

BUSINESS INNOVATION SYMPOSIUM (E6)
New Space Industry Applications (3)

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THE SPACE E-COMMERCE REVOLUTION

Abstract

In the 1990s, the space community witnessed the revolution that is now the Small Satellite market. Originally written off as not being large enough to have any real practical function, space companies large and small are falling over themselves to get an involvement in Small Satellites. They have proven to be very much more useful than the sceptics proffered. With the Small Satellite market doing very good business, many of us within the Small Satellite community are now wondering where the next revolution will come from. Most think that the smart money is on Picosatellites, and this class of spacecraft is proving its technical capability, and seems to be fast becoming the most economically viable method of accessing space.

This paper will examine the commercial world of picosatellites. In particular, the paper will look at how the approach to standardisation on platforms such as CubeSats has resulted in the evolution of internet sales of satellite subsystems, purely as a result of the natural progression of the market. Due to these mechanical and electrical interfacing standards being introduced, it has become viable for space companies to produce relatively large numbers of the same subsystem and, as a result, drive down the cost of those systems. This, in turn, is forcing companies to look to alternative methods of doing business in order to help reduce these costs even further. In addition to systems being available to buy by customers at anytime of the day or at weekends, the use of ecommerce has a huge number of benefits that help the customer make their product selection and also provide after sales support. There is even talk of soon being able to specify and procure a complete spacecraft online to meet the mission requirements. Once picosatellites have proven their technical viability as a useful platform, the next revolution in spacecraft could well already be underway and it looks likely to be a web-based space market.