

Educator, Pioneer, Visionary

Updated: Dec 16, 2024

In this world, there are individuals whose true stature transcends physical measurements, material wealth, or financial success. Jay Adrick is undoubtedly one of them.



His resume showcases an extraordinary career.

Education:

- Bachelor of Science in Communication Arts, Xavier University
- Master of Education in Educational Media, Xavier University

Professional Achievements:

- University professor, Director Radio/TV
- Architect of WVXU-FM and the Xavier TV Center
- Founder & Executive V-P Midwest Communications
- V-P Broadcast Systems & Chief Technology Officer Harris Corp.
- Designer of facilities for major broadcast networks and 200+ TV stations
- Pioneer in the advancement of digital television technology
- Holder of 3 patents; digital data transmission and medium wave broadcast antenna
- Vice-Chairman of the Advanced Television Systems Cmte

Honors & Leadership

- Recipient of television's highest honor from National Association of Broadcasters for engineering excellence
- Elected to the rank of Fellow in The Society of Broadcast Engineers

- President of the Board - National Voice of America Museum
- Technical Advisor - Madeira H.S. performing arts program

Personal Life

- Devoted Husband, father, grandfather

Aside from a wider waist and a thinner hairline, the 78-year-old Cincinnati native has physically changed little since the first day he stepped onto the campus of Xavier University as a college freshman. He still smiles frequently, laughs easily, and walks like a man anxious to get where he's going.

Adrick's unwavering drive is as strong today as when he first discovered the ham radio as a boy. He credits two neighbors for arousing his interest in "this wonderful world of broadcasting."

"One was an engineer at the Voice of America plant. He took me with him one day and I got all charged up. My other neighbor was a salesman for 1050 WZIP who asked me 'What are you doing for the summer? We need someone to help put our FM station on the air.'

To work on the technical side of radio back then, you had to have a First-Class FCC license and I did. Although only a teenager, I soon found myself working there as an engineer and, accidentally, a D-J.



**J-BYRD RUNNING THE BOARD
FOR WZIP IN 1966**

“One evening, while I was running the (mixing) board for a talk show, the host didn’t show up at the remote site. I had to improvise and read the commercial copy live on the air. After the general manager learned the host had been in a car accident, he could only encourage me to ‘just keep doing what you’re doing.’”

J-Byrd, as he was known on-air, began pulling regular shifts on the weekends. He also enrolled in the University of Cincinnati to study engineering, but his time on the Clifton college campus did not last long.

“I came from a high school with 88 kids. Suddenly I was in a chemistry lecture class with 1,500 students. I felt very lost.”

After one semester he transferred to Xavier in 1965.

“My first class at Xavier was a speech course taught by John Maupin. He had been in radio and was moderator of the campus radio station. After learning that I had a First-Class License, he invited me to see the carrier current station. WCXU didn’t have an engineer, so I stepped in. Mr. Maupin and I bonded and quickly became friends.”

Two important events occurred in the fall of 1966. The energetic sophomore was taking classes and working at WZIP, but still found time to visit with Mr. Maupin in his office. “It was an October day when this young lady walks in,” he fondly remembers. “She wore a pair of very stylish green pants, with a light green top and a pair of matching shoes. It was very stylish. She needed to borrow lunch money from her dad.”



MR. MAUPIN, SEATED

JAY ADRICK, RIGHT



MARY ANN MAUPIN



JAY ADRICK

Mary Ann Maupin was one of nine Xavier faculty and staff daughters who had been invited to become the first female students in the day school at Xavier.

“I offered to buy her lunch at the student union. It was there that I found out she had bought a VW bug but did not know how to drive a stick-shift. I volunteered to teach her how to drive it. So, on our first date we went to a cemetery. That’s how it all began. “

I’M ON BOARD

In that pivotal year, the Department of Communication Arts was established at Xavier University. President Rev. Paul O’Connor elevated the program from a minor to a major degree and named Rev. Lawrence Flynn as department chair. Adrick promptly switched his major to Communication Arts.

Around the same time, media conglomerate Scripps Howard was building a new home for WCPO-TV, its CBS affiliate in Cincinnati. President Mort Watters offered Xavier the outdated television facility on Symmes Street, including its remaining equipment. Rev. O’Connor, Rev. Flynn, and Dean of Students Rev. John Felton invited Adrick to tour the facility and prepare a report on its potential use.

