

Fundamentals of Synchronization & Timing

WSTS-2023 Tutorial Session

Kishan Shenoi

Kishan.shenoi@intel.com

Intel Corp.

2200 Mission College Blvd.

Santa Clara, CA 95054



Fundamentals of Timing and Synchronization

➤ Basic Principles

- Time and Frequency
- Alignment (frequency, phase, time)

➤ Fundamental need for Synchronization

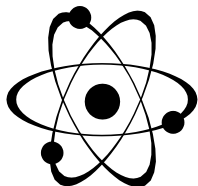
- Coordinated Signal Processing requires phase alignment
- Time-stamping events (in geographically separated locations) requires time alignment
- Buffer read/write requires frequency alignment

➤ Transfer methods for frequency/time

- Transfer methods (one-way and two-way)

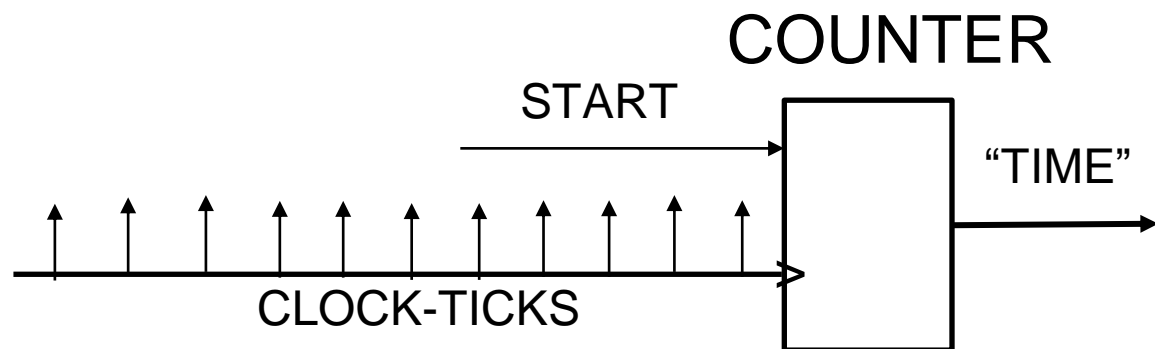
Time and Frequency

- A clock is a frequency device based on physics



Provides “ticks” at precise intervals (period);
Frequency is reciprocal of period

- Electronic systems count “ticks” for time interval



- “Time-Clock” provides the elapsed time from “start”
- Granularity of time related to tick period
- PLL...reduce tick interval;
Divider...increase tick interval

