

# Connecting With Our Leaders

## Interview with Pat O'Brien President, Global Connectivity Solutions

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*This interview article features Pat O'Brien, President, Global Connectivity Solutions, who is our April highlight for the "Connecting With Our Leaders" series. This article is the first in three events, including a Q&A Connect Roundtable Webcast available via Broadband TV in which Pat sits down with ADC employees to answer questions from Shakopee, Minnesota; and a Connect Coffee Break where employees will have a chance to connect with Pat in an informal setting. Look for reminders via ADCalmanac throughout the month.*

The Internal Communications team sat down for an interview with Pat O'Brien in late March. The below article features questions and answers exploring Pat's view on ADC, his job and his personal life. Read below to learn more about our company's president of Global Connectivity Solutions (GCS).

**Name:** Pat O'Brien

**Title:** President, GCS

**Where do you consider home (e.g., birth place, your roots)?**

I was born and raised in Bloomington, Minnesota. I attended Iowa State in Ames, Iowa for four years where I received my bachelor's degree in electrical engineering in 1987. After a brief stint in Madison, Wisconsin, I moved back to the Twin Cities. I currently live in south Minneapolis and have lived here for the last 14 years. My parents also still reside in the area.

**How long have you been in your current position? At ADC?**

I've been in the president's role for approximately three years and have been with ADC for 14 years.

**What position did you begin at within ADC?**

I started as the T-1 Repeater Product Manager in 1993.

**What did your role entail?**

I managed an extremely small product line within the overall ADC portfolio and have had continuing



*Pat pictured with his family. Left to right: wife, Mary; daughter, Abby; daughter, Emma; Pat; and son, Joe.*

product management experiences with larger, broader product offerings throughout my career.

**When you began here, did you see yourself in your role as GCS president?**

I've always had aspirations, but I wouldn't say that I would have seen myself in this role.

**What do you enjoy most about your current role? The least?**

**The Most:** I think what I like the most is the global nature of the business. By the acquisition of KRONE, our company has brought together a lot of unique cultures, a lot of talented people around the world and a lot of knowledge about customers. As a single company, we never would have had the levels of customer intimacy we do today. Between our high caliber employees and the various cultures I am fortunate to interface with on a daily basis, that is probably what I find most enjoyable about the job.

**The Least:** None specifically. I would say that part of the challenge of the job is dealing with time zone issues, as many other employees do, and the time commitment associated with managing within a

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Pat and Joe enjoy a Minnesota Twins game in downtown Minneapolis.

global environment. There is someone always awake around the world and 3 a.m. phone calls and meetings are part of that environment.

### *How much time do you spend traveling?*

I'm scheduled to be away one week a month, but because of the reality of our business, I probably spend half of my time on the road.

### *During your travels, who do you spend more time with: ADC employees or customers?*

Today, I spend more time with ADC employees, and that's a matter of getting out and meeting as many of them as I can. In my mind, we are still going through some integration in bringing the global team together. But, increasingly, my time is being spent building relationships with customers as well.

### **What does your typical day or work week look like?**

The typical day usually starts out in row 38-B, middle seat, on a flight - actually, it's very rare that two days are similar. I think that's part of the enjoyment I get from the job. There are so many unique things going on in making sure everyone has the resources and the right level of direction to carry out their roles within the big picture. If we get to the likes and dislikes of the average day, there are lots of meetings. But that's part of the reality of where we are today and is necessary to ensure we are aligned with our priorities and direction.

### *On average, how many meetings do you participate in per day?*

I attend anywhere from five to seven meetings per day.

### *Where do you find the time to respond to e-mail and complete other tasks?*

That fits in during open slots in the day and before and after the formal work day.

### **Career History: Name one challenge in your work career that may have frustrated you but produced a successful end result.**

First, here's a little career background. I began my career working for about four years at an operating telephone company, Continental Telephone Company (ConTel), which is now part of Verizon. I worked within the engineering, planning and marketing functions. In coming to ADC, I had experience on the operating side as a buyer and understood the importance of value. I think this particularly helped ground me in what is important to the customer.

