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## Profile of Susan J. Irwin

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Susan J. Irwin is President of Irwin Communications, Inc., a consulting, market research and strategic communications firm, which she founded in 1985. The company has provided consulting services to satellite and telecom service providers, media and broadcasting companies, government agencies, and investment firms. Ms. Irwin's expertise spans the breadth of satellite applications and markets, including fixed and mobile satellite services; data, voice and video applications; and government, media, enterprise and consumer markets.

Ms. Irwin is also a partner in Link Satellite Connections, LLC, a satellite brokerage firm connecting buyers and sellers of satellite capacity and services.

Ms. Irwin has devoted her career to the satellite industry, beginning in the late 70's when she was involved in some of the early satellite demonstration projects, then as a telecom policy analyst and program manager for the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, a member of two start-up teams, National Information Utilities Corporation and Private Satellite Network, Inc., and starting her own satellite communications consulting firm, Irwin Communications.

Ms. Irwin is widely published and a frequent speaker at conferences throughout the world. She is the Chair of SATCON, the Satellite Application and Content Delivery Conference and Expo, which she has organized since its inception in 2002. She is also a co-founder of the Society of Satellite Professionals International, a Director Emeritus of the Arthur C. Clarke Foundation, a Director of Near Earth, LLC, an investment banking firm, and on the Board of Governors of the Pacific Telecommunications Council.

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1) How did you get started in the satellite business?

Like many of my colleagues, my lifelong career in the satellite industry occurred pretty much by chance. I had completed graduate school at San Francisco State, with a degree in education, and a focus on communications technology. But satellite communications was not even on my radar screen. When I was looking for a job in Washington, DC in 1977, a friend who was working for the new Carter Administration introduced me to an opportunity at the Appalachian Regional Commission. ARC was one of several non-profit organizations that was given a grant to use the Government-owned satellite, ATS-6, to transmit educational programming to rural areas. I was hired as a consultant for six months -- and I was hooked. I then went to work for NTIA, managing a program that was created to demonstrate the value of satellites for distance education, health

services and other non-commercial applications. Meanwhile cable TV was growing into a national industry because of the ability of satellites to broadcast their programming nationwide, and broadcast networks were migrating from microwave towers to satellite to deliver network programming to local stations. After NTIA, I was involved a couple of start-ups, one using National Public Radio's satellite network's subcarriers for instructional data. Then I worked for the first company to build private satellite networks for business -- for corporate communications and training -- Business Television.

2) and 3) How have you been involved in changes brought about in or by this business (innovations, technologies, services)? What do you think was the greatest event/situation/opportunity you experienced?

I've had the opportunity over the past 30 years to participate in grand (and not-so-grand) schemes and start-up ventures, some of which have turned into full-blown industries and life-altering technological developments -- like cable tv, direct-to-home broadcasting, VSATs, digital compression, HDTV. My involvement has been in marketing, sales, research, in writing and speaking and helping companies launch new products. The innovations I've participated in, from C-band to Ku-band, from analog to digital communications, from 30 meter earth stations to hand held terminals, have been nothing short of earth-shattering. One of the most gratifying opportunities I have experienced has been my work with SATCON, the conference and trade show that I have been involved in, as Conference Chair, since its inception in 2002. I have nurtured it as it has grown from a small trade show to a significant industry event.

I've also had the opportunity to have been one of the original founders and directors of SSPI, which evolved from an informal group of industry friends who gathered at trade shows in the mid 80's into a highly regarded international professional association. My industry colleagues, many of whom are close friends, have provided much of the intellectual nourishment and camaraderie that has contributed to my satisfaction with my work. And in an industry dominated by men, my female colleagues have been a continuing source of inspiration and emotional sustenance.

4) What was the greatest obstacle?

The satellite industry and my consulting business have been through lean years and healthy years since I started my company. The biggest obstacle I have faced has been sticking with it, being creative and following my instincts -- not giving up when times were tough, not being lured away when opportunities to leave the industry presented themselves, but not being afraid take risks.

5) What do you see happening in the next five years in this industry?

I am both concerned and optimistic about the future of our industry. The satellite industry has been categorized in recent months as resilient, as an industry that has "strong fundamentals" and can withstand the economic turmoil that is having a major impact on so many industries today. Because the planning, building, funding, launching of satellites is such a long term process, it is yet to be determined whether the economic downturn will catch up to our industry. Clearly, some of the R&D that is critical to moving forward with satellite technology, as well as start-ups, which require funding sources that are not available today, will have an impact on our industry over the next five years. Also, if the growth markets and their drivers, DTH, government and military applications, HDTV, cellular backhaul, start to decline, the satellite industry could suffer. But the industry has been consolidated; the large operators are leaner than in previous years; and the need for satellite services in rural and developing regions will not decrease. And of course, an economic recovery is what the world's government and business leaders are working to achieve.

6) What advice do you have for women interested in entering the industry?

Offering advice to "those interested in coming into the industry" presumes that people beginning their careers are interested in our industry. I am not so sure that has been the case in recent years, so my advice is directed not at the people coming into the industry, but at the industry itself. The Internet boom and the digitization of transmission media has led young people away from working in the satellite industry. Perhaps, if our industry does remain strong throughout the economic downturn, while the job market is weak, we can again attract young people -- both male and female. I have always made it a practice to hire young women, to encourage and motivate women in our industry. Recently I have been employing young women engineering students as interns for my company. My optimism for the satellite industry lies in the hope that our industry will not only remain healthy, but will be comprised of as many women CEO's and CTO's as men in ten years. It's up to us to make that happen.