

GlenSound Electronics

A Message from Lord Pickles and Lord Blunkett, followed by GlenSound Electronics's best practice article

The ability to listen and learn from one another has always been vital in parliament, in business and in most aspects of daily life. But at this particular moment in time, as national and global events continue to reiterate, it is uncommonly crucial that we forge new channels of communication and reinforce existing ones. The following article from GlenSound Electronics is an attempt to do just that. We would welcome your thoughts on this or any other Parliamentary Review article.



Rt Hon The Lord David Blunkett, MP



Rt Hon The Lord Eric Pickles, MP

www.glenSound.com

GlenSound Electronics



Gavin Davis, managing director



GlenSound equipment in action

FACTS ABOUT GLEN SOUND ELECTRONICS

- » Managing director: Gavin Davis
- » Established in 1966
- » Based in Maidstone, Kent
- » Services: Design and manufacture of quality audio broadcast equipment
- » No. of employees: 25
- » Performed a large-scale overhaul of all audio equipment in both houses at the Palace of Westminster in 2016 and 2017
- » Annual sales in excess of \$5 million
- » www.glenSound.com

GlenSound Electronics Ltd is a longstanding, family-owned business that designs and manufactures audio broadcast equipment. Their customers range from the world's largest international broadcasters to self-employed freelancers from around the globe. The product range they offer is cutting-edge, and it constantly evolves to provide state-of-the-art solutions for customers, which are proudly manufactured from their own factories in Maidstone, Kent. Managing director Gavin Davis expands on their success and the essential factors that have contributed to it.

A brief history

We were founded in 1966 by my father, Len, a design engineer who left the BBC to develop a successful public address system company he had been running in his spare time. The equipment he utilised was designed and manufactured by himself in his garage. In 1969, ex-colleagues at the BBC, knowing about "Len's garage" and his expertise, commissioned him to design and manufacture a broadcast distribution amplifier for use at Prince Charles's investiture. Further commissions quickly followed, and, within a few years, the design and manufacture of specialised broadcast equipment became a full-time occupation. Demand for his designs increased rapidly, his first staff members were employed and larger premises were secured. My father's passion was for designing and manufacturing audio equipment, not for managing people, so expansion was kept to a minimum. By the late 1980s, there was a staff team of ten people.

A changing world

During the 1970s and 1980s, there were very few companies manufacturing high-quality audio broadcast equipment, and even fewer trading globally. Since that time, the broadcast market has changed dramatically, with a rapid expansion in the number of new radio and television channels; this opened huge potential opportunities for us in export and global marketing. The evolution from analogue to digital audio technologies drove changes in the marketplace during the 1990s, further accelerating the pace of change. During this time, we continued to prosper, mainly by providing tailored solutions and manufacturing solely to order. By the late 1990s, however, broadcasters were beginning to change the way they purchased their products. Long lead times and specialised products were no longer acceptable, and it was clear that a new approach was required.

Evolution

I joined the company in 1985, and later became managing director in 2005. The transition was deliberately cautious to counteract the possibly disconcerting effects of passing control from one generation to the next. Day-to-day operations were shared for several years, while I introduced changes to ensure the continued viability of the company within a rapidly changing marketplace.

Export was the obvious area for future growth and sustainability. New exhibitor grants provided by the Department for International Trade helped to meet the costs of attending overseas exhibitions, and were instrumental in helping us grow and develop our international trade. Initially, exhibitions in Europe and the Middle East were used to meet new



The GlenSound team

customers and, importantly, form partnerships with new distributors.

Shortly afterwards, exhibitions in the Far East facilitated exports to customers in that area, followed in 2009 by our first appearance at an exhibition in America, at the National Association of Broadcasters' show in Las Vegas, Nevada. Traditionally, the American broadcast market has been difficult for UK manufacturers to break into, largely as the US has different technical standards that equipment must comply with, and they have their own home-grown suppliers. Within the past couple of years, however, sales to America have increased rapidly, as a result of the advanced technological solutions our products can provide.

We have been recognised within the industry for our innovative products. In

“Within the past couple of years, sales to America have increased rapidly as a result of the advanced technological solutions our products can provide”



GlenSound commentary at Anfield football stadium



The Glensound Beatrice D4 at Australian cricket

“Our healthy past and ability to innovate gives us a solid foundation on which to design, build and shape the future of broadcasting”

2012, we received the IABM Award for Excellence in Design and Innovation for the world’s first broadcast HD Voice mobile phone range. Our commentary boxes have won awards at exhibitions in 2014, 2015, 2017 and 2018. We are proud of our heritage, but continue to be part of the vanguard when it comes to audio equipment design and innovation.