CA Dept Acquires TV Studios

Xavier University's rapidly expanding Communication Arts Department has recently added new facilities. Rev. Lawrence J. Flynn, S.J., chairman of the Department of Communication Arts, announced that the department has acquired the former studios of WCPO-TV, Channel 9.

The studios are to be known as the Symmes Studios of Xavier University. The gift was made possible by the recent move by the station from the studios on Symmes St. to 500 Central Ave., in downtown Cincinnati.

The university will lease the studios for \$1.00 a year, pay the taxes on the real estate, and share the expenses of the utilities. Because they must keep their transmitter as close as possible to their tower, WCPO will remain in the studios to transmit the programs

relayed from the downtown studios to the tower. The C.A. department is now in the process of planning and rebuilding facilities for a closed circuit broadcast system. This will enable them to offer a television direction - production course next semester.

WCPO left a great deal of equipment, including two studios with

lighting, control room equipment, audio-visual amplifiers, and two camera chains — the whole set of equipment necessary to run a television camera.

In addition to the proposed course, the department intends to experiment with the teaching of university courses by audio-visual tape.



Adrick assessed the space and determined it could be restored to working order and converted into a teaching studio for Communication Arts students. Based partially on Jay Adrick's report, Xavier University accepted WCPO'S offer. In an unexpected move, Flynn offered the soft-spoken young man a position as studio manager and engineer.

"I'm on board," was Adrick's immediate response. "My goal was to get the place operational. Xavier gave me a salary and free tuition. I quit my job at the radio station!"

While studying TV production, he also managed engineering duties for both the university's radio station and the TV studio. By January 1968, Xavier's first television studio was ready for student use.

Adrick even accelerated his studies, graduating a semester early in 1969. Shortly afterward, he married his wife, Mary Ann, and within a week, he enlisted in the Navy. Assigned to Cape Canaveral for electronics and telemetry tracking, Adrick worked aboard a research vessel while Mary Ann taught fourth grade in Florida. He was later reassigned to Hawaii but received an early discharge in 1971 following military reductions under President Nixon.

I'VE NEVER BEEN TO A JOB INTERVIEW

Upon leaving the Navy, Adrick returned to Xavier, where he had a standing job offer. Reflecting on his career trajectory, he remarked, "I've never been to a job interview in my life. I've never been out of work since I started in July of '64. Jobs have always found me."

While Adrick was in the Navy, the FCC had approved Xavier's license for an 11-watt FM radio station—WVXU-FM—a project he initiated before his service. In 1971, he joined the faculty as an Assistant Professor of Communication Arts and Director of Broadcasting.

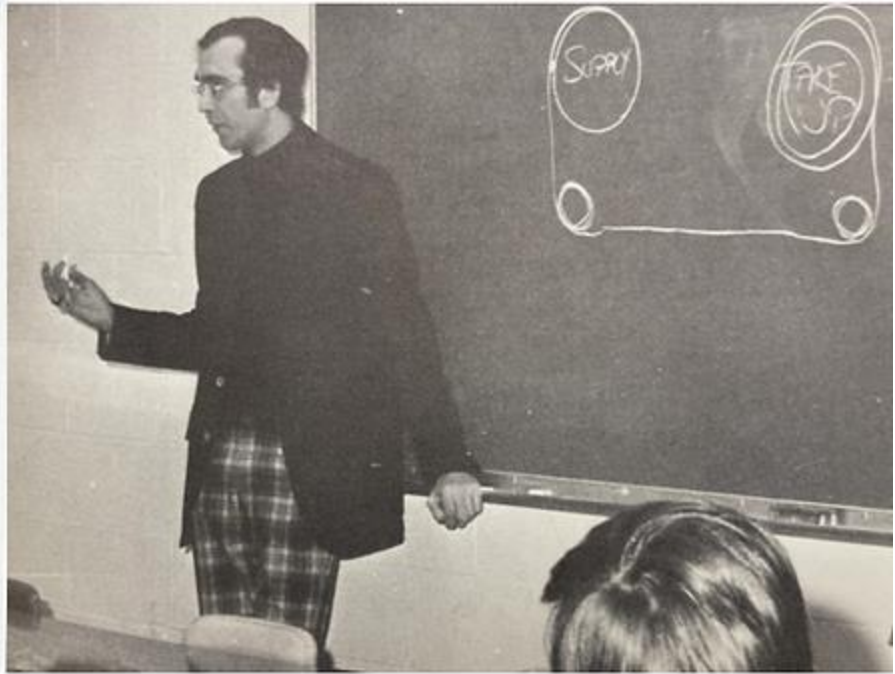
Adrick's arrival energized both the radio and television programs. Sophomore Guy Hempel recalled, "In walks this guy in double-knit polyester pants and introduces himself as Jay Adrick. He asked if I'd like to see the TV studio. It was the craziest thing I'd ever seen. I thought 'this is going to be a lot more fun than radio.'" Classmate Larry Holt echoed the sentiment. "When Jay came, the energy for both radio and television went up." Freshman Tom Stevens added, "Jay brought practical experience and relatability. The whole department was elevated."

