

Introduction

A few miles from the quiet downtown of Hickory, North Carolina, two major Highways—US-321 and I-40—meet, mingle and separate again. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, fast-moving streams of cars, trucks and eighteen-wheelers roll down the broad, multi-lane thoroughfares, heading for the mountains, the coast, neighboring states or points in between.

Near the intersection of the two highways stands a handsome four-story building bearing a name in large letters along the roofline: CommScope.

The location of CommScope's global headquarters is both convenient and richly symbolic. The company's main business and *raison d'être* for three decades has been to help build the telecommunications equivalent of the interstate highway system—a giant network of electronic “roads” and “off-ramps” known as the Information Superhighway.

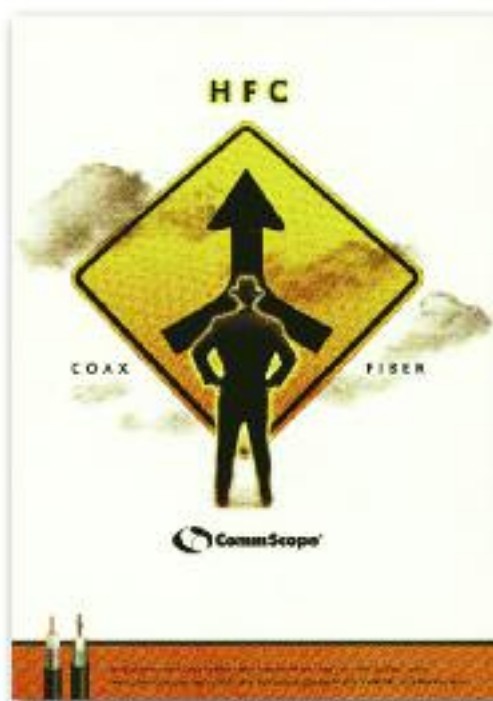
“When people ask me, ‘What do you do?’,” says Frank M. Drendel, CommScope's founder and chairman, “I say, ‘Do you believe in the Information Superhighway?’ And everybody says, ‘Absolutely.’ Then I say, ‘Well, we make its concrete off-ramp.’ That's as simple as it gets. We make the concrete foundation for the off-ramps and the local streets of the Information Superhighway.”

What CommScope manufactures is not literally concrete, but *cable*—a corporate-wide average of 3000 miles of it each day from its 12 facilities located around the world. Cables that tie computers to the Internet. Cables that link wireless antennae to base stations. Cables that connect cable television systems to thousands of homes and businesses. Cables that carry voice, video, data and more—

smoothly ... simultaneously ... invisibly ... across town, across the country, around the globe ... cables that form a part of total connectivity solutions.

Thousands of CommScope's products can be found in more than one hundred countries, and are sold by a dedicated sales force and by an extensive network of distributors and BusinessPartners. The company's customers range from small local businesses and organizations to many of the best-known companies in the world.

The most eloquent evidence of CommScope's success can be found in a single number: \$1.3 billion in sales in 2005 ... a far cry from the half million dollars that the business was losing before it was bought by Drendel and a few others in 1976.



At that time, CommScope wasn't even a separate company. It was a small coaxial cable product line and brand, struggling to stay afloat while its principal customer base—cable television systems—did the same. Fortunately for CommScope, thirty-one-year-old Frank Drendel saw a bright future for both businesses and was willing to do whatever was required to help CommScope weather the cable television industry's long and often intense growing pains over the next thirty years.

The pay-off for patience and persistence has been the privilege of becoming one of the world's biggest and most trusted suppliers of the high-performance cable needed to—literally—connect the world for twenty-first century telecommunications.

In the years since 1976, the company has expanded into other areas related to the so-called Last Mile of the Information Superhighway. In the early 1980s, as computers became more ubiquitous, CommScope dove into the emerging arena of Local Area Networks—or LANs—creating and supplying specialized cable to help businesses and organizations wire themselves for the Information Age. Today, the company's Enterprise business contributes more to CommScope's bottom line than the original Broadband group.

More recently, as the global cell phone industry exploded, CommScope applied its skills and knowledge to create a new generation of cables and connectors for wireless applications. Although still small compared to its two sister groups, the Carrier group is CommScope's fastest-growing segment.



Expansion wasn't limited to product lines. As early as 1975—even before Drendel purchased the company—Comm/Scope sold coaxial cable to the Railroad Authority of South Africa. In the 1980s, the company began shipping more of its U.S.-produced cable to customers in Europe and elsewhere. In the mid-1990s, CommScope recognized that the telecom revolution in North America would inevitably spread to the rest of the developed world. Between 1995 and 2005, the company added facilities in Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Ireland and the People's Republic of China. Today, a solid one-third of CommScope's sales are to customers located outside of the United States.

In 2003, the company made another bold strategic move by acquiring the Connectivity Solutions business from Avaya, Inc., owner of SYSTIMAX® Solutions, the number one brand in structured cabling solutions for businesses. The acquisition doubled the size of CommScope in terms of revenues and employees, revolutionizing the company's growing enterprise business virtually overnight.

As if those changes weren't enough, the first two-thirds of CommScope's existence—from 1976–1997—were marked by no fewer than seven ownership scenarios, the last of which gave birth to a fully independent, publicly traded CommScope in 1997.

Not many organizations could handle so many changes in a single generation. But CommScope has balanced its appetite for entrepreneurial adventure by keeping an unwavering eye on its original mission: supplying technology for the Last Mile—the metaphorical off-ramps and streets—of the Information Superhighway.

