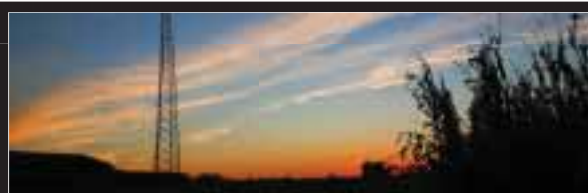


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Pro-audio manufacturer Powersoft has carved out a niche for itself in high-end amplifiers, but this is no accident its sales manager Luca Giorgi tells Paul Milligan.

Continuous flow

Powersoft kit inside the Palais des Sports in Dijon

Luca Giorgi didn't have the smoothest of entries into the pro-audio world. Coming from an entirely different industry the shock of the new was not only felt by him, but by his clients. "The first months were a real shock from a personal point of view because it was hard to understand the industry and for me to get accepted as part of the industry. Our customers and distributors were expecting someone from the industry, when they found out I wasn't they thought it was going to be bad news from them, as I wouldn't know how the industry worked. But in a short period I learned a lot, and people have recognised I can help them." Giorgi has been at Italian amplifier manufacturer Powersoft for eight years now, starting off looking after sales in the US and Asia, he has now moved on to be the company's sales director. His current role means Giorgi has to coordinate all the sales teams, including the technical sales staff, and to discuss and put together the future requirements for product improvements and for new products.

Given that it is part of his Giorgi's job role, just what are the factors that influence technical developments at Powersoft? "We are a company devoted to innovation, therefore, there is a continuous flow of ideas that come from outside. In terms of the market, the people in the

“We believe something is missing in the industry, and we have the attitude to try things that are not done by other companies”

- Luca Giorgi, Powersoft

industry, current customers, potential customers, we are always absorbing ideas," he says.

"There is also another flow that comes from inside Powersoft, and that is new ideas which come from new technologies, new components that are available in the market, that are generating thoughts such as 'why can't we do things this way from now on? We were told it wasn't possible, but now it is!'"

Although the company is committed to innovating with its products, and producing new products that the market maybe hasn't seen before, every idea that arises at Powersoft has to be analysed in terms of feasibility he says. "Essentially we have a company where we tend to do things, not because something is happening in the market but because we want to try new things. Up to now it has been successful for us."

Sometimes this means looking outside, at products Powersoft doesn't (or won't) manufacture. "We take

care of amplification, so it's essential to understand what kind of products we will have to amplify in the future. Will power increase? Or will speakers get smaller?"

So how does the company decide where it spends its R&D money? Traditionally it will arise from a need that was created during a particular installation project says Giorgi. "We will have a rough idea of the specification of the product, the target cost and the target price, and an idea of the quantity we will sell. We discuss with R&D to see if the initial specification can be improved because sometimes it's not feasible for that original cost. This then gives us a list of products that could work in the industry, and then we decide which one becomes the priority based on which one is needed first. There are some economical and financial parameters that affect the priorities, which is normal, so we can see which ones give us the quickest ROI."

Giorgi is keen to stress that the company will not

discard an idea just because they can't prove the financial viability of a product, especially if they feel that is where the market is going. This is something he feels sets Powersoft apart from its competitors. This initial discussion whether to invest R&D budget is held between Giorgi and the rest of the R&D directors to arrive an agreed point of feasibility. Once that is achieved it is taken to the board of directors to decide if the company proceeds. The board of Powersoft consists of Giorgi, the R&D director, the quality director and the MD. He says a 'very high percentage' of products that are put forward make it to the manufacturing stage. "The longest part of the process is in the definition of the product. Sometimes the product we produce isn't the one we said we were going to manufacture because in the feasibility analysis it has been improved or modified in some way." How long does it take Powersoft typically to develop a product from idea to end? A minimum of two years he says, "Sometime when it's more of a concept than a product, it can take four to five years to transform it into a product."

Powersoft, like so many manufacturers, will always try and get client feedback when developing new products, but that advice comes with a warning, says Giorgi. "The problem in asking integrators 'what

“ It can be dangerous to get feedback, as it won't allow us to make a product for the future, just one that is late to market. ”

- Luca Giorgi, Powersoft



product will you want in the future?' is that the answer they give is not what they will need in three to four years, but what they need now. It can be dangerous to get feedback, as it won't allow us to make a product for the future, just one that is late to market. This is especially true for installation products, where things move very fast. For example if I asked that question two years ago, the answer would be AVB. Now it would be Dante."

So what's next for Powersoft on the product front? Two things are currently being developed, but details are being withheld right now on each. "One is more long-term, it's a new technology for power supply for the amplifier. It's a long-term project but top secret. It's a revolution that will become the trend for the next five to ten years," promises Giorgi. "Another thing we are looking at is the interaction between the equipment part of the PA in the audio chain and the venue. We

believe the quality of the performance is created not only by the quality of the equipment but also by how you are able to take into account the venue in which you are installing the PA," he says.

"We are looking at developing ways to easily account for this interaction to get the best quality. At the moment there is a lot of money being spent on acoustic treatment which is complicated and expensive, and sometimes doesn't produce the best results. Our current idea is to get this interaction into consideration."

Powersoft has carefully positioned itself as a high-end manufacturer, and refuses to get drawn into pricing battles for its product Giorgi says, as it knows that leads to a path of commoditisation. "We believe something is missing in the industry, and we have the attitude to try things that are not done by other companies." 

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