Growth and investment

Traditionally, broadcasters would plan purchases many months ahead, but equipment is now purchased last minute, and if it’s not in stock, it won’t be purchased. We have developed over 400 products, and realised that, with increasing demand, manufacturing that many different product lines for stock was not practical.

We overcame this challenge by investing in more engineers to help redesign, refine and streamline our product range. More manufacturing staff were employed, and a significant investment was made in machinery; with these changes, however, there came the need for extra space. Rather than search for alternative premises and further use up valuable resources,

however, we were able to extend one of our current factories and acquire new office space next door. We now operate out of four separate buildings, each performing distinct functions: metalwork and production; testing and prefabrication; design studios; and administration offices.

The future

Easy access to international markets is absolutely key for our future. Our international customers need to be certain that they can quickly and easily purchase equipment from our factory in the UK. This is also of significance when it comes to purchasing the raw materials used in our manufacturing processes, as many are imported with no UK source available. If ease of trade from within the UK is not preserved, then relocation to Europe may become necessary.

With annual sales in excess of \$5 million, we are at the forefront of innovative design and manufacture of quality audio broadcast equipment. Our healthy past and ability to innovate gives us a solid foundation on which to design, build and shape the future of broadcasting. The past 13 years have seen many carefully planned changes to the Glensound company and its operations. Under new leadership, we have evolved from a very small company that traditionally offered specialised designs and niche products, and have become the company we are today. We employ 25 people producing technologically advanced systems used by broadcasters around the world; we trade on a global scale and enjoy strong distribution partnerships on several continents. As we embark on the next stage of our evolution, we are undoubtedly focused on what the future will hold.

The Parliamentary Review Publication, in which this article originally appeared, contained the following foreword from the prime minister.

The Rt Hon Theresa May MP's Foreword For The Parliamentary Review

By The Rt Hon Theresa May MP

British politics provides ample material for analysis in the pages of The Parliamentary Review. For Her Majesty's Government, our task in the year ahead is clear: to achieve the best Brexit deal for Britain and to carry on our work to build a more prosperous and united country – one that truly works for everyone.

The right Brexit deal will not be sufficient on its own to secure a more prosperous future for Britain. We also need to ensure that our economy is ready for what tomorrow will bring. Our Modern Industrial Strategy is our plan to do that. It means Government stepping up to secure the foundations of our productivity: providing an education system that delivers the skills our economy needs, improving school standards and transforming technical education; delivering infrastructure for growth; ensuring people have the homes they need in the places they want to live. It is all about taking action for the long-term that will pay dividends in the future.

But it also goes beyond that. Government, the private sector and academia working together as strategic partners achieve far more than we could separately. That is why we have set an ambitious goal of lifting UK public and private research and development investment to 2.4 per cent of GDP by 2027. It is why we are developing four Grand Challenges, the big drivers of social and economic change in the world today: harnessing artificial intelligence and the data revolution; leading in changes to the future of mobility; meeting the challenges of our ageing society; and driving ahead the revolution in clean growth. By focusing our efforts on making the most of these areas of enormous potential, we can develop new exports, grow new industries and create more good jobs in every part of our country.

Years of hard work and sacrifice from the British people have got our deficit down by over three quarters. We are building on this success by taking a balanced approach to public spending. We are continuing to deal with our debts, so that our economy can remain strong and we can protect people's jobs, and at the same time we are investing in vital public services, like our NHS. We have set out plans to increase NHS funding annually by an average by 3.4 percent in real terms: that is £394 million a week more. In return, the NHS will produce a ten-year plan, led by doctors and nurses, to eliminate waste and improve patient care.

I believe that Britain can look to the future with confidence. We are leaving the EU and setting a new course for prosperity as a global trading nation. We have a Modern Industrial Strategy that is strengthening the foundations of our economy and helping us to seize the opportunities of the future. We are investing in the public services we all rely on and helping them to grow and improve. Building on our country's great strengths – our world-class universities and researchers, our excellent services sector, our cutting edge manufacturers, our vibrant creative industries, our dedicated public servants – we can look towards a new decade that is ripe with possibility. The government I lead is doing all it can to make that brighter future a reality for everyone in our country.

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The Rt Hon Theresa May MP
Prime Minister

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