# Strengthening the Bridge of ComSoc with Industry
## Interview with Ashutosh Dutta, Director of Marketing and Industry Relations

By Stefano Bregni, Vice-President for Member Relations, and Ashutosh Dutta, MIR Director

This is the seventh article in the series started in September and published monthly in the *Global Communications Newsletter*, which covers all areas of IEEE ComSoc Member Relations. In this series of articles I introduce the seven Member Relations Directors (namely: Sister and Related Societies; Membership Programs Development; AP, NA, LA, EAME Regions; Marketing and Industry Relations) and the Chairs of the Women in Communications Engineering (WICE) and IEEE Young Professionals (YP, formerly Graduates Of the Last Decade, GOLD) Committees. In each article, one by one they present their activities and plans.

In this issue I interview Ashutosh Dutta, Director of Marketing and Industry Relations.

Ashutosh is a senior member of IEEE and ACM, and served in the past as the chair for IEEE Princeton/Central Jersey Section, Industry Relations Chair for Region 1 and MGA, Pre-University Coordinator for IEEE MGA, and the chair for the Ad Hoc Committee for Public Visibility for ComSoc. Ashutosh co-founded the IEEE STEM conference (ISEC) in 2011, and helped establish STEM clubs and implement EPICS (Engineering Projects in Community Service) in the high schools within the Princeton/Central Jersey Section. In his 25-year career Ashutosh has been Lead Member of Technical Staff at AT&T's Chief Security Office; CTO of Wireless at a Cybersecurity company NIKSUN; Senior Scientist in Telcordia Applied Research; Director of the Central Research Facility at Columbia University; and Computer Engineer with TATA Motors. Ashutosh is co-author of the book *Mobility Protocols and Handover Optimization*, published by Wiley and IEEE. Ashutosh obtained his BS in EE from NIT Rourkela, India, his MS in computer science from NJIT, and he earned his M. Phil. and Ph.D. in electrical engineering from Columbia University, New York, under the supervision of Prof. Henning Schulzrinne.

I am glad to interview Ashutosh and to present the organization and activities of the Marketing and Industry Relations Board (MIRB).

**Stefano:** Hello Ashutosh. In your opinion, what are the main issues relating to how ComSoc addresses industry needs and areas of interest?

**Ashutosh:** Industry is one of the important vertices of the ComSoc Member Relations Golden Pentagon. However, as a matter of fact, lack of interest and active participation from Indus-try has contributed to the sharp decline in industry's share of IEEE Communication Society membership.

IEEE has the following charter for industry engagement:
• Promote and inform the concept of IEEE as a progressive technical information provider to industry and its employees.
• Promote and inform the relevance of support of IEEE in developing/changing technologies.
• Work with industry to establish an understanding of their needs, and to demonstrate how IEEE can help address their needs.
• Encourage the establishment of leadership training within the regions and sections.

However, it is very important to evaluate if IEEE is delivering on Industry's requirements.

**Stefano:** Might you be more specific?

**Ashutosh:** A SWOT analysis of IEEE on industry relevance brings forth some of the weaknesses and areas of opportunities that IEEE ComSoc needs to keep in mind while engaging with the Industry. Some points associated with the weaknesses include insufficient industry-relevant publica-tions; lack of industrial content for confer-ences; and too much academic dominance.

Some threats include: industry people are too busy; industry requires immediate short-term returns; and industry people have little time for conferences. Some strengths include: IEEE's global outreach; its accessibility and affordability to engineers, including the digital library; opportunities to cooperate with stan-dards bodies; a forum and global initiator of discussion and debate on relevant issues; and a professional community to excite, motivate, and energize action.

Some opportunities that could be explored include creation of professional and vocational qualification and recognition; creating opportunities for individuals and companies to gain international recognition; provide and facilitate industry experience for students; IEEE sponsored industry lectures; creating IEEE mentoring for professional development; reaching out to industry leaders in explaining the values of IEEE; creating global job opportunities; recruiting for IEEE actively at industry sites; and demonstrating that IEEE is special and desirable to join.

**Stefano:** What is ComSoc doing to address such challenges, in particular, the Marketing and Industry Relations Board?

**Ashutosh:** Within the past few years, both IEEE and the Communication Society have experimented with various ways to re-engage with industry. To re-engage the Communication Society with industry sectors, we have come up with a strategic framework based on the principles that embrace industry's interests and objectives while integrating IEEE and ComSoc's objectives.

With the above strategic framework in place, we have now taken steps to mobilize the team and implement the steps from the framework. We have developed an Industry-relations volunteer support portal (www.ieee-industry.org) where some of the

manuals, industry focused messaging, and promotional fliers/ brochures can be found.

**Stefano:** Would you highlight any specific initiative that can be realized in the short term?

**Ashutosh:** While the Industry Relations and Marketing Board is working on some long term strategic initiatives to engage industry, a working committee has been set up, which defined some focused key short-term deliverables that include the following items.

• Planned Webinars around Industry Day Tools with Chapter Chairs and Section Chairs.

• The India Council Communication Society and Bangalore Section have started taking many initiatives to engage with the industry. They have organized a series of industry related activities in the area of Software Define Networking, Big Data, and Smart Devices. They organized TechTalks at academic institutions by industry experts. There are also efforts underway to include industry professionals as part of the section executive committee. The India council is also increasingly focusing on ComSoc sponsored conferences across India. In order to further strengthen the industry relationship, Bruce Worthman recently visited India, and with the help from Munir Mohammed made contacts with many key industry leaders at Hyderabad and Mumbai in addition to attending the Intelect conference in Mumbai.

• In order to engage industry members with high value technology, the IEEE Communication Society plans to a have high impact one day summit in emerging technology areas (e.g. SDN/NFV, 5G, IoT, and Cybersecurity). Currently, a high impact 5G Summit is being planned at Princeton University on May 26, 2015.

• The IEEE Communication Society plans to hold "Future Skillset Workshops" at a number of universities. This is an opportunity for collaboration among industry, the academic community, and IEEE.

• Industry initiative with the startup community. According to the 2014 member survey results compiled by ComSoc's Director of Marketing, John Pape, 30.8 percent of ComSoc members are/have been engaged in a start-up, and 30.5 percent plan to hire within the next 12 months. Hence, it is very important that the IEEE Communication Society reach out to the start-up community. There are a few proposals that are being considered such as to name a start-up of the month, and publishing industry news on the startup.

• The industry relation committee plans to liaise with ICEC (Industry Content and Exhibition Committee) and collect feedback for implementing industry content appropriately into some of the conferences.

• The IEEE Communication Society is also exporing potential ways to increase membership, for example by instituting a Member-Get-a-Member (MGM) Program.

• ComSoc has introduced new courses in emerging areas such as 5G, Big Data, and Mobility.

• MIRB plans to hold virtual job fairs at many IEEE sponsored conferences. MIRB also plans to sign an MOU with an interested Industry partner to create an award sponsored by a specific industry.