

Butchko Passionate About In-Building Communications

Bob Butchko is a partner and executive vice president at Lord & Company Technologies, a systems integration firm that installs turnkey in-building wireless communications for public-safety radio, cell-phone coverage and Wi-Fi infrastructure. He is responsible for sales, marketing and business development at the Manassas, Va., firm. The company counts the Washington Smithsonian buildings, the National Zoo, the Supreme Court building, the University of Virginia historic buildings, as well as U.S. naval submarines and Carnival cruise ships among its more than 150 in-building projects.

What is the most important development for in-building communications during the past few years?

We are finally at the tipping point in the in-building wireless communications market's development. Without a doubt, "global society" is addicted to lifestyle electronic appliances, cell phones, BlackBerrys and the Internet. This addiction is fueling an overwhelming demand for high-speed "full-bar service" — anywhere, anytime and without interruption. But no matter how many towers the carriers erect or how many emergency repeater sites the counties install, there will always be some indoor areas in large buildings without adequate coverage. The public can't use cell phones, and first responders can't use their radios. Years ago, this was inconvenient; today it is intolerable. This all accelerates the need for more in-building communications infrastructure, and hence the strong growth in the in-building distributed antenna system (DAS) market.

What is the most significant mission-critical communications technology on the horizon?

Because my firm focuses on public-safety radio, I'll answer from that perspective. The heart of an in-building DAS is the amplifier/repeater/signal booster/bidirectional amplifier (BDA) — the reader's choice on the identifier. Until now, amplifier manufacturers have created relatively nondescript black boxes, and for lack of a better term, general purpose. Of course the individual products have different features, operating modes and frequency bands

they play in, but fundamentally they are general purpose in that they are not a "complete solution set for a specific application."

This year, BDA manufacturer TX RX Systems Bird Technology Group will introduce a public-safety BDA specifically created to comply 100 percent with 2009 International Fire Code (IFC) and National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1 public-safety radio codes. This signal booster will have 12-hour battery backup and an alarm interface providing all five required alarm conditions, including antenna system failure and 70-percent low battery. The alarm system is compatible with standard fire alarm panels.

This is something the public-safety radio market has needed for some time. Between the new codes and specific application products like this, new BDA cities/counties can now implement technically sound and legally defensible ordinances for in-building public-safety radio and have a product that will allow them to be fully compliant with those new codes. This puts safety and quality in and takes the risks out.

What project have you completed that you're most proud of?

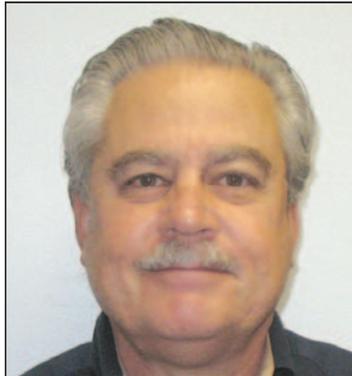
Being able to be in a business that designs and installs systems that will definitely save lives is rewarding for my partners and me. Every time we enhance the public-safety radio signal in a school or a hospital, it is a source of pride for all in our company.

Do you think there is a shortage of qualified RF engineers in our industry?

Absolutely. They just don't teach this stuff anymore.

How did you get your start in the mobile communications industry?

I've spent most of my civilian career in California's Silicon Valley building several high-tech startups in both hardware and software. I got all my RF communications knowledge from Navy technical training early in my career. Lord & Company Technologies was looking to significantly expand its small in-building RF business about three years ago, and I joined to help in that effort. I'm glad I did. ■



Bob Butchko

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Expertise: In-building communications systems integration

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Years of Experience: 10