



Bob Boster

As the president of Clear-Com prepares for the company's 50th anniversary, he looks back at its history and announces plans for the celebration.

Lighting&Sound America: What is it like to head a company that has five decades of history behind it?

Bob Boster: Clear-Com has very strong and passionate users who love the company and the systems, so I'm very appreciative of having the opportunity to be in that situation. Doubly so, given that the people who work here *are* so passionate about serving our customers. They sort of are our customers, largely; our staff comes from the business in a lot of ways, so there's a lot of appreciation for that. On top of that, we still have our founding technologist, Charlie Butten, as part of our team, and a few other key people who go back to the early days. Being a leader of something that has so much history and continuity as part of it is not only a pleasure, it provides a lot of insight for us in terms of what's going on with the business.

LSA: What do you think has kept Clear-Com relevant in the market?

BB: A constant focus on trying to address market needs as people's challenges change in terms of new technologies like IP. Keeping your eye on history, but also responding to the market needs—you put those two things together and that's a pretty good recipe.

LSA: Would you say Clear-Com is the same or different company as when it first started?

BB: Well, we're the same company with the same purpose in helping people get connected to do amazing things with reliable communications. But we're also different operationally, as we have gone through a major transformation since our acquisition by HME, especially in our ability to build products in a timely manner. We simply didn't have the infrastructure in place to achieve the levels of quality we require and to meet ambitious delivery schedules. Manufacturing in HME's factory—which is now Clear-Com's factory also—has made a major difference for us. That's probably the biggest change. We've consistently had a customer-facing team that was second to none, and now we're balancing that with world-class manufacturing and opera-

tional excellence. The other benefit to having your own factory is, once you get the product off the drawing board, it moves much more smoothly than it does if you've got to figure out how to transfer that stuff offshore to some other factory.

LSA: What does Clear-Com's 50th anniversary mean to you personally, and to the company?

BB: It's an opportunity to look back at our history and look at what has happened in that time. We have many customers that have been with us, if not for the entire 50 years, certainly for the past three decades. To me, it's very special to recognize and celebrate that. We're also looking forward, considering how much we've been able to do in the past five or six years, as we've sped up our development process and responded more to market requirements.

LSA: What vision do you have for the company and how does it fit with the market's direction for intercom?

BB: We'd like to move toward new areas that solve problems for people, that fit into their needs. For us, it's not relevant to build something new just for the sake of it being new. It needs to ring true in the ears and minds of our customers. For instance, we need to keep an eye on the market's continued migration toward IP and IP integration. At the same time, we also need to continue to simplify workflows. Not everything needs a rocket ship; some people need a rowboat—if you just need to get to the other side of the pond, a rocket ship isn't going to help you!

LSA: What are some of your plans for the anniversary?

BB: We will be recognizing the anniversary at a bunch of trade shows throughout the year. We've also got an extensive microsite up (www.clearcom50.com), and we invite people who have a Clear-Com memory they want to share to post on our guestbook. We think of this as a celebration for anyone who has been touched by Clear-Com, and everyone should join in the fun. 📶