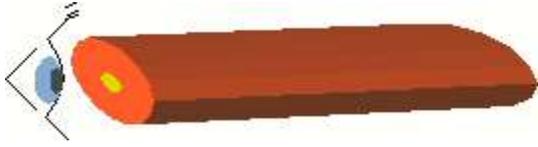


Fiber Optic Services And Products



EYE ON FIBER

Opinion

TRADE MAGAZINE INSULTS PROFESSIONAL FIBER OPTIC INSTALLERS

Mr. ML, President

Mr. PS, Editor in Chief

Gentlemen:

We are writing this letter in strong protest to the mischaracterization of the fiber optic installer and of the installation process. This mischaracterization appeared in the article Ready, Set, Go!, The Evolution of Plug and Play Systems 2003.

On behalf of the membership of the Fiber Optic Association, of all the trained and highly experienced professional installers of fiber optic transmission systems, and of trainers of installation personnel, we object to your mischaracterizations of the reliability of field installed fiber systems and components. Almost all fiber systems fail for extrinsic reasons, not due to installation issues. Perhaps Cabling Business Magazine should examine its sources and editorial balance before it defames a whole class of loyal readers and professional installers.

The first instance of mischaracterization occurs in the third paragraph: Unlike field terminations which often are hurried, performed by unskilled operators, and costly (as much as \$20.00 per connector), Plug and Play systems are built in the factory by skilled operators, are usually guaranteed for longer life, ä.

Mind you we have no intrinsic opposition to the plug and play concept for it has a place. Let us present reality, point by point.

Any professional installer knows that you cannot hurry an installation without risks. Since professional installers know that such risks cost more in the long run, they do not hurry their work. The implication of reduced reliability is not real.

To be sure, there are a few, unprofessional, or untrained installers who might hurry their work, but they represent a small minority. If they did not represent a minority, the legal business segment of fiber optics would be booming! It is not.

If hurried installation represented a high frequency (as indicated by the word often), connector manufacturers could not offer warranties of 15 to 25 years, and could not train and certify thousands of installers annually.

We have two problems with the statement "performed by unskilled operators." Professional installers have the skills required to perform their activities at low cost and high reliability. To do otherwise would be to invite bankruptcy.

The skill level required for fiber optic connector installation is not as high as many assume: high school students, electricians, plumbers, technicians from many different vocations are successfully installing fiber optic connectors. A moderate dexterity and skill level is only part of the requirement.

Attention to detail is another requirement. As long as the installer follows the correct procedure, he will achieve low loss, low cost and high reliability. With certain installation methods, trainers achieve 80-90 % yield with trainees who have never touched a connector before training. In less than one day! In two additional days, the trainees achieve 90-95 % yield, with many achieving 95-98 % yields. The dual implications of high skill requirement and of low skill installers are blatantly misleading and false.

By examination, the Fiber Optic Association (FOA) has already certified more than 10,000 Certified Fiber Optic Technicians (CFOT). Again, by examination, the FOA is certifying those with advanced experience through its three Certified Fiber Optic Specialist ratings. Professional installers have thousands and tens of thousands of connectors under their belts. Connector manufacturers and structured cabling system suppliers certify thousands more installers each year.

We object to the mischaracterization and costly (as much as \$20.00 per connector), This statement is misleading in that no one ever accepts or rejects fiber optics as a data medium based on the cost of the connector. This cost is irrelevant. The decision is based on a performance benefit analysis that includes the cost of the connector.

In addition to this reality, we point out that the number is misleading. Pearson Technologies most recent total installed connector cost analysis ([Eye On Fiber](#), June 6, 2003) shows the total installed cost ranges from \$5.23 to \$17.29, depending on the method of installation and the total loaded hourly labor rate. If we take a midpoint of \$50/hour, the range is \$7.70-\$15.60. To use \$20/connector is to mislead the reader about the true cost of fiber optics. The reality of fiber optic network cost is shown by the latest cost model issued by the Fiber Optic LAN Section of the TIA (www.fols.org). This reality is that centralized fiber systems cost less than horizontal UTP/vertical fiber systems.

There are two additional mischaracterizations: Patch cord breakage(not uncommon) is eliminated. Patch cord breakage is not common. It is the exception and is due to inappropriate handling by an installer or an end user. Again, professional installers know how to install patch cords without damage.

The second mischaracterization is in the words pulling a mass of plastic connectors through conduit. Such a pull is not standard practice. This rarely used technique is used when there is no other alternative. When this technique is used, the connectors are staggered along the cable to prevent creation of a large mass and are protected by a shroud so the damage portrayed does not occur. This technique was developed in the mid 1990s.

Finally, we question the accuracy of the statement, are usually guaranteed for longer life Longer than what? The range of vendor warranties for structured fiber optic cable systems is 15 – 25 years. We cannot find a warranty statement on the Johanson web site or in the two PDF documents available from that site. In addition, an email from Johanson stated: We currently do not have a specific warranty program for the MPAK system at this time.

This article seems to position the product addressed and the magazine itself against all of those who have been mischaracterized by the content. These insultees include:

Unionized and non-unionized professional installers who know their trade, install low loss, highly reliable connectors on a daily basis;

connector manufacturers, who train and certify their installers

structured system manufacturers, who train and certify their installers

the membership of the FOA, who have earned CFOT and CFOS designations

designers of networks, who know enough to design around the problems portrayed in the quotations, and the undersigned.

These mischaracterizations are at best, insulting, and, at worst, border on libel and slander. We request the opportunity to place an article in CBM to present the reality of fiber optic connector installation. In such an article, we will not disparage competing systems, but will demonstrate the high reliability that is commonly achieved by trained and certified fiber optic installers.

Note: as of 8/4/05, the magazine did not respond to this letter.

Respectfully submitted for your consideration,



Eric R. Pearson, CPC, CFOS

President

Pearson Technologies Inc.

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