

Innovation

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Business Knowledge

HISTORY OF THE TELEVISION

TELEVISIONS CAN BE FOUND IN BILLIONS OF HOMES AROUND THE WORLD. BUT 100 YEARS AGO, NOBODY EVEN KNEW WHAT A TELEVISION WAS. IN FACT, AS LATE AS 1947, ONLY A FEW THOUSAND AMERICANS OWNED TELEVISIONS. HOW DID SUCH A GROUNDBREAKING TECHNOLOGY TURN FROM A NICHE INVENTION TO A LIVING ROOM MAINSTAY?

TODAY, WE'RE EXPLAINING THE COMPLETE HISTORY OF THE TELEVISION INCLUDING WHERE IT COULD BE GOING IN THE FUTURE.

MECHANICAL TELEVISIONS IN THE 1800S AND EARLY 1900S

**PRIOR TO ELECTRIC TELEVISIONS, WE HAD
MECHANICAL TELEVISIONS.**

**THESE EARLY TELEVISIONS STARTED
APPEARING IN THE EARLY 1800S. THEY
INVOLVED MECHANICALLY SCANNING
IMAGES THEN TRANSMITTING THOSE
IMAGES ONTO A SCREEN. COMPARED TO
ELECTRONIC TELEVISIONS, THEY WERE
EXTREMELY RUDIMENTARY.**

**ONE OF THE FIRST MECHANICAL
TELEVISIONS USED A ROTATING DISK WITH
HOLES ARRANGED IN A SPIRAL PATTERN.
THIS DEVICE WAS CREATED
INDEPENDENTLY BY TWO INVENTORS:
SCOTTISH INVENTOR JOHN LOGIE BAIRD
AND AMERICAN INVENTOR CHARLES
FRANCIS JENKINS. BOTH DEVICES WERE
INVENTED IN THE EARLY 1920S.**

PRIOR TO THESE TWO INVENTORS, GERMAN INVENTOR PAUL GOTTLIEB NIPKOW HAD DEVELOPED THE FIRST MECHANICAL TELEVISION. THAT DEVICE SENT IMAGES THROUGH WIRES USING A ROTATING METAL DISK. INSTEAD OF CALLING THE DEVICE A TELEVISION, HOWEVER, NIPKOW CALLED IT AN "ELECTRIC TELESCOPE". THE DEVICE HAD 18 LINES OF RESOLUTION.

IN 1907, TWO INVENTORS RUSSIAN BORIS ROSING AND ENGLISH A.A. CAMPBELL-SWINTON COMBINED A CATHODE RAY TUBE WITH A MECHANICAL SCANNING SYSTEM TO CREATE A TOTALLY NEW TELEVISION SYSTEM.

ULTIMATELY, THE EARLY EFFORTS OF THESE INVENTORS WOULD LEAD TO THE WORLD'S FIRST ELECTRICAL TELEVISION A FEW YEARS LATER.

THE FIRST ELECTRONIC TELEVISION WAS INVENTED IN 1927

THE WORLD'S FIRST ELECTRONIC TELEVISION WAS CREATED BY A 21 YEAR OLD INVENTOR NAMED PHILO TAYLOR FARNSWORTH. THAT INVENTOR LIVED IN A HOUSE WITHOUT ELECTRICITY UNTIL HE WAS AGE 14. STARTING IN HIGH SCHOOL, HE BEGAN TO THINK OF A SYSTEM THAT COULD CAPTURE MOVING IMAGES, TRANSFORM THOSE IMAGES INTO CODE, THEN MOVE THOSE IMAGES ALONG RADIO WAVES TO DIFFERENT DEVICES.

FARNSWORTH WAS MILES AHEAD OF ANY MECHANICAL TELEVISION SYSTEM INVENTED TO-DATE. FARNSWORTH'S SYSTEM CAPTURED MOVING IMAGES USING A BEAM OF ELECTRONS (BASICALLY, A PRIMITIVE CAMERA).

THE FIRST IMAGE EVER TRANSMITTED BY TELEVISION WAS A SIMPLE LINE. LATER, FARNSWORTH WOULD FAMOUSLY TRANSMIT A DOLLAR SIGN USING HIS TELEVISION AFTER A PROSPECTIVE INVESTOR ASKED "WHEN ARE WE GOING TO SEE SOME DOLLARS IN THIS THING, FARNSWORTH?"

