All things considered, 2017 certainly looks to be a significant year for the RF/microwave industry. Of course, we will continue to hear about 5G as it inches closer to reality. We can also expect to hear all sorts of reports concerning the Internet of Things (IoT). Driverless cars are sure to make headlines, too. The list goes on.

Whether it’s texting a friend or watching a YouTube video on an iPhone, wireless technology is now clearly entrenched in our lives. It is impossible to walk around here in New York City and not see people texting on the street or looking at something on their phone while waiting for the train. We can get so distracted by a text message conversation that we become unaware of what’s happening around us (I have been guilty of this myself). Although wireless technology is such a major part of our lives, does society appreciate the engineers who are responsible for it? Are engineers more or less appreciated than, say, teachers and health professionals? Teachers should be respected—their jobs can often be difficult and stressful. I have teacher friends who can certainly attest to that. The same can be said for the nursing profession. I also know several nurses who can relate to having stressful jobs. One can make the case that teachers and nurses are seriously underappreciated (but I won’t get into that here).

What about engineers? Are they appreciated? I’m not sure, but it is clear that many people—and understandably so—have no idea of the concept of RF/microwave engineering. I am positive that many of you reading this right now have experienced telling someone that you work in the “microwave” industry—or for a “microwave” company—only to wind up explaining to that same person that you don’t actually work with microwave ovens. This simply underscores how wireless technology is relied upon, but not really understood.

Whether you may or may not feel appreciated, you should nonetheless feel some satisfaction today if you are a part of this industry. After all, you are creating the technology that so many people depend on—whether they realize it or not.