



BY MAURY WRIGHT, EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Holiday wishes target technological harmony

As I write this column in early December, I've yet to even think about holiday shopping, but my son was quick to proffer a lengthy wish list. That list and a gentle prodding from Matt Miller, editor-in-chief of EDN.com, remind me of a column that I wrote seven years ago (see "Holiday wishes," *Commverge*, Dec 1, 2000, www.edn.com/article/CA54538). In 2000, I made my wishes for technological

developments that I believed would be good for the high-tech segment. Reflecting on that column, here are my wishes for 2008.

Ironically, one of my wishes for 2000 was for harmony in the DVD-standards area. Sony (www.sony.com) was then championing a proprietary DVD+R/W format, whereas the DVD Forum (www.dvdforum.org) had adopted DVD-R/W as the industry standard. Well, it's déjà vu all over again. Once again, Sony is duking it out in the DVD area, promoting its proprietary Blu-ray format for high-definition DVD. If the past is any guide, neither HD (high-definition)-DVD nor Blu-ray may emerge victorious. Both the DVD+R/W and the DVD-R/W flavors of DVD-rewritable technology still exist, and most drives now support both. Dual Blu-ray and HD-DVD support looks likely in the high-definition-DVD segment, as well.

But will Sony ever learn? I wish that the company that I once so admired would get on with building great products and forget revenue streams from royalties it achieved by having mass-market-product vendors adopt its IP (intellectual property). I've made this wish before. Meanwhile, just as in the rewritable-DVD skirmish, high-definition-DVD is not taking off in the

market, and Sony's delays have cost the company more than it can ever recoup in royalties.

I'm also wishing for harmony in the wireless arena. I hope that 2008 will see a unified 802.11n spec and products that at least approach the range and speed that the spec promises. Then again, 2008 will probably see the battle escalate over the next-generation standard even as vendors deliver the n products that underdeliver to consumers. Although I've for now abandoned 802.11n (see "Immaturity in 802.11n products guides a return to a wired LAN," *EDN*, Aug 21, 2007, www.edn.com/article/CA6470534), I wish for the capabilities that the vendors have promised.

I also wish that the UWB (ultra-wideband) and Wireless USB camps would deliver on their promises. I recently wrote a blog post about the complaints a wireless-industry executive made about the media's testing of products to the spec (see "Wireless USB exec questions press reviews based on actual specs," *EDN*, Oct 31, 2007, www.edn.com/071214edb1). Well, I wish the UWB, wireless-LAN, and cellular camps would all produce and deliver on realistic and attainable specs.

In 2000, I also wished for resolution on several HDTV-related issues.

Thankfully, the industry reached an accord on modulation schemes, and we now enjoy reasonably good HDTV service. But the industry still hasn't got the interface issues right. The HDMI (high-definition-multimedia-interface) specification has inherent problems that resulted from the insistence of content owners to impose egregious DRM (digital-rights-management) schemes. Again, the content owners and other interested parties lose more money than they could hope to gain when they place roadblocks in the way of technology adoption.

I complained about the music industry in 2000, and I'm happy to say we've seen great progress in a transition to a downloading-friendly business model. We still have a long way to go. Now, the cellular carriers still want their cut of music sales. I wish for music that I can download once and play on any device I own. We're close to that goal, but we're not yet there.

One thing I'm adding to my list this year is a return to broad cross-licensing pacts in the industry. In the quarter-century leading to the new millennium, widespread cross licensing drove innovation. Nowadays, no one cooperates, and the industry wastes too much money on court battles. Meanwhile, the innovation that comes from collaboration has disappeared. We need it back.

Finally, and please read this sentence for the words and without regard to the origin of the words and your own beliefs: I wish for peace on earth and good will toward men. Globally, we'd all benefit from a peaceful 2008. Talk to you next year.**EDN**

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