“That was Frank Drendel's vision,” says Paul Wilson, retired VP, Technical Services and Support. “He saw the Last Mile long before most other people did.”

“You can't tap into even a drop of the sea of two-way broadband info and entertainment on the Information Superhighway without bumping into the 'Last Mile's' hybrid fiber coax architecture,” says Drendel. “And that's what CommScope makes.”

The long-term vision of CommScope has been matched by equally long-term leadership. Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Frank Drendel and Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer Jearld Leonhardt co-founded CommScope in 1976 and have held its reins for the entire thirty years. President and Chief Operating Officer Brian Garrett joined the company in 1980 and has been in his current roles since 1997, the year CommScope began trading on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol CTV.

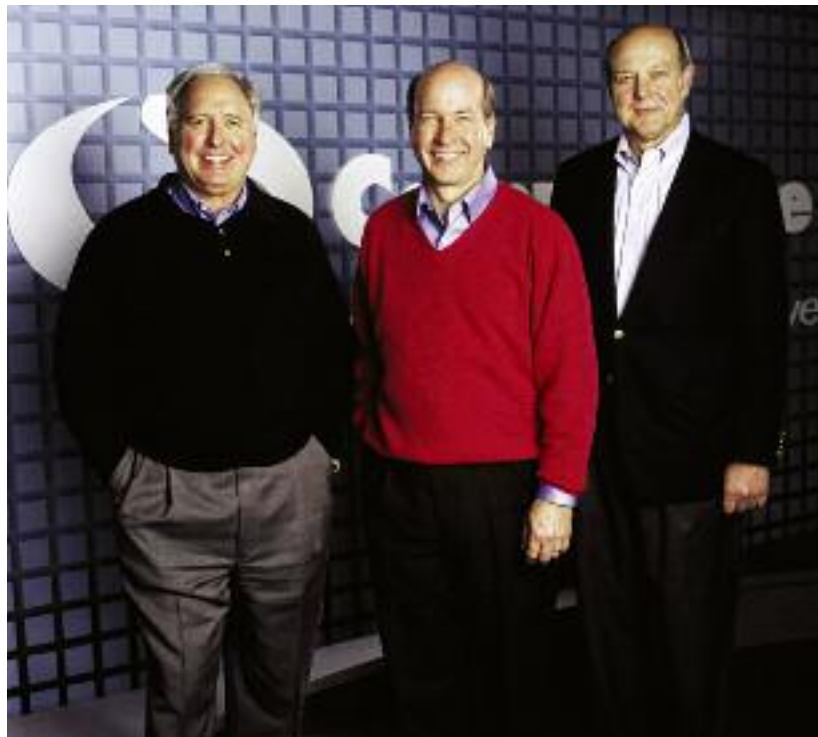
The cohesiveness of top management is no accident. One of the secrets of CommScope's success is its knack for developing and keeping relationships.

Says co-founder Jearld Leonhardt: "From the start, Frank has encouraged all of us—at every level of the company—to build relationships with customers, with vendors, with the financial community, wherever we have an endeavor to undertake. Frank believes that things get done through people. You have to get to know people, understand them, have relationships with them to accomplish things."

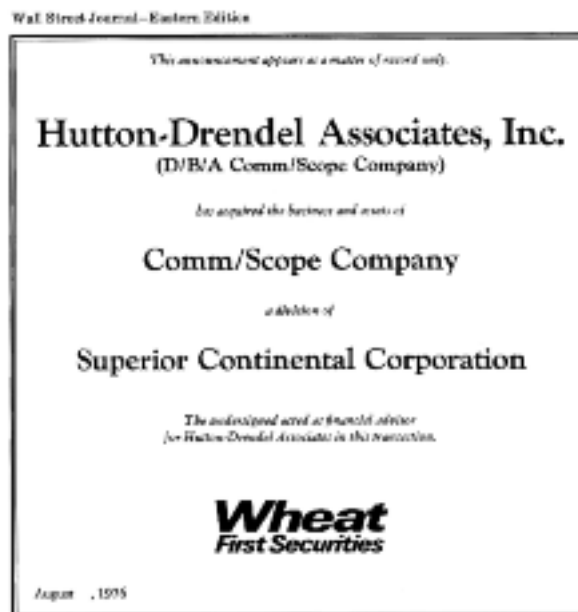
"Frank has the ability to get along with people," says George Hutton, one of CommScope's original investors, and the first chairman of the company's board of directors. "That's one of the basic reasons he's made it. Because it's not easy getting along with everybody. ...He has always been able to take the best of everybody he's ever met."

CommScope's customer service philosophy also emphasizes long-term relationships—a "get it right" mindset that permeates the company and has won CommScope many long-time and loyal friends.

"Our customers can all tell you that they can get this product elsewhere and for less, but when something's wrong, it gets fixed ... period." says Frank Drendel.



Frank M. Drendel,
Brian D. Garrett, and
Jearld L. Leonhardt



As CommScope celebrates thirty years in business, its success still surprises even those who have been most involved and responsible for the company's rise from obscurity in 1976 to being one of the best-known names in its industry.

"Here we were, this itty teeny little business thirty years ago," says Brian Garrett, CommScope's President and COO. "Privately held. Only made one thing: coax cable. And look at where we are today. A billion-plus in sales. Diversified. Publicly traded. Global."

Garrett laughs: "I guess we didn't know enough to know what we couldn't do!" 🤔