



Robert Bell, Executive Director of the World Teleport Association (WTA), asks who will help make the revolution happen.



## The gleam of a very bright future

▶▶ **At the annual convention** of CASBAA in Hong Kong, I heard a fascinating interview with Saul Berman, Global Business Strategy Executive & Partner, IBM Business Consulting Services. Berman is one of those cross-over figures who has advanced academic degrees as well as a distinguished business career, and now gets paid to be a visionary about technology change.

He focused on forecasting what the traditional business of media and broadcasting would look like in 2010, and his vision was truly radical. For example, he noted that time windows are currently the basis of the economic model of most media companies. A film is scheduled for theatrical release, following which it is released for to premium movie channels, for Digital Versatile Disc (DVD) distribution, to airlines and for free-to-air broadcasting. Each of these windows is defined by the distribution platform being used, and each is budgeted to contribute a certain amount to the top line. The same kind of economic model underlies much Television (TV) programming.

The trend of the past few years has been for these windows to shrink as more media moves through the distribution pipeline faster. Berman believes that the entire nature of these windows is undergoing revolutionary change. Instead of being defined by time, they will eventually be defined by viewer choice. Imagine a world in which the viewer pays for access to a piece of content independent of platform. You pay for access to a new film TV series and the platform on which it is delivered depends on your choice: a visit to the local cinema, viewing of individual episodes, a download for one-time use to the 'media server' that will drive

your home entertainment system, permission to port that content to other devices, or the purchase of a DVD in order to archive it forever.

Obviously, a huge number of technology, right management, regulatory and distribution infrastructure changes must take place for this vision to be realised. And as Bob Zitter, Chief Technical Officer (CTO) for HBO Networks, said in a luncheon speech at CASBAA, it has to happen all over the world. Zitter was addressing the issue of intellectual property piracy, or 'stealing' as he prefers to call it. He was issuing a call to action for the nations of Asia, where theft of content by cable system operators and end users is a burning issue for content providers like HBO. In his view, it will not help for North America and Europe to put in place the necessary safeguards if other regions of the world do not. Because once content is digital, an unlimited number of perfect copies can be made and distributed worldwide via the Internet, making it impossible



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for content providers to get paid. If the content providers are not getting paid, the ultimate loser is the consumer, whose access to content will be restricted.

As I listened to these learned gentlemen, however, a different question came to mind. It was: “Who will help make this revolution happen?” The days are long gone when media companies, even today’s giants, can justify massive investments in distribution technology and infrastructure to fulfill this striking vision. They will turn to specialists in the marketplace who understand content management, have built and maintain platforms and distribution networks, and stand ready to be their outsourced providers. I’m referring to companies in my industry, from global players like GlobeCast and Ascent Media to smaller specialists like Globecom Systems, ATCi and Crawford Communications. The newly integrated hybrid carriers like

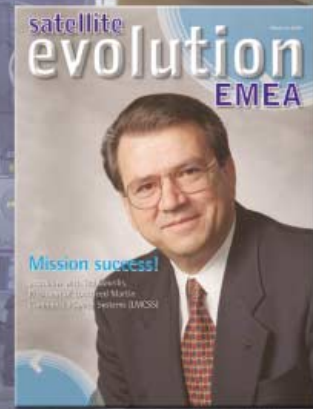
### The WTA

Robert Bell is Executive Director of World Teleport Association (WTA) ([www.worldteleport.org](http://www.worldteleport.org)), where he is responsible for the programmes, finances and operations of the Association. WTA is a nonprofit trade association of teleports, satellite and terrestrial carriers, technology providers, investment houses and consultants in 20 nations around the world. Headquartered in New York City, WTA has an Asia Secretariat in Tokyo and a Greater China Bureau office in Hong Kong. The association helps its members build their businesses by educating them on issues, researching their markets, feeding them sales leads from potential customers around the world, and connecting them to strategic allies. Mr. Bell welcomes comments and can be reached at [rbell@worldteleport.org](mailto:rbell@worldteleport.org). ■

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Intelsat, PanAmSat and Worldsat will play their own role as well. If Berman and Zitter are correct, there is in the midst of today’s tumultuous market changes the gleam of a very bright future ahead. ■

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