



Matt Koenig assembles a UAXT 6 air cooled television transmitter at GatesAir in Quincy. H-W Photo/Michael Kiple

Opening airwaves

GatesAir banks on global, digital upgrades

By Matt Hopf
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The digital conversion of broadcast television and radio around the world continues to present opportunity for GatesAir.

The firm, formerly known as Harris Broadcast, manufactures television and radio transmit-

ters. It dates to 1922, when Henry C. Gates founded Gates Radio Supply. His son, Parker Gates, helped transform the firm to one of the world's top suppliers of radio and television equipment.

GatesAir Vice President of Operations Bryant Burke said continued digital TV rollouts in

Asia, Africa and South America continue to provide sales opportunities for the firm. In Europe, the firm is seeing the conversion to digital radio.

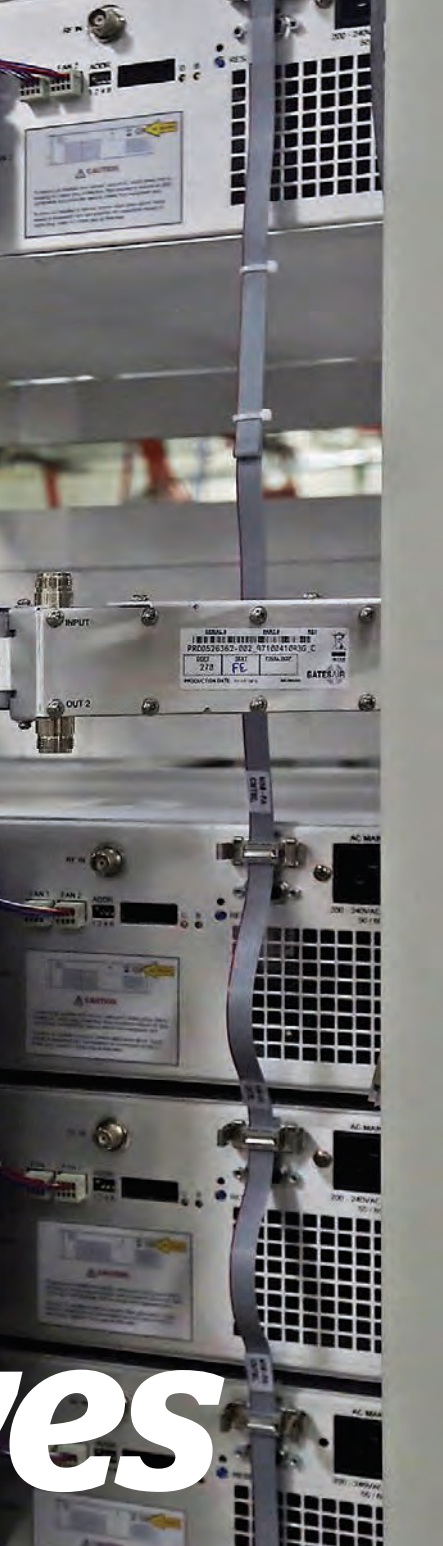
"Overall worldwide, we're just seeing some positive momentum in FM radio as well," he said.

Burke said even though GatesAir can be affected by

currency issues and a change in the national political climate, it continues to do well worldwide.

"For the most part, we've really been penetrating a lot of these countries with multiyear programs," he said. "It's been very strong for us."

Burke said the transition from being publicly traded Harris



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Bryant Burke

vice president of operations, GatesAir



Tony Ryan tests a finished GatesAir UHF television transmitter scheduled to go to North Carolina. H-W Photo/Michael Kiple

Wismann Lane in Quincy, where about 200 people are employed. About one-third work in product production and the other two-thirds hold professional and managerial roles.

"When I take people through our facility, whether it's a customer from around the globe or a congressman, they're just amazed at the vertical integration that we have," Burke said. "We manage the whole aspect of the product from the design, development, the electrical engineering, the mechanical engineering, circuit and software design."

The Quincy facility also handles its own metal fabrication.

"We have a very state-of-the-art capability there, and we continue to invest in it," Burke said.

The company's sales and marketing departments, as well as its research and development functions, are situated at GatesAir's headquarters, which

is outside Cincinnati.

With a strong outreach in the global market, Bryant said the company is preparing for a couple big opportunities in the broadcasting industry domestically.

The Federal Communication Commission is moving toward limiting television stations to a smaller portion of the broadcast spectrum to free up spectrum space for the growth of wireless services.

"What does that mean locally for GatesAir?" Burke said. "Those broadcasters that voluntarily relinquish those wireless spectrum rights will get new channel assignments and (have to) replace their hardware that may be more channel-specific."

The Advanced Television Systems Committee, an international nonprofit organization that develops voluntary standards for digital television, also has adopted a new multimedia standard.

"What that eventually means is free 4K or Ultra HD television," Burke said. "So those people who are cord cutters should be excited about that."

The change would allow broadcasters to target content to certain areas.

"If you have one transmitter covering all of Chicago, you wouldn't want to be on the south side of Chicago watching a commercial for a Chevy dealership on the north side," he said. "It's geo-located targeted revenue opportunities for broadcasters."

Burke said the firm has tried to prepare for changes in the market with employment training programs through the state as needed.

"We're investing very heavily in research and development, in capital equipment and people," he said. "We're just waiting for a couple bells to go off to continue that momentum that we have going." ■

Corp. to the privately owned Gores Group in 2013 has been beneficial. The company was split into two entities, Imagine Communications and GatesAir, a year later.

"We're much more entrepreneurial-focused, and we've done some consolidation of our global footprint, but we still play and do business in over 185 different countries," he said. "We have great global reach."

That reach of GatesAir products can be felt at 30th and