of company Membership to ensure that all interested parties are reached within a company
- Generate regular statistics on Membership
- Expand some of the existing publications to cover complementary areas and make more use of the opportunities offered by the CD-ROM and the Web

How can we improve areas in which we under achieve?

- Update database
- More seminars targeted to reach consultants and specifiers
- Regular by-lined columns in National and Trade Press

Who should do all this?

- Three areas - outsourcing, FIA secretariat, Council Members
- Re-define responsibilities of Council Members related to the tasks undertaken

When should we do all this?

- The main tasks should be initiated/completed within 12 months

What will be the cost?

- All proposals so far are low-cost, e.g. outsourcing half-day per month public affairs consultant in Brussels is c. £5-10k per year: PR opportunities are very low cost.
- Depending on what is shown to be achievable, it may be necessary to raise Membership fees to help fund the projects which would ultimately benefit Members

Is any other association working on similar lines?

- The Road Haulage Association has a diverse and competing Membership, competes with a rival trade organisation, has a comparatively low-income organisation and numerous defaulting Members - yet it is recognised as being able to 'punch above its weight'. Its status is achieved by rapid reaction to emerging issues of interest to Members, e.g. Budget road tax increases, French lorry driver strikes etc. Significant public affairs spending in Brussels, with direct line to Neil Kinnock (EU Transport Commissioner). Seen as having a leadership role within own industry and outside.

Domestic market

- Think about an FIA "Fibre to the Home" logo - similar to the "Intel Inside" sticker
- Undertake schools presentations in association with a CD-ROM in PC/Mac/Acorn format that could be sponsored by an FIA Corporate Member. Look at generating a *Times Educational Supplement* piece as spin-off.

Channels and tools

- Graduate fairs - raise the 'buzz' about the industry and provide the FIA with a platform to emphasise its role as a recruitment source
- Armed forces resettlement fairs with a particular focus on ex engineers and signallers

The above is just the start - and we NEED our Members to become involved!!! It's YOUR Association

Data cabling – Crawling out of the Melting Pot

Since the last and very popular "Melting Pot" seminar in July 1998, significant progress has been made in both Europe and in the United States with regard to the developments of specifications for Category 5 (1999), Category 5e and Category 6 (both as components and installed cabling).

Backwards compatibility presents a serious challenge. CENELEC has also been working hard on the optical fibre issues raised by bandwidth-limited applications such as Gigabit Ethernet. Some sensible planning information is beginning to emerge. ISO/IEC JTC1 SC25 WG3 met recently in Mexico this month and no doubt discussed these developments. In addition, SC25 WG3 also has the opportunity to select a Category 7 connector and proposals for a standard Small Form Factor (SFF) optical fibre connector are on the agenda. It promises to be a "fun-packed" event.

As indicated back in July, FIA Standards Director Mike Gilmore, who is convenor of European and UK IT cabling standards committees will discuss the outcome of the meeting in detail at a Seminar at **BSI headquarters, Chiswick, London on Wednesday, 24th February.**

Aimed at users, consultants and suppliers in the data cabling industry, anyone planning to adopt high performance IT cabling should find the event invaluable. The programme shown below begins at 9.00 a.m. and finishes at 4.30 p.m.

Cat. 5 (TIA/EIA TSB95) Cat. 5e (TIA/EIA 568A - A5) Class D (1999) - Stability appears to be in sight

Cat. 6 Connecting Hardware and Backwards Compatibility - The problems mount and tough decisions may be required

Cat. 7 Connecting Hardware - And the winner is? Class E and Class F Channels - When can we expect stable requirements?

The Case for SFF Optical Connectors! - Is it proven?

Optical Fibre - Selection Criteria - Implementation Guides" take shape

Milestones and Millstones - Difficult choices ahead for suppliers and users alike

Designing on Sound Foundations - How fast can we adopt the new technologies - and should we? There will be question and answer sessions

The cost of the day is £260 + VAT per person and this includes lunch, refreshments and a comprehensive workbook. However, Members of the FIA can enjoy a discounted rate of £210 + VAT per person.

To register, send a fax to Mike Gilmore on either +44 (0)113 232 3721 or +44 (0)113 293 2632 giving contact details and the number of delegates wishing to attend. If a discount is applicable, please state that you are an FIA Member.

FIA Launches an Exclusive Insurance Service

Over the years, the FIA has had many enquiries from Members about insurance - particularly from those in the installation field who have found it difficult to obtain competitive rates to cover loss of instruments, equipment etc. on-site.

There are few insurance companies that are willing to meet the needs of installers without imposing high premiums and, where the Association is concerned, it has been difficult to make recommendations without knowing something about the insurers.

There is also the problem that different companies have different needs.

To meet the requirements of an industry sector that poses particular problems, therefore, the FIA has been in touch with a number of insurers and brokers in an attempt to create a tailor-made scheme for its Members.

Success

This initiative has now been brought to a successful conclusion following the generation of a scheme that is exclusive to the FIA. While more comprehensive details are obviously available, a brief outline is provided opposite.

