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Is Space R&D Truly Fostering A Better World For Our Future? (2)

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EXITING THE ECHO CHAMBER — HOW SPACE CAN PROVIDE GREATER VALUE BY BETTER
UNDERSTANDING ITS BENEFICIARIES AND PARTNERS

Abstract

Space is experiencing a challenging tension. From awestruck acclaim for the possibilities of space telescope imagery and rover-captured videos of Mars, to the reverence for astronauts and the rapid growth of the start-up space sector, to space's place as source material for some of the most popular entertainment franchises today — incredible technical achievements and a permanent place in the pop-culture zeitgeist are hallmarks of our sector. Yet space can also be the subject of derision and criticism from elected officials and heads of state, news media, and the public at large for being an extravagant playground for the wealthy and a beneficiary of wasteful government spending. In short, space is often seen as a detached realm of fantasy and frivolity, with limited value for life on Earth.

Within the space sector, a common response to these criticisms is to lament this lack of understanding and talk amongst ourselves about our desire for the public to better grasp the value of space. We rightly work to outline the many ways in which space enables and improves modern life on Earth, but if the space sector is to keep growing in economic and societal value, we must go further — we must better understand the aspirations and struggles of other sectors and the public at large, so that space might offer new and better solutions. We need to go beyond telling others why space matters to them and better demonstrate to others that they matter to space.

This paper will explore ways in which the space sector might better create and connect its value to society by building better relationships with other sectors, the public, and the media. To guide that exploration, this paper will assess the current state of the space sector's engagement beyond its own bounds, including results from applied examples of such engagement in space and other sectors. The paper will also review a variety of approaches to building relationships outside of space, including:

- methods, goals, and potential outcomes of building communities with other sectors;
- tactics for exchanging and processing information from potential beneficiaries of and partners for space-based services, to inform new solutions; and
- sharing stories of greater substance and broader appeal with news media and the public.

This paper will culminate by offering a framework by which the space sector can make itself more valuable to other sectors and the public via more empathetic and meaningful engagement.

Keywords: outreach, engagement, marketing, communications, societal benefit, partnerships, adjacencies, applications