In terms of your question, one that is real to me and real to a lot of employees - and one that will hopefully have a successful end result - is our Competitive Cost Transformation initiative. As a company, I think it's clear to most employees that we need to continue to evolve; we need to continue to make sure that our processes, the way we go about our work, is appropriate given our global size and scale. Change is required. We as a company believe we are successful because we continue to meet our customers' needs around things like lead time, around quality, around breadth of product. And moving forward, ever more important is meeting their needs for price.

In terms of transformation, we have been publicizing our ability to control cost. But cost is just one of the elements that is important in our ability to meet all of our other customers' requirements. Lead time, quality and product are equally as important. Cost alone will never be the answer for ADC's success. And I think that I've probably focused too much on the cost message and people have questioned if the other values and differentiators are still part of where we are going. They absolutely are. Today, I find myself in a position in which we are trying to balance our message and ensure people understand that the way we go about winning in the marketplace is consistent with our past practices. However,

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we need to continue to change and evolve if we want to be successful long term.

### What motivates you?

I know this is going to sound like a canned answer, but I really do like winning against our competition. When it comes to work, I'm very much motivated by executing the plans we lay out. I like when we decide we are going to focus on a particular market area or particular customer and then have success. I get very motivated by fresh ideas, especially now that we have employees around the globe with different perspectives on winning with our customers. Holistically, I am pretty motivated by seeing my children develop and being able to participate in their growth. They're so young. They're like little sponges. I am motivated by having the time and the opportunity to be part of that.

### What kind of fresh ideas are you seeing from employees?

I think the fresh ideas we are now seeing have always been there. I think as the global team has gotten stronger, the voices of people in different parts of the world have become stronger and different ways to look at growth opportunities have come into the fold as to how we do business. Some examples of different perspectives on growth opportunities include how we go about developing products and markets, how we meet different customer and market needs, and how we meet those needs in developing and developed countries. As I said, I think fresh ideas have always been here. I think we're just taking advantage of bringing them together into solutions for our business and customers.

### If you were to define "success," what would you write?

When you look at success purely from the work environment I think that it's accomplishing what you've set out to accomplish. Executing on the plan is clearly the model we should follow. Success is also making sure that we're developing a long-term, viable company positioned for growth, that employees have development opportunities and that we bring new talent into our organization. I see those things as broadly defining success for the work environment.

I think for me as a person success is acting with integrity and being viewed as an open and honest individual with the right balance in my life. I do

travel quite a bit, but I make sure that when I'm not, I'm spending time with my family. Success is being able to see the individual accomplishments of my children and the ability to let them have opportunities to grow.

### How do you check in with your family when you are away?

The Internet is a wonderful thing! There's been far more e-mails and text messages than calls, but it does make the world a smaller place when you can have those real-time communications.

### What are some important traits of an effective leader?

Going back to honesty, integrity and trust, I think all of those traits are foundational within a leader. They have to be people who are viewed as those consistent with their acts and their messages. The employee base has to feel that the leader is looking out for their best interests, that they are being told frankly of the company's conditions and understand what's happening in the organization. I think other traits that are very important include being sensitive and caring. And I think that leaders should have sound judgment and an every increasing sense of flexibility. One of the big changes that I have seen within our industry is the requirement and ability to change our direction on short notice because that's how volatile and dynamic the market is at the moment.

### Our ability to respond to industry requirements for quick change is inevitably an effect of the flattening of our world. From your perspective, how is this changing our industry and the business world?

Instead of flattening, I'd say there is a lower barrier for information to be transported around the globe, so the wants and needs of people throughout the world are becoming more homogeneous. And our customer base, they're looking to provide those wants and needs. At one time, an offering from a service provider in India would have been far different from what you saw in a developed country. Today, product offerings are becoming more and more ambiguous with voice, video and data. It's not just telecommunications that is flattening our globe and business environment but telecommunications is a great enabler within the process. But because of these developments, applications are really coming together. We have a great story to tell how we can help our customers fulfill their application needs.