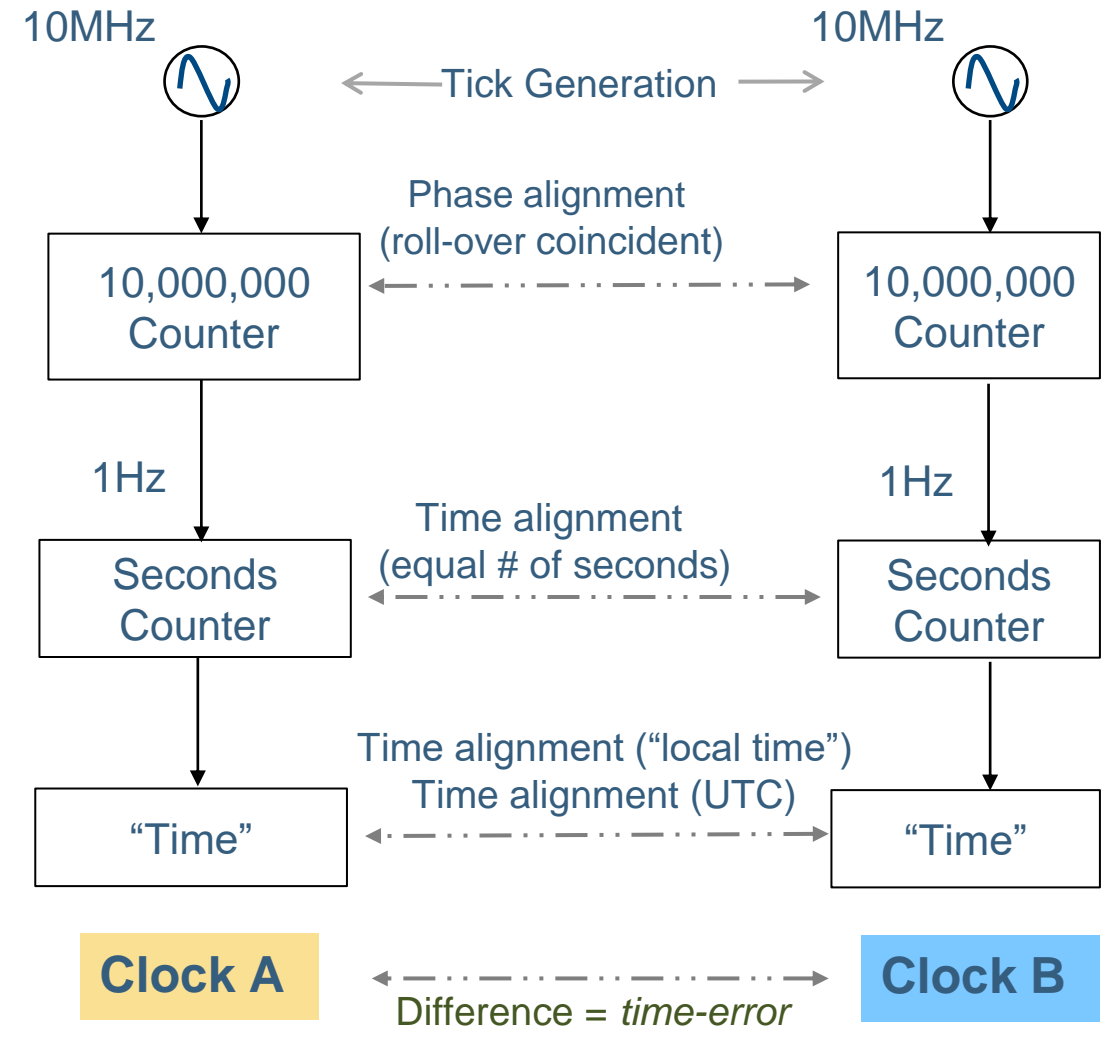
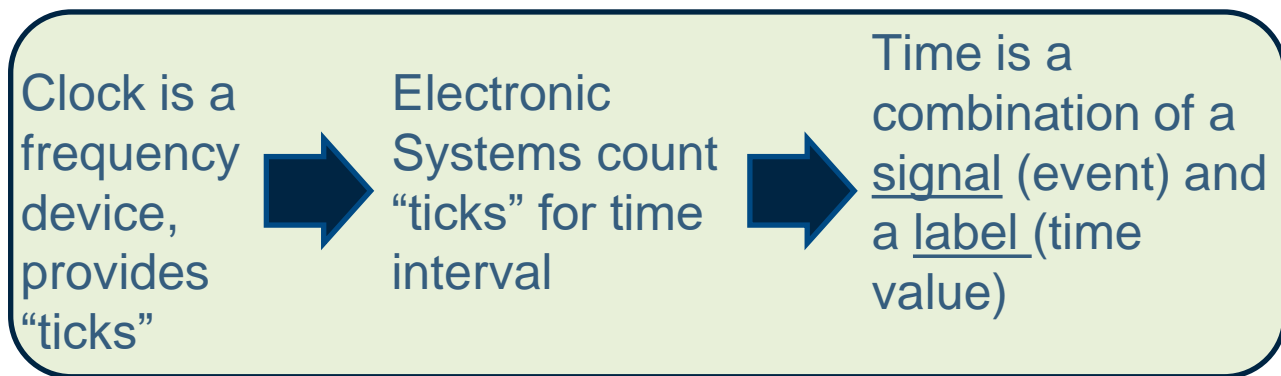
- *Time* is a combination of a *signal* (event) and a *label* (time value) and is always considered in terms of elapsed time from an agreed-upon reference

