

# Scott's SatelliteGuys

- *Provides assistance with technical satellite reception questions*
- *Founded by Scott as a non-profit forum*
- *All advertising income is reinvested in better technology*
- *New is the use of the forums through Customer Service employees of digital TV companies*

■ Scott Greczkowski's home in Newington outside of Hartford, Connecticut in the USA. Scott operates his satellite forum [SatelliteGuys.us](http://SatelliteGuys.us) from here. On the street side he has two motorized dishes installed; four smaller fixed dishes are mounted on the wall. To the left is a multifocus dish with five LNBs for DirectTV, in the middle is a dish for the DishNetwork eastern arc pointing to 61.5W, 72.7W and 77W plus another antenna for the DishNetwork western arc at 110W and 119W. All the way to the right is another antenna for 110W. This dish is used for automatic scanning that takes place every hour. It can instantly identify when a new channel appears on DishNetwork and posts this information in the forum thread Uplink Report.



■ Scott Greczkowski with a T-shirt from SatelliteGuys.us in front of his two motorized dishes, on the left a 1.5-meter offset antenna and in the middle a 2.5-meter prime focus dish both of which are currently pointed to 85W.



# How Scott Built up the Largest Satellite Forum in the USA



If in the USA you want to find out more about satellite reception, you go straight to the Internet to the SatelliteGuys.us forum. Numerous threads in this forum provide any and all information not only on the reception of freely receivable satellite signals, but it also provides help for any problems that subscribers to the two satellite PayTV operators in the USA might have. A team of 25 volunteers manage all of the sub forums and also take care of their own specialized subjects. The forum has 175,000 registered users; the occasional users and visitors to the forum make up a multiple of that number.

Founder and organizer of SatelliteGuys is Scott Greczkowski. He lives in Newington, a suburb of Hartford, the capital city of the state of Connecticut in the USA on the American east coast. That's where we paid him a visit since we wanted to get a better understanding of how Scott created the largest satellite forum in the USA. How did he even get started with satellite reception?

"I was an enthusiastic radio listener early on in life", remembers Scott, "When I was young I was always trying to receive radio stations that were

further and further away with my AM radio." Scott had his first encounter with satellite reception when he was 13 years old. "In a store that my parents shopped in quite often there was one day a satellite reception system on display." Little Scott was completely fascinated with it and turned the antenna from left to right. He couldn't believe that so many TV channels could be received from so far away.

He had to wait a few years, but by 1991 he was able to acquire his own satellite system. "At 19 years old I moved into my own apartment and managed to convince the landlord to let me erect a 2.5-meter antenna on top of the garage." He paid US\$3000 for that system and still remembers his first receiver. "It was a General Instruments model 650, one of the best analog receivers of the time."

A friend of his then started an Internet company. Scott helped him out with that and in 1995 a radio show started in the TechTalkNetwork. It dealt with satellite reception („Friday Night Live with Gary Bourgois" - Gary passed away in 2010) and it was from here that Scott got the idea to record this radio show and encode it as a stream so that he

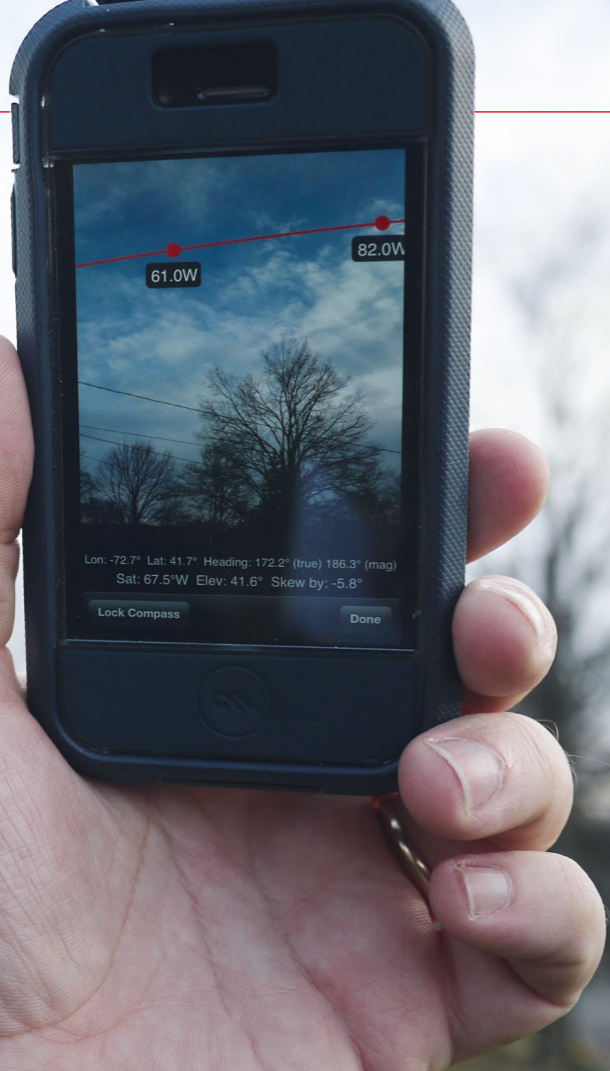
could offer it through his friend's Internet server. "It took three hours to encode one hour of the radio program for the Internet stream." At the same time the company Real Networks developed software that would allow this audio encoding at a much faster rate so that even live transmissions were possible. To test this software, Real Networks contacted a number of Internet service providers including the company from Scott's friend. They found the right guy. Scott immediately put the software into service and carried the radio program live in the Internet. "We had a license for 100 listeners and with our first broadcast we had 80 listeners logged in."

