The (High) Definition of Success

AMI MIRON ProfD’89

Miron earned his professional degree in electrical engineering at Columbia in 1989, taking classes at night while working at Philips Electronics as manager for VLSI video systems. Although he completed all course work for the PhD, he left school without doing a dissertation to accept a promotion at Philips to vice president for television systems and worked on HDTV.

That decision proved fruitful for more than just Miron. His ensuing technical achievements are as visible worldwide as they are anonymous, at least to those outside the realm of electrical engineering. Miron could be the answer to a trivia question or even a series of them.

At Philips, he developed and patented the first picture-in-picture technology for televisions under the Magnavox brand. He devised a system to solve the problem of ghost images on television screens, which the FCC adopted as the nation’s standard. He was later a member of the team that developed the U.S. standard for high-definition TV.

In 1993, Miron joined General Instrument Corporation (now Motorola) as vice president to head advanced technology and new products for the cable TV market. He left Motorola four years later and founded MiroCom Inc., a software networking company that provided digital entertainment and Internet content to televisions. It was later sold to Comcast.

Currently, Miron is the founder and president of Miro Partners, based in Philadelphia. He works with entrepreneurs, start-ups, venture capital, and universities. He serves on the board of Ben Franklin Technology Partners, is senior adviser at Wheaton Small Business Development Center, and is on the Upper Dublin School District strategic planning committee.

Miron earned his BSc in electrical engineering from the Technion—Israel Institute of Technology in Haifa. He came to New York to earn an MS from what is now Polytechnic Institute of NYU, before coming to Columbia Engineering.

Miron says his graduate work at Columbia “was instrumental in convincing the Philips management that the immigrant can be successful.”

Many parents hope their child follows in their footsteps and takes over the family business. Richard Hunter at first followed his academic interests, until a genetic pull tugged him at his entrepreneurial spirit.

The lure of New York City and Columbia Engineering’s aerospace engineering graduate program motivated Hunter to apply after getting his bachelor’s degree in math and physics in 1965 from Whittman College in Walla Walla, Washington.

“I was convinced I was going to have a career in aerospace,” Hunter said. “It was the middle of the space program, and I found the attraction of New York City and trying something different a great experience.”

Soon after graduation, he began working for Bellcomm, a consulting arm of Bell Telephone Laboratories. Hunter worked with NASA head-quarters on projects involving the U.S. Apollo space program.

“My interest in aerospace started with the first satellite launched by Russia,” he said. “I was very fortunate to have a broad engineering, math, and physics education that allowed me to participate in the Apollo project at a ‘systems’ level right out of school.”

When Bell Telephone Laboratories exited aerospace work, Hunter went to work at the Time Company for his late father, Edwin, who is considered an irrigation industry pioneer.

“Aerospace jobs were very scarce in 1974,” Hunter said. “The family business opportunity won.”


“One of the things that’s fun about our company is that it’s a relationship business, not a transaction business,” he said. “If you can build a good product with enough margin in it to provide customer satisfaction, you’re in good shape.”

For a company that started out with a single product, Hunter Industries has grown to 1,500 employees around the world, including Jordan, China, and Spain, among others. The San Mar- cos, California–based business also owns 120 patents and 57 registered trademarks.

Hunter said the business has been profitable since the first year, but he cautioned the entrepreneurial route is a tough one.

“You will need more start-up capital and you will work harder and longer than you expect,” he said. “It’s a 24-hour job.”

Hunter credits his dad with fueling his business innovator fire. The family legacy continues: Hunter’s son Greg, 38, is now Hunter Industries’ vice president of marketing, and son Scott, 31, graduated from Columbia College in 2003 and is now in his medical residency in California.

Hunter remains involved in academia. He was a long-time trustee at Whitman College and also served on two boards for California State University, San Marcos. He has been a member of the Columbia Engineering Board of Visitors. He received the Irrigation Association’s Industry Achievement Award in 2010.

“When he’s not busy running the company, Hunter likes to chase solar eclipses with his wife Jan, three kids, and five grandchildren.

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