

Harris Broadcast Gets New Boss

Grass Valley vet Thorsteinson takes the helm **By Glen Dickson**

When Harris Corp. acquired Leitch Technology for \$450 million last October, it probably didn't realize it was also getting a new boss for its broadcast business in the deal.

But six months later, Harris has tapped Leitch President Tim Thorsteinson, a 15-year veteran of the broadcasting industry and former CEO of the Grass Valley Group, as president of the company's Broadcast Communications Division, based in Mason, Ohio.

He replaces Jeremy Wensinger, 42, who is returning to the Harris Government Communications Systems Division as a group president with responsibility for homeland-security and civil- and national-intelligence programs.

The 52-year-old Thorsteinson joined Leitch, a manufacturer of digital infrastructure, master-control and video-

production products, as president/CEO in November 2003. He has led a turnaround at the Toronto-based firm, which has enjoyed strong U.S. sales of master-control gear as broadcasters upgrade their plants for digital television (DTV).

"I think Tim's an excellent choice," says Ira Goldstone, CTO of Tribune Broadcasting, which recently purchased Leitch's Digital Turnaround Processor to facilitate DTV multicasting at 21 stations.

Thorsteinson's career has ridden the wave of consolidation in the broadcast-technology industry since the late 1990s. After serving as president of Tektronix's video and networking division, he left to run that business when it was spun off as Grass Valley Group (GVG) in '99, then joined French conglomerate Thomson when

it bought GVG in 2002. But he says he didn't foresee his latest job switch when the Leitch deal was being negotiated last summer.

"That wasn't part of the decision-making process, and it wasn't discussed at that point," he says. "I just thought Harris would be a good place to work."

Leitch's business has continued to improve over the past eight quarters, says Thorsteinson, and its integration into Harris has been good for business.

"We have won some business we probably wouldn't

have won if we were not part of a larger portfolio of products and solutions," he says. "All the key people decided to stay with Harris, and we haven't had any unplanned turnover."

Thorsteinson plans to stay in Toronto



Tim Thorsteinson

to oversee Leitch's 800 employees and the 1,400 in the Broadcast Communications Division, which encompasses television and radio transmitters, automation software, traffic and billing systems, video-networking products, and a growing mobile-video business.

Harris is still in an acquisitive mood, evidenced by last week's deal to acquire privately held Optimal Solutions Inc. (OSi), for \$32 million. Harris plans to integrate OSi's traffic software into its comprehensive "H-Class" software solution for broadcast operations.

OSi was the second software provider to be scooped up by a large broadcast-technology vendor this month, following Avid Technology's acquisition of automation supplier Sundance Digital for \$12 million. Thorsteinson predicts further consolidation among broadcast vendors. He thinks it is too difficult for smaller companies to compete.

"Most of them are looking for an exit strategy, particularly if a bank owns them," he says. "My guess is, there will be some further consolidation. Right now, it helps that everybody is doing pretty well in the industry." ■