This gave Scott the first sense that the Internet was an interesting medium that he could use to expand his satellite hobby. But the actual breakthrough where Scott would actively use the Internet came a little later. "In 1997 the cable company 'Digital Cable' began their first tests with digital technology and believe it or not selected my area as their test location." Scott was the first private customer that got a digital cable connection. "I sat right down and wrote a report on the operation of the digital TV box that included many

■ The prime focus antenna is fitted with a C/Ku-band LNB



1. How far can his dishes see? Scott pulls his iPhone from his pocket and starts Dishpointer (www.dishpointer.com). The display shows the receivable satellites from his location. "The range covers 50W to 131W."
2. Naturally Scott uses another motorized antenna for terrestrial TV. "Sometimes I can receive the digital TV channels from New York."
3. Who in the USA is the owner of this black Lincoln? Sorry, we won't tell.



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from the satellite scene in the forum", remembers Scott. He became so active in the forum that the operator of the forum eventually started to get uncomfortable. "One day I found that my account was locked", shuddered Scott, "and I was out." That shouldn't have happened to him, not even once. He found a sponsor that provided him with forum software and space on a server - that was the birth of www.SatelliteGuys.us

"It was September 7, 2003 when my own forum went live for the first time!" says Scott and then explains how he came up with that name, "Many small companies use the founder's name as the company name. I wanted to do that too but not so directly. My initials are S and G. I thought about it and wondered what could they stand for? S could only be Satellite and the G?" The answer came to him in a flash: "It's all the members of my forum, it's the Satellite Guys." For a domain Scott chose .us since it's an American forum. "Just recently though I was able to acquire the previously taken .com domain so that now SatelliteGuys can be reached from every important domain."

It has only gotten better since then. Scott pulls up the server statistics on his PC: "In 2004 we had 29 million page views and in 2011 it had jumped to 500 million page views." Since then the curve has gone steeply upwards: "If the

trend stays the same, the page views for 2012 will double to one billion."

Scott's forum is viewed mostly in the USA. The server statistics show that 95% of the visitors come from the USA, 4.5% are from Canada with the remainder from the rest of the world. How does Scott finance the costs for such a successful forum? "On SatelliteGuys.us you'll find banner ads, Google ads as well as sponsors", lists Scott (TELE-satellite is one of those sponsors) who then gives us some numbers, "In 2006 we took in about US\$10,000 and in 2011 it was roughly US\$50,000." Not much is left over from that income: "I use that to finance the server costs, the software licenses and the bandwidth." On top of that there are goodwill actions such as the distribution of T-shirts with the SatelliteGuys.us logo as well as other similar promotions to promote the web site.

Scott emphasizes that he's not running SatelliteGuys.us for the money; he finds that he has a lot of fun providing other satellite viewers that have problems with their satellite system or receivers with a platform to get help. "Numerous forum threads are archived so that you can find help in older forum threads for devices that haven't been available for some time." Scott is proud that his forum can provide answers to even the most exotic problem; at some point, every problem was handled once

before. "If you have a technical problem, you can utilize our search function or use Google to find the appropriate forum thread."

In the meantime SatelliteGuys.us has become the first web address for anyone that has a technical problem with their satellite or cable connection. The incredible assortment of tips and tricks that have been collected in the forum have opened up an area that surprisingly is also becoming interesting for commercial providers: "Recently we've become direct partners in customer service for a number of companies", reveals Scott. "DishNetwork works together with us: some of their customer service employees are registered members of my forum and answer questions from other members directly in the forum."