Alignment in Frequency, Phase & Time

Aligning (or Synchronization) of two Time Clocks implies:

Frequency B	=	Frequency A	Syntonization
Phase B	=	Phase A	Roll-over instant
Seconds B	=	Seconds A	Elapsed time equal

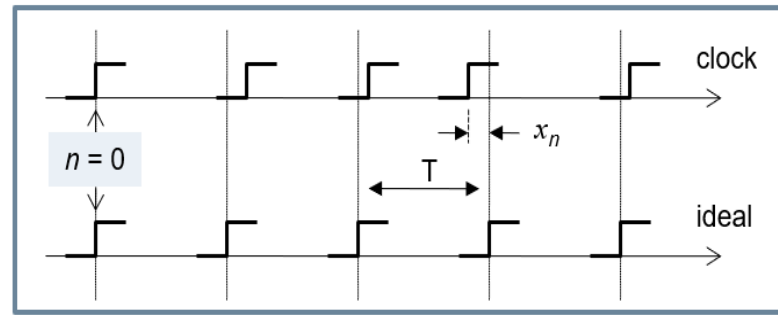
“Time”: Same formatting convention, time-zone, etc.



Clock Metrics

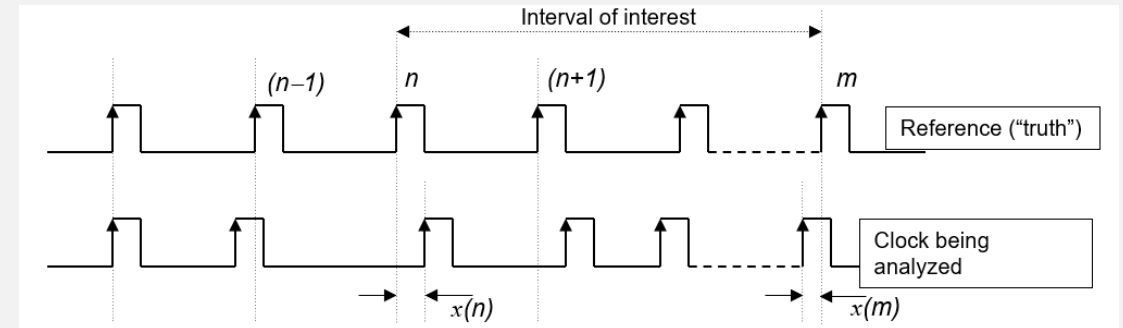
Time Error

- Clock signals are (almost) periodic (nominal period $\sim T$)
- Time Error (Phase Error): Edge does not line up – phase error (expressed in time units)
- Time Error is the basis for all other metrics



Time Interval Error (TIE)

- Consider an interval of interest
- Start: “n” ; Stop: “m”
- Duration measured by ideal clock (“truth”) : $(m - n) \cdot T_S$
- Error in measurement of same interval by clock being analyzed: $TIE(m, n) = x(m) - x(n)$



MTIE and TDEV

Maximum Time Interval Error (MTIE): A measure of peak-to-peak excursion expected within a given interval, τ (τ is a parameter). The observation interval is scanned with a moving window of duration τ and $MTIE(\tau)$ is the maximum excursion. MTIE is a useful indicator of the size of buffers and for predicting buffer overflows and underflows

Time Deviation (TDEV): A measure of stability expected over a given observation interval, τ (τ is a parameter). TDEV provides guidance on the noise process type