If the details within the outline do not meet your specific needs, it is very likely that a policy can be generated which will cover special-case requests. **Contact the Secretariat for more details**

MAJOR FEATURES

1. Only available to FIA Members
2. Wide cover at competitive rates
3. Free insurance/legal HelpLine
4. All Risks incl. Fire, Theft and Accidental Damage to buildings, contents and stock; goods in transit (UK and Europe); installation kits & tools (UK and Europe)
5. Consequential Loss or Business Disruption - All Risks to gross profit and/or increased cost of working (can be extended to customers if required)
6. Liabilities - Public, Products and Employer's - Employer's is £10m as standard; Public and Products is £5m as standard; cover available for USA, Canada and Offshore work; consequential loss cover e.g. failure of a product to fulfil intended function
7. Contractors All Risks/Physical Loss or Damage - goods/employees in transit in UK and Europe; hiring in/out Plant and Contractors Plant; employees tools; theft from unattended vehicles
8. OPTIONS: Professional indemnity; Products guarantee; Performance bond/financial loss; Marine cargo; Directors' and Officers' liability; Personal accident; Credit insurance; Legal expenses. Other cover can also be arranged

TitBits from the Industry

Bending - One of the limitations of fibre optic cable has always been the bending radius. Recent announcements, however, indicate that the problem may soon be a thing of the past.

Already available in the USA, cable developed and produced by Thomas & Betts under the name Miniband 180 allows the cable to be bent through 180° on a radius of just 0.5mm. This compares to the 55mm typical of most standard cables available today with 12mm generally being the minimum for lightly protected cable being taken in or out of equipment.

Apart from the obvious savings in space, even greater savings can be made by using single-ended splitters to be developed which will allow all fibres to emerge from one end. Both single-mode and multi-mode fibre cable can be produced. **Drawback (for the moment) - cost!**

Gigabit Ethernet - The copper/fibre premises cabling controversy continues in the technical press in a way that is often creating confusion and generating completely incorrect information. This is something of great concern to FIA Technical Director Mike Gilmore as well as to the FIA itself.

Amid other erroneous comments, a writer in a leading publication recently stated that 'copper capable of carrying 1 billion bits/s is already installed as Category 5 structured cabling. The ISO/IEC standards body, however, disagrees.'

But Mr Gilmore points out that the ISO/IEC committee does not disagree at all. In general, Category 5 (1995) is not guaranteed even if it is installed correctly. There is an ill-defined amount of installed Category 5 cabling that will support 1000BASE-T. This is why it is necessary to use the *latest* Category 5 specifications. Products meeting these requirements have been installed over the last two years and WILL support Gigabit Ethernet. The whole purpose of the revision of Category 5 has been to ensure that it will support Gigabit Ethernet. There is no other reason for it. Failure to support fast Ethernet will be laid at the door of bad installation or operating practice and will not be a failure of post 1995 Category 5 *per se*. In addition, the writer totally ignored Category 5E - now being standardised in the USA as part of the amendment series to TIA/EIA 568A which is designed to support Gigabit Ethernet in the most complex cabling configurations.

Comment - Don't believe all you read in the Press. See p.3 if you want to find out the real facts

Polymer Option for Premises Cabling? - While the limitations of plastic versus silica fibre are well known, considerable advances have been made where the former is concerned. While many conventional fibre optic products have dropped in price over recent months, the problems with polymer fibre have more to do with the limitations of the technology have remained.

Now, however, reports from Telecom Italia's research centre CSELT suggest that recent developments in Japan may soon generate polymer fibres whose optical performance in the visible spectrum may equal that of silica fibre. The Italian team proved the potential of the networks by combining multi-mode silica and the new polymer types and substituting them for copper cable original used to link to the main optical fibre telephone network.

Tests involved running the experimental 'broadband' networks at rates up to 52Mbits/s over distances of 50 and 300m. Although the term 'broadband' is a fairly loose term, it appears that data rates of between 2 and 52Mbits/s can be generated downstream to the subscriber and between 64kbits/s and 2Mbits/s upstream. **Comment - An advance, but the proof of the pudding is reliant on cost and availability!**

FIA SEMINAR

Training and The Impact of New Cabling Standards and Technologies

Two half-day events to be held at the Cable & Wireless College, Coventry on

Thursday, 15th April 1999
(Note New Date)

Organised by the FIA in partnership with the Cable & Wireless College

The seminars will address the following issues:

Morning - TRAINING (NVQS, ELCIS, BICSI, OUTSOURCING, FIA APPROVAL)

- 1. Qualifications** - with such confusion about different qualification schemes, the industry needs to know what the schemes offer, if they are relevant, and which ones are truly appropriate. And why should a business invest in training its staff? – ***Peter Revill from the TVSC will provide the answers***
2. When deciding on **outsourcing training**, what guidelines & benchmarks should be used? – ***Richard Hallows from Cable & Wireless provides an in-depth insight***
3. There are a number of different **Training Initiatives** being promoted such as ELCIS and BICSI – what value do these have? – ***A speaker from the Training Provider sector will provide the answers***
4. **FIA Approved Training Scheme** – its value to the industry and to those that want to join the industry – ***A speaker from the FIA will give the facts***

Afternoon - IMPACT OF NEW CABLING TECHNOLOGIES AND STANDARDS

1. Cat 6 – Cat -7 - Fibre – ***A leading figure in the industry will assess the reality of the technologies***
2. The impact of Gigabit Ethernet – ***FIA chairman Mike Phillips will assess the technology and its future in the industry***
3. Fibre-to-the-Desk - a positive solution - ***Speakers from 3M will show the way forward***

WHO SHOULD ATTEND? Network managers, IT managers, Installers and System integrators

Cost (incl. lunch & refreshments): £60 + vat per half day. £100 + vat for the whole day

FIA Members may attend both sessions for the price of a single session. Call the Secretariat NOW to reserve your place