

CANTO

Reimagining ICT

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The telecommunications industry is an agile one which is in constant transformation. Navigating and understanding it all takes time and patience.

Enter CANTO, formerly known as the Caribbean Association of National Telecommunications Organizations, and its vision of becoming “the leading authority in shaping information, communication, and technology in the Caribbean Region and the Americas.” By forming a trade association that now comprises some 130 different member organizations, CANTO has helped its mem-



TERESA WANKIN
General Secretary of CANTO

bers work together, collectively, for the betterment of all stakeholders and by extension, the region.

“We are a trade association of the ICT (Information and Communication Technology) stakeholders in the Latin American and the Caribbean region,” explains Secretary General Teresa Wankin. “We were founded in 1985, by a small group of telecom operators. Our aim remains the same – forming a trade organization to address the common concerns of stakeholders; provide a platform for networking; sharing of information; and, generally, for



doing business in the region. Over time, as the industry evolved and developed, so did the membership of CANTO grow from just pure telecom operators, to anyone with an interest in ICT. So now the Association has service providers, regulators, and anyone with an interest in ICT. Our members have evolved and so have we to become a focal point for all of the stakeholders to meet, do business, and network, and, most importantly, drive regional growth and development.”

The policy strategy of CANTO is directed by a Board of Directors appointed by the membership. The full-time staff of eight and the permanent Secretariat are located in Trinidad and Tobago. The Association’s activities are financed through the contributions of the members, as well as other revenue generating projects. This allows CANTO to offer an array of services specially designed with its members and other

AT A GLANCE CARIBBEAN ASSOCIATION OF NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS ORGANIZATIONS

WHAT: A trade association with 130 member organizations

WHERE: Port-of-Spain, Trinidad

WEBSITE: www.canto.org





stakeholders in mind. These include activities like an Annual Conference and Trade Exhibition, an Annual General Meeting, ICT specific Training & Workshops, and ICT Periodicals.

With 130 organizations joined together, the footprint of CANTO stretches far and wide. Seeing itself as a Caribbean and Latin American association with a global focus, CANTO has members in Europe, America, South America, and Central America, as well as its Caribbean base. Membership includes full members, such as the region's carrier operators, and affiliate members, which are those entities that have an interest in the telecom industry, including vendors, manufacturers, and suppliers.

CANTO's stated mission is to influence the innovation and development of ICT solutions for the benefit of members by developing, navigating, and leveraging relationships with all stakeholders. To accomplish this, the Association advocates for policies, legislation, and rules that advance the creation of an environment which

facilitates the growth and development of services and technologies around the region.

"Advocacy is something that we do well through collaborative dialoguing," Wankin asserts. "I will give you an example: in the British Virgin Islands, there was an issue where the regulator wanted to regulate unsolicited text messages with intense rigor. At the request of our members there, we brought all the players together, and had a series of meetings, which resulted in the regulator agreeing to providers giving customers the option to 'opt out' of text promotions. This is the type of value we add to the region by providing that platform for all stakeholders to dialogue for the common good



of the region. So, regardless of your role in the ICT ecosystem, CANTO's the only platform you need if you want to establish relationships and create new business opportunities. We have a history of getting things done for the growth and develop-





ment of the region.”

CANTO’s most recent Conference and Trade Show was held in the Dominican Republic, this past July. “This was an annual event for people to come and experience firsthand all the cutting edge technology that exists right here in our region,” says Wankin. “Often, people think they have to go to America or Europe to see what is new, but if you come to CANTO’s Conference, you would have an equally gratifying experience. We bring everything to the region and create a platform where government ministers, operators, regulators, and service pro-

viders come together for four days and discuss a diverse spectrum of telecom-related issues.”

Mergers, acquisitions, strict regulations, evolving technology - the telecom industry is beset with change no matter where you look, and CANTO sees itself as a meeting place where stakeholders can get together and do business, and also as an organization that can solve problems as they arise.

“Businesses always have to do introspection,” Wankin says, “and that is not just the telecom industry. A business must always revisit its models and seek to make them



better, to optimize their operations and resources. Technology will always be a part of the puzzle. With technological advancement comes opportunities. We see the membership evolving with these technological changes. When I joined CANTO, fifteen years ago, telecom was much sim-



pler; now that it has evolved, we are having conversations about Big Data, the Internet of Things, Smart Cities, and relaxed regulations. CANTO, as an association, is evolving with the industry to ensure that we are well equipped to better service our members for the economic development of the region.”





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