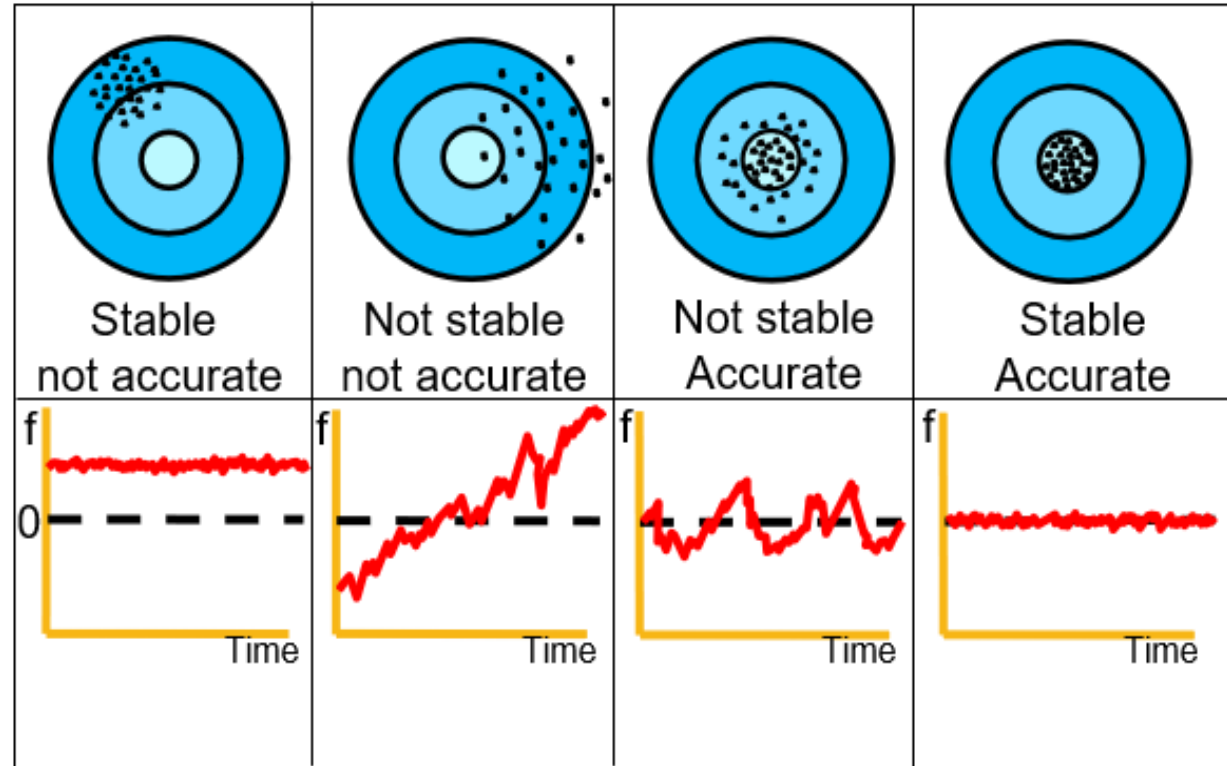
Accuracy and Stability

Accuracy: Maximum (freq., phase or time) error over the entire life of the clock

Stability: (Frequency, phase or time) change over a given observation time interval

Stability is expressed with some statistical dispersion metric as a function of observation interval (e.g. ADEV, TDEV, MTIE, etc.)

All metrics are computed on the *time-error* sequence



Samples of measurements of frequency offset

Samples of measurements of time-error
or frequency offset

Fundamentals of Timing and Synchronization

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 - Alignment (frequency, phase, time)
- **Fundamental need for Synchronization**
 - **Coordinated Signal Processing requires phase alignment**
 - **Time-stamping events (in geographically separated locations) requires time alignment**
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Fundamental Need for Synchronization: Signal Processing

