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From “Electronics” to “Technology”

Gary Shapiro, 12/17/2015

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Last month, the Consumer Electronics Association became the Consumer Technology Association. The new name more accurately reflects our vision, scope of activity, current membership base and brand promise. We announced the name and introduced the new logo at CES Unveiled New York, a half-day event offering a sneak preview of the year’s most innovative products and technologies ahead of CES 2016 in early January.



While our association’s name has changed, our mission has not.

As representatives of more than 2,200 U.S. technology companies, promoting and spurring innovation are at the core of everything our association does. And to represent our members fully and fairly, we needed to make sure we understood their needs and their business models. Starting from first principles, this has meant taking a closer look at our organization’s name.

CTA remains the voice of the consumer technology industry and committed to its growth. We fight for and defend pro-innovation public policies. Our focus on, and commitment to, excellence in market research and industry standards, as well as to promoting and spurring innovation, will continue unabashed and unabated.

Our name change is less revolutionary than evolutionary. While our association has successfully staked its claim as a global champion of technological innovation, the term “electronics” no longer accurately represented the full scope of our membership and the industry we represent.

Just think about the evolution in radio over the last two decades. In 1996, Sonicwave.com launched the first Internet radio station. Today, more than 119 million people listen to online radio every week, averaging about 13 hours of playtime. Technology is evolving at the lightning speed of innovation.

BACKGROUND

This name change is not our first reformation. In fact, our association has a long history of changing our name to reflect the rapidly-evolving industry we represent. We began, in 1924, as the Radio Manufacturers Association. Later, we became the Electronic Industries Association, the Consumer Electronics Manufacturers Association and then the Consumer Electronics Association. With every step in our evolution we’ve grown our membership, expanded our scope of technology and strengthened our public voice.



Over the last nine decades, our membership has broadened to include new technologies and innovative industries, including automakers, crowdsourcing technology, software and app creators, drone companies, 3D-printer makers, digital health leaders, robotics innovators, Internet of Things players, search engines, content creators and more. The name “Consumer Technology Association” allows us to update our brand without changing our identity.

With this evolution, we also more inclusively represent the member companies that are non-hardware innovators, such as Uber and Lyft, BMW and Ford, Netflix and Pandora, Expedia Inc. and Yelp, Google and WebMD, and Twentieth Century Fox and Starz. Indeed, much of what our industry is creating today is smart, connected and not “electronics” per se — at least not as traditionally defined.

WHAT'S THE SAME?

One thing that isn't changing is the name of CTA's annual industry trade show in Las Vegas. CES, the world's gathering place for all who thrive on the business of consumer technologies, has become the global brand for innovation where representatives from the world's technology industry discover the latest trends, conduct business and network. With more than 2 million net square feet of exhibit space across three venues, CES reflects the awe-inspiring scope, breadth and innovative breakthroughs of today's consumer technology industry.



Another thing that isn't changing is CTA's 35-year co-sponsorship of the National Radio Systems Committee in collaboration with the National Association of Broadcasters. During that time, the NRSC has standardized broadcast-radio technologies in analog and digital AM/FM radio, as well as text delivery via the Radio Broadcast Data System. The roughly 200 engineers who participate in the NRSC's standards development groups have helped keep consumer technology manufacturers on the same page as broadcasters, even as radio has evolved.

Because of the timing of our name change and the sheer size and scale of CES, some attendees will see CEA signage at the 2016 show. But anyone looking for us online at *CE.org* is now automatically redirected to our new Web address, CTA.tech.

As technology evolves, so do we. Our new name better represents the full promise and potential of our member's products and services, whether that lies in creating new jobs, strengthening technology's role as an economic engine or introducing life-enhancing innovations. Embracing innovation is at the core of our organization.

Gary Shapiro also is author of the books "Ninja Innovation: The Ten Killer Strategies of the World's Most Successful Businesses" and "The Comeback: How Innovation Will Restore the American Dream." His views are his own. Connect with him on Twitter: @GaryShapiro.