

"ONE OF THE MOST difficult parts of the job is to let someone go," says Communications Division General Manager and Tektronix Vice-President Tom Long. "A manager has to have a mental toughness or somewhere along the line he'll end up with high blood pressure or ulcers."

Communications Division General Manager

Television, technology, and Tom Long

By CAROL TALLEY



Tekweek is talking with the Division general managers, getting a glimpse of the men who lead these not-always-understood things called Divisions of Tektronix. Third in the list is Tom Long, general manager of the Communications Division.

Tom Long's Tektronix career began in 1959 as a Field Engineer working out of Tek's Detroit field office. His job eventually took him to Dayton, Ohio, where he also continued his university studies.

Armed with an Electrical Engineering degree, a Masters in Business, and eight years of Tektronix experience, Tom moved with his family to Beaverton in 1967. He worked there in a number of marketing and engineering functions until 1973, when he was named to his current job, Communications Division General Manager.

In 1974 when Tek acquired the Grass Valley Group, a television production equipment company located in northern California, Tom was named its president.

Tekweek: Do any one of your past work experiences stand out as being extra valuable in terms of what you're doing today?

Tom: They've all contributed, however, I think my sales experience as a Field Engineer stands out as particularly valuable. It gave me a feel for what drives the customer, of what they respond to, and what their problems are. You must always be aware of the customer; it's impossible to have a business without them.

Tekweek: Describe the products and markets of the Communications Division.

Tom: The products we manufacture address the Communications industry, most of which are television related. The products manufactured by our TV Products Business Unit here in Beaverton are primarily test and measurement in nature, while those of Grass Valley are principally used for production and distribution of the TV picture.

Tekweek: What are some of the trends of the television/communications industry and how is Communications Division responding to them?

Tom: One of the revolutions today in television involves the distribution of the programs. For example, cable systems are springing up everywhere, giving the viewer an alternative to the three or four commercial channels we're typically used to. Also, notice the increasing use of home video players that show cassettes of feature movies.

Over a period of time, things like these are going to cause a restructuring of the economics of the television industry. For example, we see major changes taking place

as the production houses—the people who actually put the programs together—grow in numbers. Tektronix provides a lot of equipment the production people use, so we'll have to adapt ourselves accordingly.

Other technology changes we're likely to see in the next few years include, perhaps, direct satellite broadcasting. We could have microwave antennae on our roofs that would pick up a television channel directly from the satellite. A few years further out in time, we will see high-resolution pictures that have the same quality of 35mm color slides. In this era, we will likely see the aspect ratio of the viewing screen change to a wider picture and, of course, large screen projectors will be commonplace in the home.

Tekweek: Are you personally a television fan?

Tom: Well, there are programs I watch from time to time, but I'm not an addict. I have a video recorder which we occasionally use.

Tekweek: Who all is in your family?

Tom: My wife, Delores, and four children, ages 17 to 25.

Tekweek: What's your work schedule like?

Tom: I'm always in here by eight and I rarely go home before six. We're getting to the point where I usually have several people in on Saturdays for meetings.

Tekweek: Do you do much traveling in your job?

Tom: Maybe about one week out of five. Most of that is visiting trade shows and talking with major customers. Do I like it? Not particularly. Travel is exciting the first time or two, but by the tenth time, it's absolutely boring. The actual discussions with people are always stimulating, but getting to and from them is not.

Tekweek: Do you have any regular routine for unwinding from the pressures of work?

Tom: I play volleyball a couple of nights a week at the Tualatin Valley Recreation District. It's a lot of fun. I used to have other interests, flying and woodworking were a couple, but I need more activity than they provide.

Tekweek: It seems to me that divisionalization is a very natural step in the evolution of a growing, broad-based company. Is this a correct perspective?

Tom: I think so. If we produced a single product line there would be no need for divisionalization, but our products and our markets have become quite diverse. Divisionalization is really the only practical way to get the proper management expertise to line up those markets.

One of the things to look forward to as the divisions grow is the expanding role of the business units. They will become the nucleus of the division's strategy, so I think one of the things division managers will be doing is making the business units more self sufficient. What Tektronix is doing today in terms of the division, the divisions will have to do relative to the business units in the next few years.

Tekweek: In what ways does the division manager set the tone for the rest of the division?

Tom: The tone of the division is set a number of ways. One is by the manager's habits. For example, what do you do, what do you consider to be important? If you don't think being punctual for work or meetings is important, then others will develop similar values. Or, take the way you spend the company's money. Are you frivolous or responsible with it? Also, such factors as how you communicate with people; are you easy to talk with, or aloof?

All of these things filter down and affect the organization. There is a myriad of factors that work together to develop the division's personality, the personality of the division manager being one of them.

Tekweek: What kind of advice would you give to someone who had goals of reaching upper management?

Tom: As far as experience goes, I think one should try to get multiple experience in a number of functional areas. One of the things one should strive for regardless is to *be the best*. Be as good as you can be at whatever job you're doing. And turn out work that's timely. A lot of people say, "What do you want—quantity or quality?" Well, dammit, we want both! We've got to have both!

One should always be looking for ways to improve productivity, which means working smarter, not harder. An increase in productivity is the only legitimate reason we have for increased salaries. And an increase in productivity often comes through increased quality.

If you want to really be an achiever and do the job well, do things beyond what you're required to do. Develop a responsibility beyond your authority and be a good communicator.

Tekweek: What do you like best about your job?

Tom: Everything! I particularly like the visionary aspects of the job, the strategic and long range planning. I have fun here; I wouldn't be here if I didn't enjoy it.