



[DesignCon History: Looking back 20 years](#)

[Janine Love](#) - November 05, 2014

In January, we are celebrating 20 years of [DesignCon](#). But, that's really a simplification. Before the first "Design SuperCon" in 1995, there was a series of road shows that began around 1989 based on a rather new concern for a select few: signal integrity. Here, I aim to piece together the history of what has become DesignCon.

According to Karl Kachigan, one of the team that created Design SuperCon, the first High-Speed Digital Symposium (the seed that became Design SuperCon and then the DesignCon we know today) was held in 1989 in the HP office in Santa Clara, CA. The following year, this symposium grew into a road show.

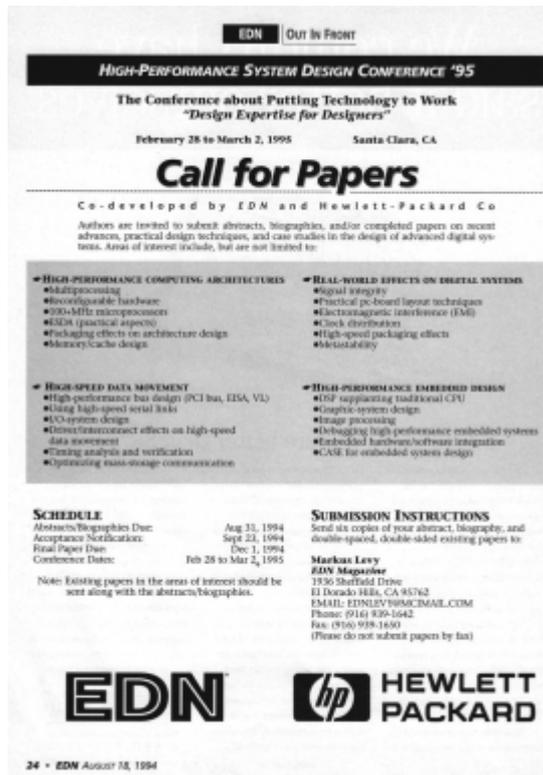
Last year, I spoke with [Eric Bogatin](#), one of the participants in the early road shows about his experiences then. According to Bogatin, HP's Dave Belandi put together 10 talks, and the speakers joined him on a road show. There were four cities in the US, and then they went to Europe as well as Japan in early 1990s.

One of the attendees at an early High Speed Digital Symposium was Istvan Novak, a current DesignCon Technical Program Committee member who attended his first "DesignCon" in 1993 in Budapest, Hungary. (He has scanned some pages from that symposium's conference [flyer](#).) Novak notes that there were two tracks in this symposium: High Speed System Design and Digital Communications Design. Novak notes, "Most papers focused on signal integrity, though in those years even the term signal integrity was not widely used yet.

Power integrity had no dedicated paper at this conference, but if we read the papers carefully, we can find several related topics, which later became important pieces of power integrity."

These early road shows provided much needed learning opportunities, cemented friendships, and created a legacy that engineers still benefit from today. "We became a tight knit group and really had a lot of fun taking our little symposium on the road," recalls Bogatin. He notes that the team did demos, showing how to apply the traditional tools to this relatively new field of signal integrity. "Belandi deserves a lot of credit for recognizing this new field of signal integrity and that it had to be treated differently... We had to do a lot of work to spread the word that these were upcoming problems, and we could use traditional techniques as well as needed to invent new ones," Bogatin adds.

In 1995, HP created Design SuperCon, a 1-day conference based on its successes of the High Speed Digital Symposium [on the road](#). It was a marketing event for HP, and, as such, many of the papers presented were based on information obtained using HP products.



Pages from the August 18 (l) and September 29 (r) 1994 issues of EDN announce call for papers for Design SuperCon, 1995. Click on the images to enlarge.

Kachigan recalls that after the first Design SuperCon, the conference was held in the US and Japan for the next few years. In 1996, they moved the conference to the Santa Clara Convention Center (from the Santa Clara Marriott) and in 1998 changed the name to DesignCon. In 2000, HP transitioned the conference to management by IEC, who expanded it from an HP-only event to an open one. Since then, it has grown into a four-day conference with a full day of tutorials. In 2002, Barry Sullivan joined IEC and became an integral part of DesignCon until he stepped down as Technical Program Director at DesignCon 2014.

In 2010, UBM [acquired](#) DesignCon. In 2014, more than 150 exhibitors and 5000 attendees were at the four-day conference and exhibition. For DesignCon 2015, more than 100 engineers are participating in the [Technical Program Committee](#) (TPC), an advisory board that generates the call for papers, reviews abstracts, and reviews papers for the conference. Many of the TPC members are regular DesignCon speakers as well. In 2015, there will also be an expanded exhibit hall.

Over the years as data rates have increased, signal integrity has grown to be a concern for many more engineers. In his typical fashion, Eric Bogatin jokes, "I used to say, 'there are two kinds of designers, those who have signal integrity problems and those who will.' Now, almost every design has signal-integrity issues." See you at DesignCon 2015!

Please feel free to share your first memories of DesignCon in the comments below.

Editor's Note: Eric Bogatin will be doing two speed training events in DesignCon 2015's ChipHead Theater this year, and Istvan Novak is participating in three technical sessions and two panels.

Also See:

- [DesignCon prophecy from 1995](#)
- [Profiles in Design: Eric Bogatin](#)

- [Profiles in Design: Istvan Novak](#)



Want to learn more? Register now for [DesignCon](#), the premier conference for chip, board, and systems design engineers. Taking place January 27-30 at the Santa Clara Convention Center, DesignCon 2015 will feature technical paper sessions, tutorials, industry panels, product demos, and exhibits.

DesignCon is managed by UBM Tech, EDN's parent company. Get updates on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), & [DesignCon Central](#).