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### **How do you apply ADC's Vision, Mission and The ADC Way in your role? How do you encourage employees to use these key values in their positions?**

I think our Vision, Mission and The ADC Way are starting to take hold. I use all of them as my guiding principles. The Vision and Mission are part of what my team and the leadership team has developed as an aspiration for our company and how our company will be successful long term. The ADC Way obviously speaks to how we want individuals, including myself, to go about their day-to-day activity.

In this global environment, there are a lot of key elements within The ADC Way that are important, starting with "Customer." It's been said time and time again that as a company we never lose sight of what's important to the customer. Without the customer, the rest of what we do doesn't matter. I know that's a pat answer, but I think it's true - particularly in an environment where we see customer consolidation. Those who are going to continue to win are going to be the ones who react to the customers' changing needs will keep the customer first. On a daily basis, I think our employees top to bottom need to keep the customer in mind when we're going about our jobs. We need to understand that how we win in the market is around short lead-time and that going the extra step in making sure that a task is accomplished today versus tomorrow is important to ADC's success.

The other ADC Way value that resonates with me is "Teamwork." We have research and development activities going on today that are using talents from across the globe - from Berlin to India to Shakopee - to bring a single product to market, which is challenging. There are many cultural and communication challenges that are a part of bringing this kind of team together but their impact is very powerful. Not only do we have the ability to work around the clock, but we have this incredible amount of talent to draw upon that could never be created in one location. The "Teamwork" piece of The ADC Way resonates very strongly within the GCS organization.

### **What is a current project you are working on? What is your role and level of involvement in this project?\***

One I want to speak to is one that I and the leadership team are essentially beginning this week. That's the strategic planning process. This is an

annual cycle where we get together and talk about our current plans; what's working, what's not; and what's changed within the marketplace, our competitors and our customers. It helps us plan how much we need to adjust our planning so that we meet our Vision and Mission. It's always an exciting process because of the global input across ADC. And I think it's so important for the company today to have a clear understanding of how we are going to continue to grow. I think the growth question is on the minds of a good number of our employees. Given where we are today, how do we continue to grow? What does the long-term vision look like for the company? I think we're at a crossroads. This strategic planning process is going to be one in which we must understand our core competencies and determine how best to use those core competencies to continue to grow the company.

### *How long does the planning process take from start to finish?*

The plan is complete in the September timeframe and then there's a final approval process with our Board of Directors in October. In the end, it's the leadership team that ultimately puts the ADC package together, but there is input from various levels of employees within the organization. I think you could safely say there are more than 100 employees directly involved in developing our strategy.

### *How do you take our industry's volatility into account during the planning process?*

You look at various sensitivity analyses; you try to anticipate what could happen in the market and put plans in place that lay out how you will react if one scenario develops over another. I think the biggest challenge we face as a company today stems from the overall modest growth expectation in the market. Our expectation, as a company, is that we want to grow far beyond the overall market growth rate. So the challenge is how do we do that? We focus on what applications or segments we anticipate to grow faster than the overall market, on what geographies will grow faster than the overall market and on what product segments we need to be involved in to support those applications. That leads to investment into our go-to-market strategy and into our business today. It also leads us to explore potential acquisitions and partnerships that could expand our business rapidly as opposed to normal, organic means.

\*Current as of **Tuesday, March 27**.

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### Career History: What would you define as your biggest work accomplishment (either at ADC or elsewhere)?

If I look at ADC's history, this company has really reinvented itself a number of times. And for me, being involved in the acquisition of KRONE was probably what I view to as my biggest career accomplishment. We went from a very North American-centric company with a very limited product portfolio to being a global leader in infrastructure with a broad portfolio serving multiple markets and, I think, 98 of the top 100 companies in the world. To be able to put that together was very satisfying, and I think it set a very good foundation for our continued growth.