In the early 1970s, amid civil unrest in Cincinnati, including police strikes and civil rights marches, Xavier decided to move the TV studio on campus. After evaluating potential sites, Adrick proposed integrating the studio with the student center's theater. However, political obstacles led to the selection of a renovated space in Brockman Hall. With a team of students, Adrick orchestrated the move before the 1973 fall semester.

Meanwhile, WVXU-FM thrived in the basement of Alter Hall. The station's programming and student staff expanded rapidly. To extend its broadcast reach, Xavier aimed to increase the station's signal power, requiring FCC approval and university funding.



WVXU-FM TOWER



1974 - ASST PROFESSOR

& DIRECTOR - RADIO/TV

Station manager Russ Read led the effort. “Jay tutored Mike Geis and me to write the proposal for WVXU’s initial power increase (10 watts to 65 watts) as our capstone project. It was the very first business proposal and design project for the both of us. It was a great learning experience.”

In 1974, in addition to teaching and spearheading WVXU and TV studio projects at the university, Adrick also earned a master’s degree in Educational Media, furthering his expertise in the field.

During this period, industrial television was gaining traction as a tool for corporate training. Companies like Monsanto, Procter & Gamble, and Kroger began reaching out to Xavier for help producing training materials. Adrick recognized the potential and leveraged these opportunities for both the university and its students.

“We launched an internship program,” Adrick explained. “Students assisted in producing the training content, earning money, gaining hands-on experience, and building their resumes.”

In 1977, a grant from the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare funded a seven-episode television series titled *Cherish Our Differences*. Written and hosted by Drs. Paul

Simon and Roger Fortin from Xavier’s history department, the series was produced at Xavier’s TV Center. The grant enabled Adrick to purchase state-of-the-art equipment, including new cameras, 3/4-inch recording decks, a time-based corrector, and a character generator.

“We acquired the equipment from a company called Midwest,” Adrick recalled. “The salesperson was moving on and he persuaded me to consider managing their Cincinnati branch. His offer more than doubled my salary. With two young children at the time, it was the right decision for my family.”

Adrick remains deeply committed to the institution that shaped his career. Together with four Communication Arts alumni, he founded TEDI—The Endowment for Digital Innovation. This initiative ensures that Xavier students today have the resources to compete tomorrow in his “wonderful world of broadcasting.”

Will you join Jay? [Click Here.](#)



After 3 years with Midwest, the five branch managers realized they could only go so far as the company was structured. Instead of leaving, they found an outside investor, Jay met Midwest’s president, and a deal was struck to buy their division. They became Midwest Communications.

“And I became Executive Vice President of the company and V-P of the Systems Division. Designing and building broadcast systems became my focus. I had 75 engineers who did mechanical work, wood working, wiring, etc.”

WE CALLED HIM THE PROFESSOR

Jay and Midwest often partnered with Rees Associates, an industry-leading architecture firm.

“We were known for delivering client-focused innovative designs,” according to company founder, Frank Rees. “Station owners wanted buildings that defined their community. I recommended they also hire Jay and (Midwest Communications), because they did things right on the technical side. I found Jay to be really bright. He could see things on the horizon. He would advise me about upcoming changes in the industry, which in turn helped us collaborate in designing and building. I was proud to work with Jay.”

Adrick spearheaded teams that designed and built broadcast facilities around the world for such networks as the Golf Channel, Discovery Channel, The Weather Channel, National Public Radio (NPR), Georgia Public Broadcasting, TV Azteca, The Voice of America, Disney Studios, the Iraqi Media Network consisting of nine TV stations, and 200+ local broadcast facilities.

Joe Mack collaborated with Adrick for three decades and witnessed his impact firsthand.