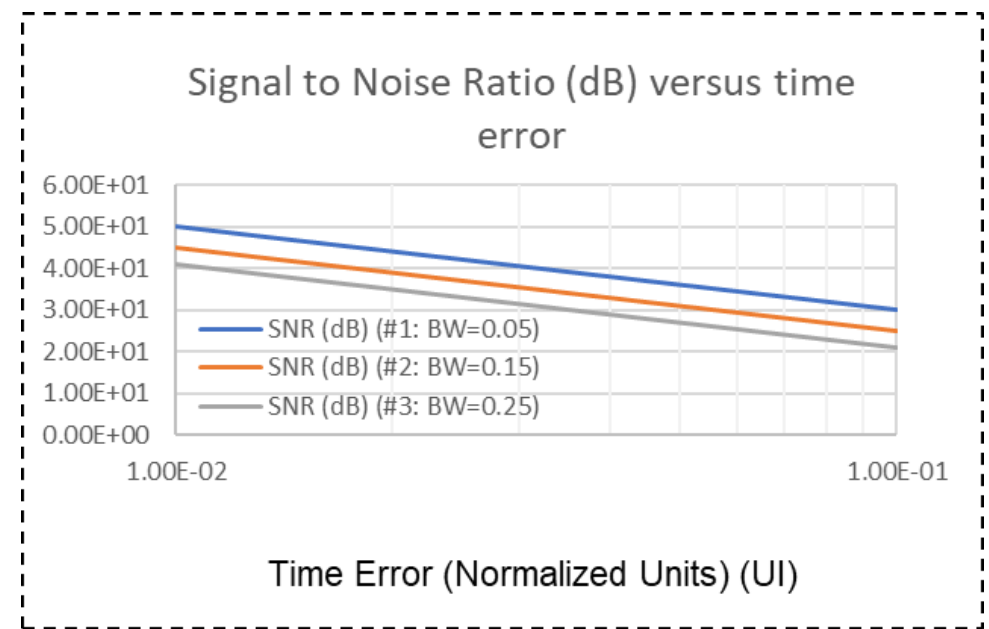
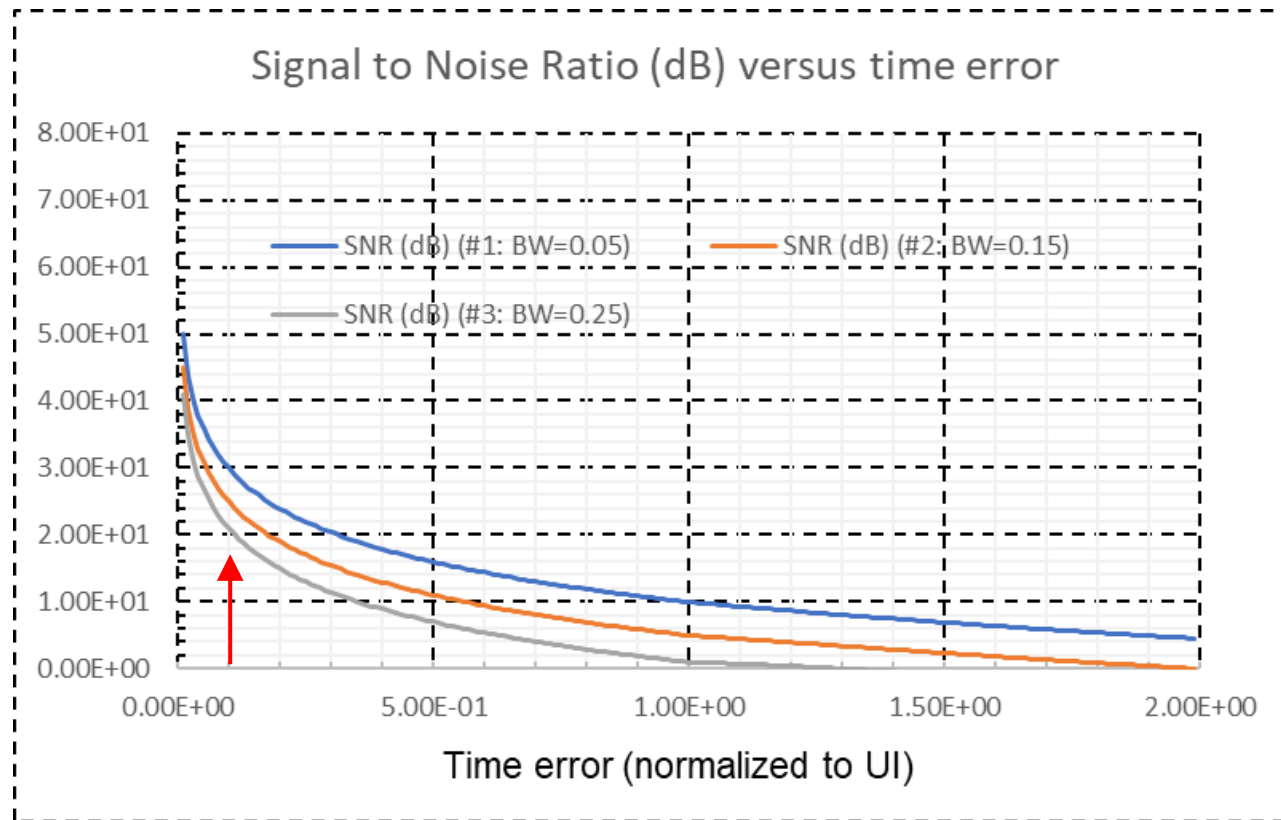
- Combining signals from different sources necessitates that the signals be in proper “phase”
 - Example: Interference cancellation involves subtracting the “known” interference from the received signal (e.g. EICIC, echo cancellation)
 - Analysis is application specific
- In interference cancellation, the received signal, $y(t)$, contains an interfering signal, $x(t)$, which is “known”...imperfect representation of $x(t)$ results in degraded performance that can be quantified in terms of signal-to-noise ratio (SNR):
 - Proper signal : $x(t)$; **Synchronization** error manifests as a delay: $x(t + \delta)$
 - “Noise” resulting **just from synchronization error** is
$$\epsilon(t) = x(t) - x(t + \delta)$$
- Synchronization error can be quantified in terms of **Signal-to-Noise Ratio** (SNR)

