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Videoconferencing Insight Newsletter

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8 January 2006. Aethra is chosen as Videoconferencing Insight's "Videoconferencing Company of the Year 2006" because the company made considerable technical innovation and progress in 2006. Aethra enhanced its range of videoconferencing endpoints with the Vega X5 set top and Vega X7 High Definition videoconferencing systems; the company also offered a range of enhanced voice and video network infrastructure products for Unified Communications. Aethra now offers every component needed to build, operate and manage a complete IP video network. Aethra is now a clear Number 3 in the videoconferencing industry.

Aethra was founded in 1972 by Giulio Viezzoli. Although it remains a privately-held company with his son Marco Viezzoli as CEO today, Aethra has a significant turnover (approaching \$100 million we think) and is consistently profitable.

Aethra produces a range of telecom and network access equipment as well as videoconferencing systems. Aethra designs and produces network test instrumentation and appliances – for ISDN, xDSL, ATM and analogue. Aethra offers its own "The Voice" audio-conferencing system. The Meetin® multi-audio/video conferencing and videostreaming services provided by Aethra.net, mainly to Italian customers, rounds off the Group's integrated audio, video and data communication offer.

Aethra produces products of the highest quality and reliability. Aethra introduced a Quality Control System in 1989 leading to ISO 9001 certification in 1995 and an environment control system based on the ISO 14001 international standard in 1998. Its product testing facilities are probably the most extensive in the industry.

Aethra has consistently invested each year between 10% and 15% of its revenue in research and development of new products (R and D). The fruits of this R and D in videoconferencing became apparent in 2005 and 2006 when a complete new range of videoconferencing systems, including the Vega X3 and Vega X5, was introduced.

Aethra has been working for some time on its new High Definition videoconferencing system. This was enthusiastically received when shown to partners at a partner conference in October 2006 and the Vega X7 will be released at the end of Q1 2007. Some interesting features were revealed by Aethra's CEO in our previous issue of 20 December 2006.

We noted that the Vega X7 HD VC system has optimal functionality at the suggested bandwidth of 768 kbps. It will also offer the two best forms of HD audio. Hence, Aethra has proved it is one of the technology leaders in introducing High Definition videoconferencing. And Aethra's CEO feels that sooner than we all think, HD VC will be the norm. That bodes well for Aethra's future success.

All these VC systems demonstrate that Aethra is offering the best technology available, stylish Italian design and some features that are better than competitive offerings. As Aethra competes fiercely with attractive pricing, this is a compelling proposition worldwide. Aethra now sells in over 60 countries worldwide and has a strong presence in China. Aethra's market share increased in 2006 and is likely to rise further in 2007, given the importance Aethra now attaches to the world's largest single market - the United States.

In January 2006, Aethra appointed Jack Toto as CEO of Aethra, Inc. its subsidiary based in Miami, Florida. By September, he had completely reorganised the sales strategy with on-the-spot sales representation extending to seven of the larger States. The collective experience of the new sales team is extensive and will ensure a much stronger Aethra presence in this market.

In 2006, Aethra completed its offering of Aethra Unified Communications. In April 2006, Aethra broadened their infrastructure product range to include RADVISION desktop and 3G product ranges. And in May 2006, the RADVISION Scopia 5.0 MCU and gateway was added.

AETHRA now offers a complete range of hardware/software ISDN and IP infrastructure components of a video network, which include: (1) MCUs (Multipoint Conferencing Units) with full video/audio transcoding and SIP/H.323 support; (2) ISDN Gateways for seamless connectivity between different networks and standards; (3) Gatekeeper functionality for call control and dial plan schemes; and (4) The AETHRA Director Suite which comprises Scheduling & Management capabilities for the videoconferencing network including all network elements and endpoints.

Aethra now delivers a complete range of high quality videoconferencing products under its own brand. Thus Aethra became in 2006 a complete global solutions provider for both videoconferencing systems and Unified Communications. Aethra is the third company to achieve this goal.

That is why Aethra is Videoconferencing Insight's "Videoconferencing Company of the Year 2006".

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