BETWEEN 1926 AND 1931, MECHANICAL TELEVISION INVENTORS CONTINUED TO TWEAK AND TEST THEIR CREATIONS. HOWEVER, THEY WERE ALL DOOMED TO BE OBSOLETE IN COMPARISON TO MODERN ELECTRICAL TELEVISIONS: BY 1934, ALL TVS HAD BEEN CONVERTED INTO THE ELECTRONIC SYSTEM.

UNDERSTANDABLY, ALL EARLY TELEVISION SYSTEMS TRANSMITTED FOOTAGE IN BLACK AND WHITE. COLOR TV, HOWEVER, WAS FIRST THEORIZED WAY BACK IN 1904 SOMETHING WE'LL TALK ABOUT LATER ON.

THE FIRST TELEVISION SETS IN AMERICA

AMERICA'S FIRST COMMERCIALY PRODUCED TELEVISION SETS WERE BASED ON THE MECHANICAL TELEVISION SYSTEM MADE BY JOHN BAIRD'S TELEVISION DESIGNS. THESE SETS WERE SHOWN OFF TO THE PUBLIC IN SEPTEMBER, 1928.

IT WOULD TAKE UNTIL 1938, HOWEVER, BEFORE AMERICAN ELECTRONIC TELEVISION SETS WERE PRODUCED AND RELEASED COMMERCIALY. THEY WERE AN INSTANT HIT AFTER RELEASE.

AMERICA'S FIRST TELEVISION COMMERCIAL

THE FIRST TELEVISION STATION IN AMERICA STARTED BROADCASTING IN 1928. FOR THE FIRST 13 YEARS OF ITS EXISTENCE, TELEVISION REMAINED BLISSFULLY COMMERCIAL-FREE. THE FIRST COMMERCIAL BROADCAST IN AMERICA DID NOT TAKE PLACE UNTIL JULY 1, 1941, WHICH IS WHEN THE FIRST AMERICAN ADVERTISEMENT AIRED. THE AD WAS FOR A BULOVA WATCH AND LASTED FOR 10 SECONDS. IT AIRED ON NBC.

FIRST REMOTE CONTROL FOR TELEVISION SETS

**THE WORLD'S FIRST TELEVISION
REMOTE CONTROL WAS CALLED THE
TELE ZOOM, AND IT CAN BARELY EVEN
BE CATEGORIZED AS A REMOTE
CONTROL. THE TELE ZOOM WAS ONLY
USED TO "ZOOM IN" TO THE PICTURE
ON THE TELEVISION. YOU COULD NOT
USE IT TO CHANGE ANY CHANNELS OR
TURN THE TV ON OR OFF. THE TELE
ZOOM WAS RELEASED IN 1948.**

**THE FIRST "TRUE" REMOTE CONTROL
WAS PRODUCED BY ZENITH AND
RELEASED IN 1955. THIS REMOTE
CONTROL COULD TURN THE
TELEVISION ON OR OFF AND CHANGE
THE CHANNEL. IT WAS ALSO
COMPLETELY WIRELESS.**

THE FIRST TELEVISION PROGRAM IN AMERICA

TODAY, AMERICAN NETWORKS PLAY THOUSANDS OF DIFFERENT PROGRAMS EVERY DAY. EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THESE PROGRAMS, HOWEVER, OWES ITS EXISTENCE TO AMERICA'S FIRST TELEVISION PROGRAM, WHICH WAS CALLED THE QUEEN'S MESSENGER. THAT PROGRAM WAS FIRST SHOWN IN 1928 BY WRGB STATION.

WE'RE NOT 100% SURE THAT THE QUEEN'S MESSENGER WAS THE FIRST TV PROGRAM SHOWN IN AMERICA. IN 1928, THE PROGRAM WAS THOUGHT TO BE BROADCAST ONLY TO FOUR TELEVISION SETS. NOT 400. NOT 4,000. FOUR. THUS, WE HAVE SOME AMBIGUITY AND DEBATE OVER WHETHER THIS WAS ACTUALLY THE FIRST TELEVISION PROGRAM.