Fundamental Need for Synchronization: Signal Processing

“Noise” resulting just from synchronization error of δ is

$$\epsilon(t) = x(t) - x(t + \delta)$$

SNR drops to ~25dB just due to 0.1 UI time error; impact increases with signal bandwidth



Signal Processing requires good synchronization

Fundamental Need for Synchronization – More

- Time-Stamping Events
 - Required if events occur “simultaneously” in separate equipment/locations
 - Ordering of events established by time-stamping using a common clock (e.g. traceable to UTC or TAI or GPS, etc.).
 - Requires end-point synchronization to this common clock.
 - Many examples (distributed database, shared documents, stock trades, sensor fusion, multi-player gaming, etc., etc.)
- How can an action or event be verified or validated?
 - Time-stamp using a common clock (usually UTC)
 - Important in Blockchains, crypto-currency, etc.
 - Important for stock market to chronologically order trading activities
- Synchronous multiplexing (“TDM”)
 - Lack of synchronization (syntonization) results in buffer overflow/underflow events (*aka slips*)

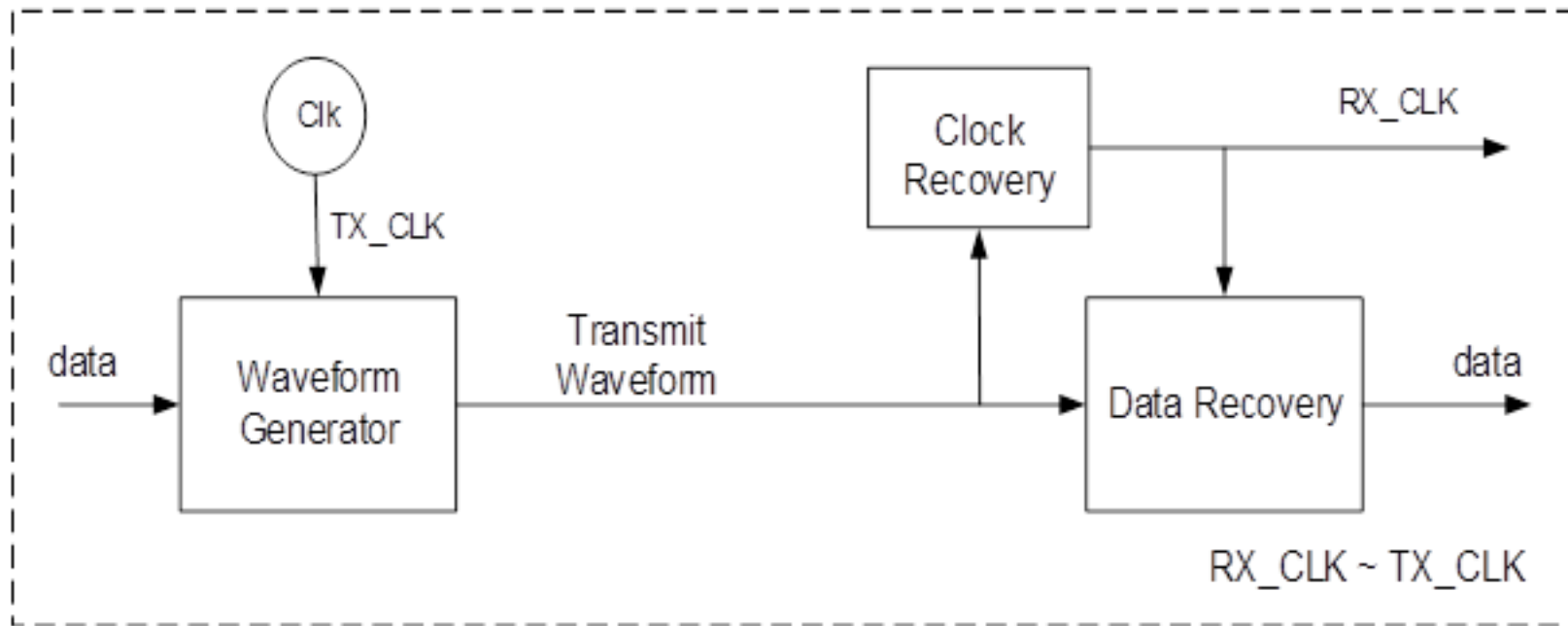
Time-stamping events (in geographically separated locations) requires time alignment
Chronological ordering requires time-stamps with time aligned to common reference
Synchronous multiplexing requires frequency alignment of streams

