TECH EXCHANGE

Welcome to Tech Exchange on Test & Measurement!

Each month this new section will focus on a different product category and will include a brief interview with a representative from a leading OEM.

This Month: Vivek Vadakkuppattu, Product Manager for Azimuth Systems

Q: What were some of the most significant technological developments in the Test & Measurement industry in 2010?

At Azimuth Systems, we continued to see the trend of greater focus being put on real world-centric performance testing in 2010. For example, testing can be based on conformance (which is typically the bare minimum any device needs to pass) or performance (anything beyond conformance). While the amount of performance testing based on statistical channel models or even conformance testing hasn't gone down, customers are realizing more and more that testing based on real-world conditions is becoming more critical to ensuring true device performance in the field.

Q: How does Azimuth meet the key challenges and demands of the marketplace?

Having started in the conformance testing field and gaining significant expertise in the testing arena, Azimuth realized early on that performance testing (especially based on real-world testing) was the key to catching issues, in the lab, before the device was actually deployed in the field.

Independent of its activities in 3GPP, Azimuth initiated an internal effort early on to help our customers better understand the importance of real-world testing and to offer real-world testing solutions to our customers. While Azimuth's products (ACE MX channel emulator, ACE WB channel emulator and Wi-Fi product lines) have always allowed for real world testing, Azimuth took this to the next level in 2010 by offering customers the Azimuth Field-to-Lab™ solution which allows customers to test devices under true real-world conditions by re-creating field conditions collected from drive test tools/scanners in the lab through the ACE MX channel emulator. Field-to-Lab allows customers to optimize their drive testing efforts by reducing the time, effort and costs associated with drive testing, enabling them to bring products to market faster and with better quality.

Furthermore, Azimuth's latest addition to our product portfolio, the Azimuth MIMO OTA device test solution also, works towards bringing laboratory testing closer to the real world than ever before. Azimuth's MIMO OTA device test solution helps in testing devices in their native state, i.e. the state in which they would be used in the real world.

Q: Describe the relationship you have with your customers and how the company meets their needs?

Azimuth has a very close working relationship with all of our customers and even collaborates with quite a few of them. Our role in these relationships varies from providing specific solutions to customers (in response to a specific request) to actually educating customers about what they should be doing and providing solutions to meet their needs. We also work with some customers on developing next generation products together.

Two reasons why Azimuth has been so successful are because (i) we are very close to our customers and work proactively to anticipate their needs and make sure we have something for them when they need it and (ii) we think outside the box and come up with novel solutions that help customers test things in ways that they wouldn't have thought of.

Q: What types of additional services does the company provide in order to differentiate themselves from their competitors?

Apart from the availability of high quality, easy-to-use products, one of the things that really sets Azimuth apart is its field team. Not only is it structured to ensure that there is someone to help our customers onsite in the short term, but the team is made up of people with development and field experience, thereby ensuring that our application engineers are able to take a holistic approach when it comes to solving problems for the long term.

The company also offers customized solutions to meet specific customer needs. This varies from projects/products done by engineering to those done by R&D. Azimuth offers additional services/products to customers to simplify testing, create new channel models/testing techniques, improve existing techniques, etc.

Q: What is the company's outlook for 2011? And how will it make an impact?

Azimuth has a very optimistic outlook for 2011. With the LTE revolution really taking off and operators, handset manufacturers and others in the mobile ecosystem ramping up their LTE efforts, we sees an increased need for testing complex devices – which is something Azimuth does very well.

Azimuth's efforts in promoting real world testing are also paying dividends since the gains customers are seeing with Azimuth's real -world solutions are convincing them even more of the need for real-world testing and Azimuth's products.

Azimuth will continue to make an impact since there is a company-wide initiative to offer more real-world testing solutions. With the availability of Field-to-Lab and the launch of the MIMO OTA device test solution, Azimuth plans to be in a very good position to leverage the real-world testing market. Azimuth is also looking at synergies between product lines such as Field-to-Lab and MIMO OTA to offer customers more evolved real-world testing solutions. Azimuth is also continuing with its

R&D efforts to identify new areas of testing.

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