

Now Serving Event Controllers

Leightronix Switches On Server Technology

by Carolyn Heinze

Back in the early 1980s, David Leighton identified the need for a new device to allow cable television facilities to automate their playback systems at an affordable price. With the incorporation of his company, Leightronix, Inc., Leighton set out to address that need with his first product, the TCD-RT (Time Coincidence Detector-Real Time), a programmable controller that enabled stations to record satellite feeds at specified times, rewind tapes, and then play them back at specific times, all on an unattended basis. The TCD-RT became the first of the TCD Series and the original among a family of Event Controllers.

inventor profile

"Many local cable operators would actually have to have a staff member there that would, every half hour or hour, reach up, put the deck in play, and push the button on the switcher because automation was just too expensive," Leighton recalled. "That is where the idea for the TCD-RT came from; we thought: 'Let's build a box to do it for them.'"

The product caught on, leading to the introduction of the MINI-T-IR—a smaller version of the TCD-RT offered at a lower price.

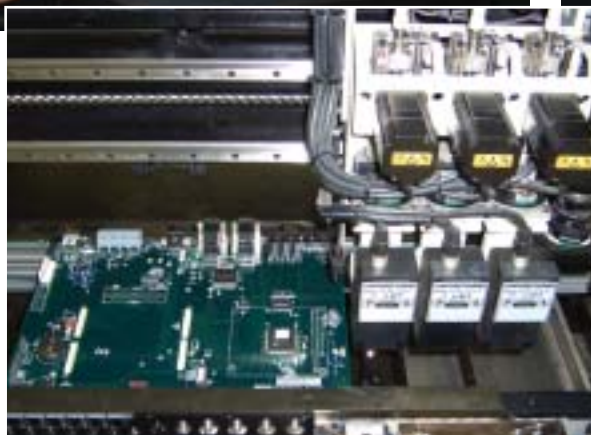
Over the 1990s, Leightronix introduced the PRO Series of Event Controllers (PRO-16, PRO-8 and MINI-T-PRO), the TCD-1000 Event Controller, and the C-VOICE, a specialized remote interface that allows video system control through a standard telephone line. These products were followed up with the introduction of the MVP-2000, a digital video/audio player, routing switcher, Event Controller and VCR controller with an integrated TCP/IP network port.



▲ Tate Schaar, senior engineer, is responsible for the Nexus printed circuit board layout design. ▶ For assembly, Leightronix utilizes the latest in ball-grid-array and surface-mount technology.

In the fall of 2001 the TCD/IP was introduced. This was the second Leightronix product to feature integrated network connectivity and its most powerful Event Controller. A year later saw the release of the TCD R/P, a powerful server add-on for the TCD/IP.

"No longer are we controlling just VHS decks; the majority of our customers have combined tape playback with DVD and server technology to create an incredibly powerful playback system," Leighton explained, noting that, as it has with every other industry, the internet has profoundly changed the way video professionals do their jobs. "We have had products out for some time that are internet enabled, that give the customer a wide berth of functionality in terms of what can be controlled over the internet as well as what can be controlled locally."



▲ David Leighton founded Leightronix in the early '80s with a focus on custom video control solutions. Today, Leightronix offers a full line of professional video playback and control solutions.

by the manufacturer's support department. "The Nexus brings with it all of the knowledge that we gained going all the way back to the days of the TCD-RT, plus all of this new technology, as well as our

sales and tech support department backing it up," he said. "Nexus is very strong when it comes to its features, but customers will also get all of these other things, which we are very proud of because the people here at Leightronix are top-notch."

From the start, Leighton based his company on three core values: affordability, versatility and reliability. Leightronix continues to employ these values today, although the company's president admits that it's no small task. "We give the customer a lot of bang for their buck, without cutting corners. Maintaining a balance can be tough at times."

One of the most significant challenges that companies like Leightronix face isn't just making a product happen, but making it relevant for as long a time as possible. "I often say to people, 'Just when we think we are ahead of the game having run ethernet wiring to our home refrigerator we find out that this month's new model is wireless!'" Leighton illustrated. "Our customers make a commitment to us when they buy our products, so we do our best to honor that commitment by staying focused on the basics: affordable products that are versatile and reliable."

▶ Leightronix, Inc.
www.leightronix.com

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▲ The new Leightronix Nexus is a specialized video server and playback controller designed for local cable television operations.

In 2003, Leightronix rolled out its NET Series of Event Controllers (NET-164, NET-EC, MINI-T-NET). The NET Series replaced the PRO Series while adding the feature of integrated network management along with a new scheduling and network management software application.

In early 2005, Leightronix will release its new Nexus, which builds upon everything the company has released to date. The product is a two-channel video server and one-channel video recorder featuring built-in audio/video routing and switching, a DVD controller, basic VCR and DVD control channels, and video messaging—all in a two-rack box.

"Again, the marketplace is shifting, and clearly server technology is becoming a must-have, no matter what the end-user is up to, so we rolled that type of digital recording and playback technology into a platform that brings with it all of the things that we have done previously," Leighton explained. "It's a device that has pretty much everything you would need for a cable or low power play-out scenario—like a Swiss Army knife for all kinds of applications." With this product, Leightronix is targeting locally originated cable channels, campus cable television operations and corporate communications systems. "It can be used for every application that includes automated video playback, switching and control."

Leighton notes that Nexus, like all other Leightronix products, is accompanied