“Jay was a great boss. We called him the professor, because of how he worked. Jay’s trademark, when first meeting with customers, would be to take out two large pieces of paper from the drafting department, extract exactly what the customer wanted, and put it into an engineering drawing. Right there! I saw him do this numerous times.”

“We were the dominant player,” is how Adrick put it. “If you wanted broadcast equipment you came to us. This was the beginning of satellite news gathering, We built satellite news gathering trucks, live ENG trucks, 53 ft. double wide expanding sports production trucks for NBC, Turner and others.”

Midwest Communications had grown to 35 branch locations and 500 employees when it went public in early 1987. However, the company struggled after the stock market downturn. Then in 1990, an accounting rule turned a profitable year into a loss. The fallout led to the liquidation of the company's divisions.

“But my Systems Division was having its best year for orders and backlog, so I approached the Harris Corporation. They conducted a full review and made an offer for the division. The acquisition was approved and I became vice-president of Broadcast Systems with Harris for the next decade.

IT WAS TRULY A SPECIAL TIME

“At the time research and development of digital television was underway so I then became V-P of Advanced broadcast technologies, driving my team to get involved in digital.”

Adrick was instrumental in the conversion to digital television, developing broadcast technologies that resulted in three U.S. patents.

“The FCC approved the Advanced Television Systems Committee (ATSC) standard for Digital in 1996. Harris put me on the ATSC board, and I was elected its vice-chairman in 2002, a position I held for the next decade.”

Adrick had led the development of the ATSC Mobile DTV system, provided strategic guidance for the development of new broadcast products and represented Harris in the world of broadcast standards.



**Jay Adrick, U.S. Delegate
to World Conference on
Future of Broadcast Television
(Shanghai China - 2011)**



**Mary Ann and Jay Adrick
TV Engineering Achievement Award
National Assoc. of Broadcasters
(Las Vegas - 2013)**

In 2013, the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) honored Jay Adrick with its prestigious Television Engineering Achievement Award, recognizing his significant work in developing, testing and implementing digital television. The announcement read, in part, “His career has been marked by strong design and project leadership skills, coupled with strategic vision. Beyond his many product design and development achievements at Harris, Adrick has led technical teams on major broadcast system implementations around the world and made important contributions toward the conversion to digital television.”

“Jay has the analytical mind of an engineer and the personable manner of a salesman,” remarked former Communication Arts student Mike Cutler. “He’s just as at ease addressing a ballroom of a thousand broadcasters as he is engaging with a classroom of a couple dozen teenagers.”

58 years after walking into WZIP for a summer job, Adrick called it a career, which has allowed him more time to enjoy life with his wife, Mary Ann, their two daughters, Melissa Adrick Unger and Suzanne Adrick Tucker — like their mother, both dedicated teachers — and their families.



THE FAMILY 2023



A FEW YEARS EAR

The entire family have been active sailors and boaters from their home port of Catawba Island on Lake Erie. And when back home in Cincinnati, Adrick delights in perfecting his elaborate O Gauge Model Train set in the basement.



Adrick continues to dedicate his time and expertise to meaningful causes and projects. Having first discovered his passion for broadcasting at the Voice of America, it's fitting that he now serves as board president for the Voice of America Museum of Broadcasting in West Chester, Ohio.

He also volunteers as an advisor and teacher at Madeira High School, where he played a pivotal role in designing and building its state-of-the-art performance center.

Looking back on his many achievements, Adrick easily pinpoints the most treasured chapter of his life.

"Those years at XU, from 1967 to 1978, stand out as the best," he shared. "It was a wonderful time. I met my wife and formed lifelong friendships with students and colleagues. It was truly a special chapter in my life."

A dedicated amateur radio operator since 1961 (K8CJY), Jay stays connected with friends and colleagues through weekly ham radio sessions. To reach out to Adrick, you could also just email him. jay@adrick.net.



Photo Credits:

Various John Maupin, Mary Ann Maupin, & Jay Adrick Photos - "University Archives and Special Collections, Xavier University Library, Cincinnati, Ohio."

Special Acknowledgement: *France Sloat*
Xavier Office of Marketing & Communications

John Kiesewetter
Media Writer / WVXU Contributor

To comment on this article, email XU.DIFT@gmail.com

To suggest a classmate who should be profiled, email XU.DIFT@gmail.com with name(s) and contact information.