COLOR TELEVISION IN AMERICA

COLOR TELEVISION TRACES ITS ROOTS AS FAR BACK AS 1904, WHEN A GERMAN INVENTOR RECEIVED A PATENT FOR COLOR TELEVISION. HOWEVER, THAT INVENTOR DID NOT ACTUALLY HAVE A WORKING COLOR TELEVISION IT WAS JUST A PATENTED IDEA.

A CONCEPTUALIZED COLOR TELEVISION SYSTEM APPEARED IN 1925 FROM INVENTOR VLADIMIR ZWORYKIN. HOWEVER, THIS SYSTEM WAS NEVER CONVERTED INTO REALITY. ALL ATTEMPTS TO CONVERT IT INTO REALITY DID NOT SUCCEED.

COLOR TELEVISION WAS PLACED ON THE BACKBURNER FOR ABOUT 20 YEARS. IN 1946, THE IDEA OF COLOR TELEVISION WAS RENEWED IN EARNEST. AS THEHISTORYOFTELEVISION.COM EXPLAINS,

"BY 1946, THE SECOND WORLD WAR WAS HISTORY, AND PEOPLE IN AMERICA WANTED TO MAKE UP FOR ALL THE TIME LOST TO THE WAR. BLACK AND WHITE TELEVISION WAS THOUGHT OF AS OLD AND IT WAS TIME TO DO SOMETHING NEW. THIS IS WHEN COLOR TELEVISION SYSTEMS FIRST BEGAN TO BE CONSIDERED SERIOUSLY."

THE COLOR TELEVISION WAR IN AMERICA WAS FOUGHT BETWEEN TWO INDUSTRY GIANTS: CBS AND RCA. CBS WAS THE FIRST COMPANY TO CREATE A COLOR TELEVISION SET. HOWEVER, THE MAIN DRAWBACK WAS THAT IT WAS A MECHANICAL TELEVISION BASED ON JOHN BAIRD'S ORIGINAL SYSTEM. THUS, IT WAS NOT COMPATIBLE WITH BLACK AND WHITE TV SETS IN USE ACROSS AMERICA.

DESPITE THIS MAJOR FLAW, THE FCC DECLARED THAT THE CBS COLOR TELEVISION WAS GOING TO BE THE NATIONAL STANDARD.

RCA PROTESTED, STATING THAT IT WAS UNFAIR TO MAKE CBS COLOR TV THE STANDARD WHEN IT COULD EVEN BE USED BY MILLIONS OF CUSTOMERS ACROSS AMERICA (MOST OF WHOM OWNED RCA TELEVISIONS).

UNFAZED, RCA CONTINUED TO DEVELOP THEIR OWN COLOR TELEVISION SYSTEM THAT WOULD BE COMPATIBLE WITH ITS CUSTOMERS RCA SETS. IN 1953, THE FCC ACKNOWLEDGED THAT RCA'S COLOR TV SYSTEM WAS BETTER. STARTING IN 1954, COLOR RCA TV SYSTEMS WERE SOLD ACROSS AMERICA.

COLOR TV HAD A SIMILAR INITIAL PROBLEM AS 3D TV AND OTHER TECHNOLOGIES: PEOPLE OWNED THE COLOR TV TECHNOLOGY, BUT BROADCASTERS WEREN'T PRODUCING COLOR TV CONTENT. FEW PEOPLE OWNED COLOR TV SETS BETWEEN 1954 AND 1965. HOWEVER, STARTING IN 1966, COLOR TV PROGRAMMING WAS BROADCAST ACROSS AMERICA, LEADING TO A SURGE IN SALES OF COLOR TELEVISION SETS.

TODAY, ONLINE TELEVISION AND OTHER BROADCASTING TECHNOLOGIES HAVE CHANGED THE FUTURE OF TRADITIONAL TV. WITH MORE AND MORE PEOPLE "CUTTING THE CORD", IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN IF TRADITIONAL TV CAN SURVIVE IN AN ERA FILLED WITH NETFLIX AND OTHER TECHNOLOGIES.

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