Boeing Enters Communications Test and Measurement Market with First Adaptive Multi-Protocol Analyzer

Boeing today announced its entry into the commercial communications test and measurement market with a multi-protocol analyzer that is the first of its kind in the industry. The Boeing AS4950 is the first "adaptive" test system, meaning that it uses a single board that can auto-learn and reconfigure itself to the particular network or device under test. This capability enables communications service providers and equipment manufacturers to test multiple protocols, networks and devices using a single test system, resulting in significant time and cost savings for them and their end users.

The AS4950 is designed primarily for communications service providers who need to design, maintain and monitor their equipment, systems and networks, and for manufacturers of communications and Internet-working equipment including switches, routers and hubs who need to ensure conformance to standards and test the quality and performance of their equipment. The AS4950 also can be used by systems integrators who must evaluate and install multiple vendors' products to provide complete solutions for their own customers and by large end-user organizations that may be conducting their own product evaluation or that plan to do their own ongoing product monitoring and maintenance.

The AS4950 combines a common hardware platform with protocol-specific software packages, making it the first test system to deliver both the flexibility and cost advantages of software-based test systems and the high performance of hardware-based systems. With its single board PCI card design, the AS4950 gives customers the ability to use the host system of their choice including portables, desktop systems, rack-mounts and brick architectures.

Because the AS4950 is self-configuring and auto-learns, it is the first test system that can literally adapt to the particular network or device that the customer is testing, reducing the complexity of testing and saving customers valuable time that otherwise would be spent manually reconfiguring their test equipment for each different test situation.

"Previously, service providers and manufacturers had to purchase multiple protocol analyzers or at the very least, multiple interfaces, in order to test all of the services or products in their portfolio," said Rob Johnson, Boeing Information & Communications Systems manager for AS4950 sales and marketing.

"This was an impractical, time-consuming and costly process for these customers. With the AS4950, these customers can now purchase a single test system that can be used for multiple protocols - a particularly valuable scenario for network service providers who maintain Frame Relay networks but who are also building ATM (asynchronous transfer mode) networks, for example."

Key benefits that customers can realize with the AS4950 include:

- Cost Savings: The AS4950's common hardware platform with modular software support for multiple protocols saves customers the cost of buying multiple interfaces or worse, multiple test units.
- Simplified Configuration and Reduced Set-up Time: The AS4950's self-configuring feature simplifies the entire configuration process, saving valuable time and resources. This is particularly useful for service provider field service personnel who often don't have time to be re-trained on new test systems.
- Scalability: The AS4950's modular design lets customers pay only for those features they need now, while allowing them to add new features as their requirements expand.
- Investment Protection: Customers can use existing platforms instead of buying new systems since the AS4950's PCI card design is compatible with a multitude of systems. Furthermore, the AS4950 incorporates a Java-based Graphical User Interface (GUI) to ensure operation from any system equipped with a web browser.

The initial version of the AS4950 will support ATM OC-3 and OC-12 interfaces and will be available in March 1998. Pricing for the base card starts at $19,995, U.S. list. The OC-12 module is priced at $17,995, U.S. list. Support for additional protocols including Frame Relay and xDSL will be available in the fourth quarter of 1998.

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