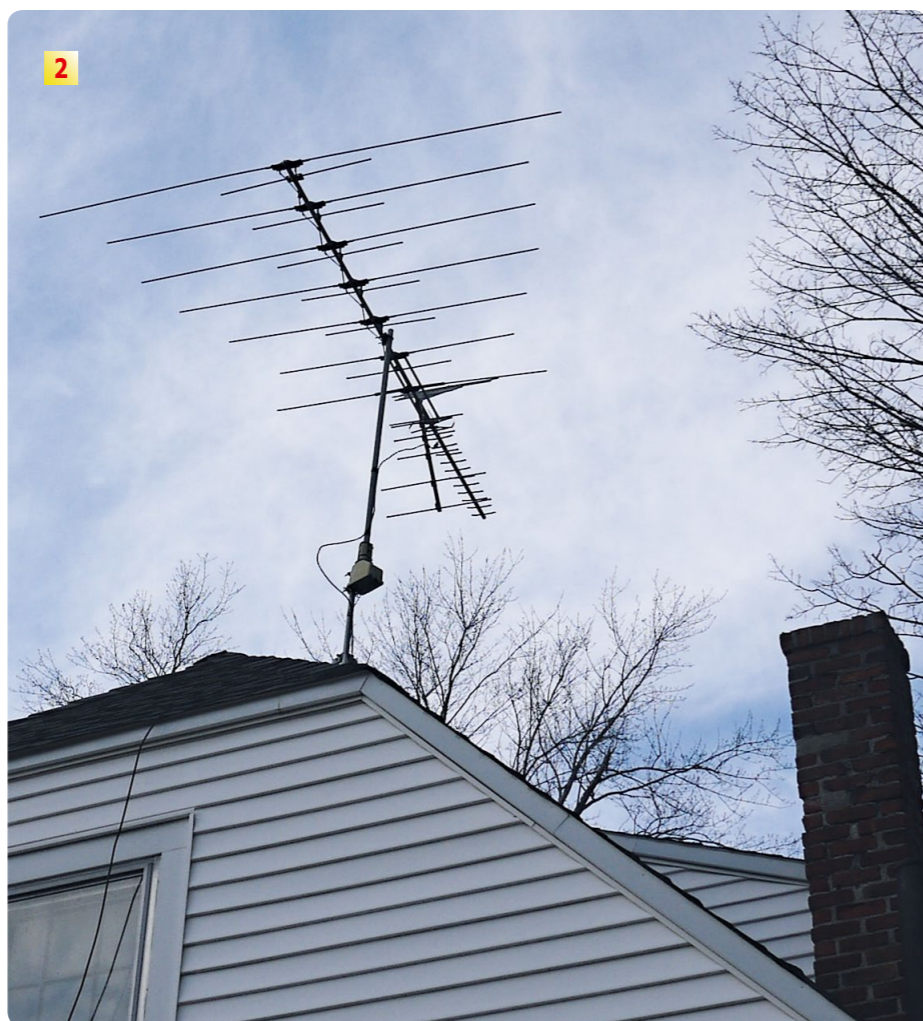
Other companies have noticed SatelliteGuys as a place to better support their customers, Scott offers the companies the resources they need to support their customers at no charge. Besides DISH Network, official support is now offered by Satellite Radio provider Sirius XM and cable television provider Bright House Networks. Scott hopes to one day also get DIRECTV on board as well.

"America is starting to learn that if they need support with their satellite or cable service to come to SatelliteGuys

pictures." That was his first test report that he from then on continuously kept up to date. He posted this report on the website ttn.nai.net that he was already using for streaming the radio program. He became well-known in the scene practically overnight; even CBS and C-NET contacted him so they could report on his experience with this new digital TV technology. When that cable company expanded their product palette to include Internet service in 1998, Scott was again one of the first customer to get connected This time Scott became active again but for a different reason: "The cable company was unable to deliver what they had promised." Scott founded a Yahoo Group that very quickly had nearly 1000 members; they were all cable customers who were not happy with their Internet service. Scott stood firm and finally at some point the cable company solved the technical problems.

Scott realized that there were many users that had technical problems and that more could be done as a group rather than individually. Scott took this realization and carried it over into satellite reception and in 2000 became a member of the first real satellite forum DBSForum and then later on DBSTalk.

"I began by posting news and rumors





■ Scott works as an IT Manager at a large company in Connecticut. His office can be found on the 29th floor of the 'Goodwin Square Building', the second tallest building in Hartford.