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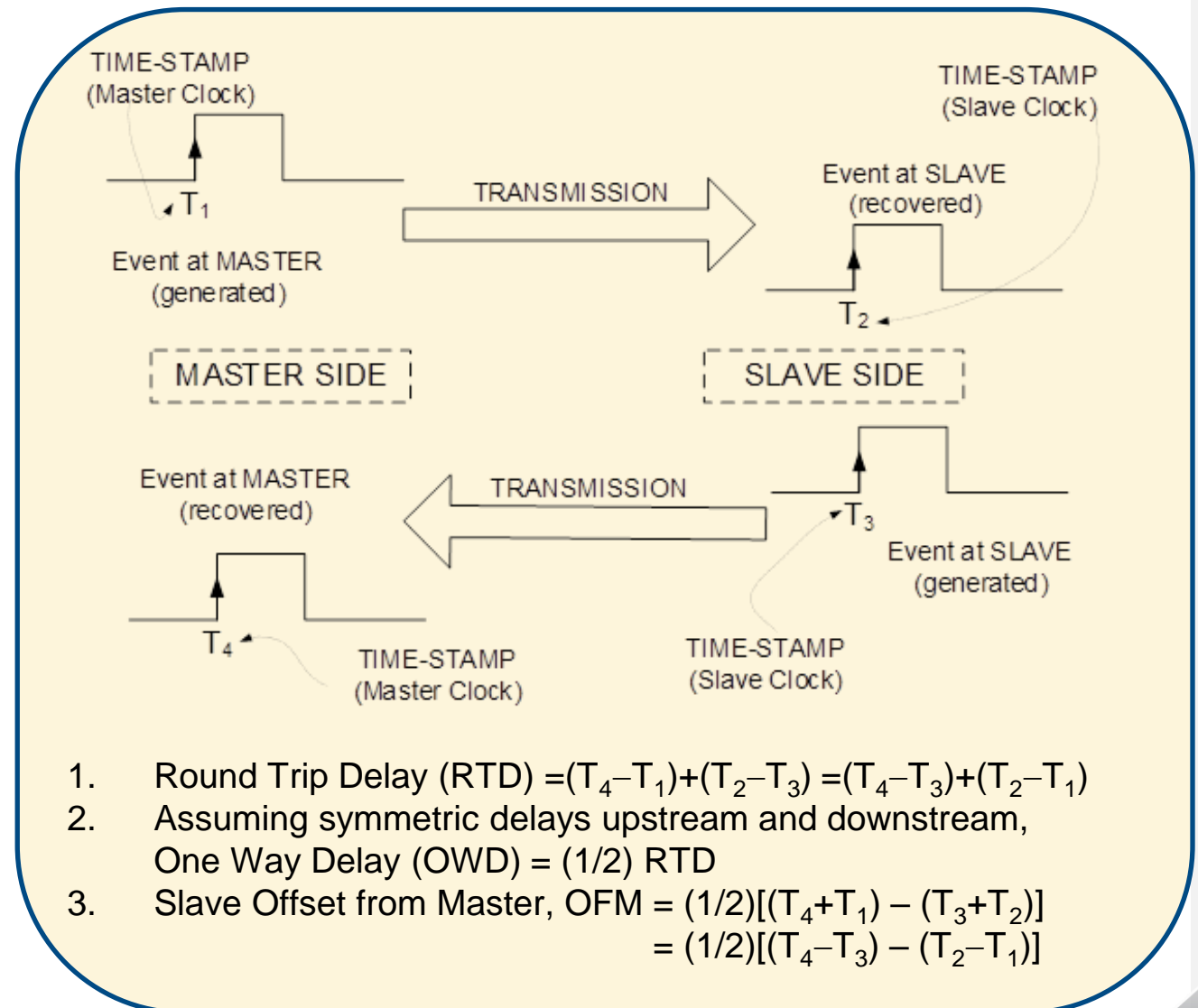
Transfer of frequency – *Timing Signal (one-way)*

- A timing signal is a signal that inherently includes the clock properties of the source, allowing the destination to extract a timing reference
- Using this timing reference the destination can construct a (near) replica of the source clock
- Example: the transmit waveform used to deliver digital information can provide a *frequency reference*.



Transfer of Time (e.g. Precision Time Protocol: IEEE 1588™)

- Transfer of time and/or phase requires two-way exchange to determine round-trip delay
- Utilizes time-stamped packets to provide a timing reference
- Transfer quality affected by variable transmission delay and asymmetry
- PTP (aka IEEE 1588™):
 - Master sends *Sync_Message* (with T_1)
 - Slave time-stamps arrival (T_2)
 - Slave sends *Delay_Request*, time-stamps departure (T_3)
 - Master time-stamps arrival (T_4)
 - Master sends *Delay_Response* (with T_4)



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Topics Addressed

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Thank You

Questions, comments, suggestions?
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