

Pliant's Customer-Centric Philosophy

PETER AMOS, CEO/PRESIDENT OF PLIANT TECHNOLOGIES

BY SILAS LYNCH

Born from CoachComm—a value-added reseller for pro audio products into the American football-centric sports communications market—Pliant Technologies is a full-scale developer and manufacturer of proprietary products for a broader customer base.

Peter Amos, the founder of CoachComm in 1991, continues to helm his original company and its Pliant subsidiary as CEO and President. “Through my experience in the pro audio industry, I learned a lot about how the industry functions,” Amos explains of his entrée into manufacturing. “We have also hired several key employees with long careers in the pro audio marketplace who give us a good perspective into the market; they act as voices of the industry inside our organization.”

Amos and his company's beginnings as a reseller allowed him to best learn how to meet the needs of his customers, regardless of the equipment involved. Gaining a better understanding of the broad range of technologies in the marketplace let to his seeking the best values across a wide range of brands. “Over time, it became clear that there were gaps in product offerings in the intercom sector, such that it created an opportunity for us to develop unique solutions for our customers,” Amos says. “As we developed the products that I needed for my customers, it was only natural to introduce those products into many other applications worldwide.”

As CoachComm transitioned into a fully vertical operation to include component-level engineering, manufacturing, marketing, sales and support, it became increasingly important for Amos to attempt to control all aspects of the products sold. As such, he and CoachComm “guide the technology where we need it for our customers, [which] gives us control over our business and products,” continues Amos. “It also allows us to react to our customers quickly when needed. We try to focus on our customers daily; I believe that is the key to our success in our core markets and will become key in our future success for Pliant. Customers are the



Peter Amos, CEO/President of Pliant Technologies

lifeblood of a business; if a business loses sight of that, they are very vulnerable.”

Structurally, CoachComm and its Pliant subsidiary is structured and managed via engineering, marketing, sales, product management and operations departments featuring managers tasked with their area of specialty. “They all work together to bring products to market and support them over time,” notes Amos of the nearly 100-employee collaborative efforts, primarily based in the company's Auburn, Alabama facility. “In addition to those employees, we have several sales persons located throughout

the United States to better respond to customer's needs on a direct basis. The Pliant subsidiary functions as a dealer/distributor model and we sell all non-coaching applications of our technology through that model. We believe that customers in the [professional] broadcast and live-sound markets can be best served through a dealer/distributor partner relationship; we are committed to supporting our dealer/distributor channel in every way possible.”

As a long-time major player in sports communications, CoachComm continues to dig into its core market, yet broadens its reach into worldwide broadcasting, live sound, theater, rental, commercial, industrial, maritime and many other segments. “We are focusing our product development in areas that will create new and exciting technologies that can be leveraged across multiple markets in which we already have a presence,” explains Amos. “It's an exciting time, and in the coming years, we plan to roll out product after product to our customers in every market segment, both domestically and internationally.”

Regarding CoachComm/Pliant's company culture and overall philosophy, it's all about the customers. “It's something we feel strongly about,” notes Amos. “We all work hard to do the best we can for our customers

every day. Personally, I am extremely involved in the company and I walk through the entire operation a couple of times per day. I know what is going on, and why. This enables me to make proper decisions with regards to the direction of the business and the performance of our departments.”

Amos notes that his company doesn't consider competition in daily operations, as he tends to want to find the newest way to accomplish a goal or serve a need, “not a rehash of someone else's ideas and technology. The best way that I've found to do that is to focus on the problem to be solved, not the technology to solve it. Once the problem is identified, going to work to solve the technical issues is the next step. One thing that hurts companies and their market potential is to underestimate the power of the user experience. We work very hard to 'be the user.' Working to identify what they want and need, and to go the extra mile to make it more intuitive in function and support, is the special sauce that makes for great products. I guess I think of competitors like this: If you're looking in the rear-view mirror at competitors, you'll end up running off the road. Focus forward on the customers and their problems; then you win!”

Pliant Technologies
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