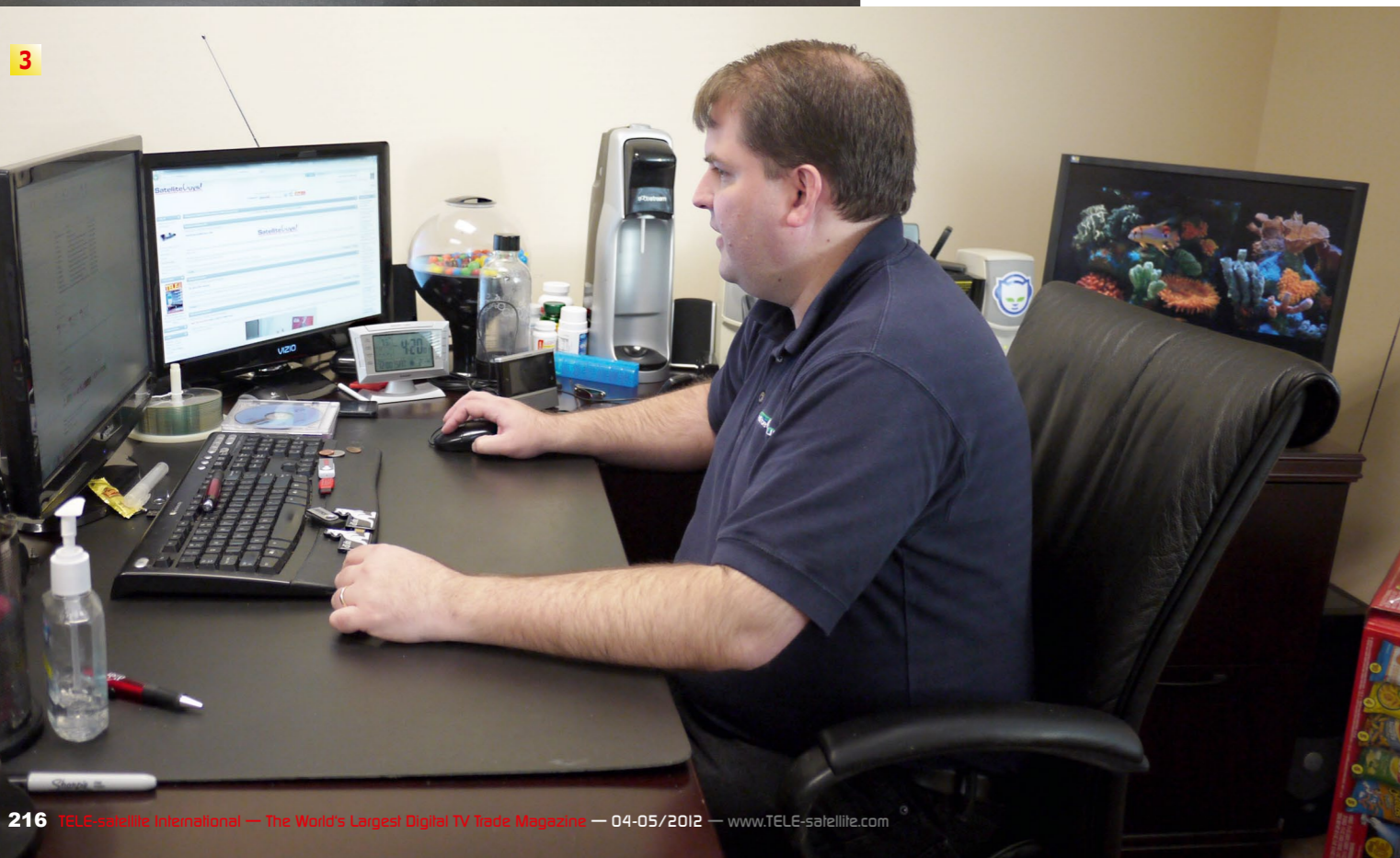
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first, and that is something I am very proud of!", says Scott with a smile.

Scott never planned for this to happen although deep down he wanted it: he found an expansion of SatelliteGuys.us that other digital TV companies should stop and think about: instead of operating their own legally liable question and answer forum, their customer service employees could answer questions on an external forum such as SatelliteGuys.us.

Scott's original idea to provide a platform for other satellite enthusiasts to get help with their technical questions is well on its way to becoming self-sufficient and becoming the customer service point for a number of digital TV companies. Scott managed to discover a very interesting perspective of the future making it possible for his forum to become even much larger and more attractive.

1. As the IT Manager, Scott is responsible for his employer's 14 servers.
2. New from Sirius and being tested by Scott: an indoor radio from satellite radio provider Sirius. "The Sirius signal is so strong that you don't need a direct view of the satellite. As long as you're relatively close to the window, the signal strength is good enough for this small antenna." The unit not only can receive the Sirius satellite radio signal, it can also receive Internet radio through a WiFi receiver.
3. Scott in his office. From here he keeps an eye on the performance of the SatelliteGuys.us server