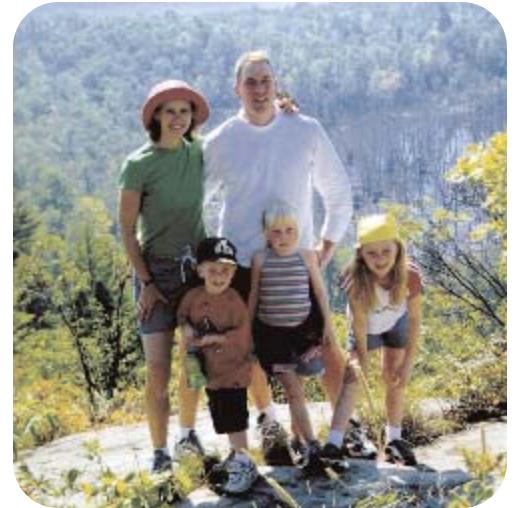
*If you could have changed anything in the integration process, what would it have been?*

This question often comes up. My answer usually resonates around our speed in decision-making and implementing changes sooner rather than later even if they were a result of imperfect decisions. In general, though, we're externally viewed as having been very successful in our integration effort. But moving to a global company from, an ADC perspective, a North American company and, a KRONE perspective, a European company, has been a challenge. Integration activity is still going on, but we are much stronger today than either of us were independently.

### Who was the last customer you spoke with and what did you discuss?\*

In general, being in front of customers is one of the more satisfying parts of my job. The last customer I spoke to was Deutsch Telekom (T-Com), and we discussed some of the roll-out plans around our Automated Cross-Connect (ACX) project. It's a very ambitious development for ADC, and it's a new product category for the telecommunications industry. We will continue to work closely with T-Com to ensure their needs and ADC's needs are met. As with any large-scale development, there are bumps in the road getting to where you need to be. Our discussions and meetings with T-Com have been and continue to be around ensuring that everyone involved has clear expectations as to what success looks like.

\*Current as of **Tuesday, March 27**.



*Pat and his family on vacation. Pat enjoys hiking and camping in his spare time.*

### What do you see for yourself in the future? One year? Five years?

It's hard to say, but what I can tell you is that I truly believe we will continue to grow as a company. So what I envision for myself is a much more global role. Right now, I feel that I have a good grasp of what's happening in North American market and with our North American employee base, and when I look out one year, five years, I am hopeful that my knowledge of the global environment and our employee base is stronger. This past quarter, for example, I held my first Town Hall meeting with our employees in Berlin, Germany. (To view Pat's Q1 webcast, click [HERE](#) to watch it in English; click [HERE](#) to view it in German.)

### Considering ADC is a global company, how have you adapted your leadership style to accommodate various work cultures?

I think the biggest challenge is adapting to the communication needs of a global environment. There's a challenge in making sure that I'm getting out and being visible with employees and understanding what's important to any given location. There's also a challenge in making sure that employees around the globe understand what's happening with ADC and keeping them informed of what's happening outside of their own work environment. Coming back to the time zone issue, it's also been a personal challenge to ensure that I am communicating in the right time zones.

*How do you communicate across language barriers?*

In many cases, from a preparation standpoint, it can be difficult to make sure information is conveyed in an employee's native language; however,

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that's simply a part of what we must do if we are going to be successful in our global environment.

### **When outside of work, what do you do for fun? Personal hobbies? Activities?**

The Dad stuff, such as driving my three kids around. I spend a lot of time with them and their various activities. From a personal standpoint, I stay pretty active. I've run two marathons and plan to run another one this summer (the Grandma's Marathon in Duluth, Minnesota) and I hope to run one in Berlin, Germany. I also bike a lot, camp and hike with my family, and take advantage of the great state and national parks here in Minnesota. There are some real gems out there. I really enjoy the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and Tettegouche State Park, both in northern Minnesota. I think what's so appealing about these parks is that they're so accessible, but once you're there, you feel like you're at the end of the world. You don't see other people. It's very relaxing.

### *Does your BlackBerry work there?*

It doesn't.

### **If you could name one favorite childhood memory, what would you describe?**

My most vivid memories involve camping and hiking. As a family, we'd road trip throughout California, Minnesota and the Rocky Mountains and take advantage of the United States' national parks system.

### **Favorite book?**

Now that I'm spending a lot of time on airplanes, I've had more opportunity to read. So I don't know if this is necessarily a favorite book, but I recently finished "The Discoveries" - a book by Alan Lightman that calls out the 25 greatest scientific discoveries of the 20th century. The book analyzes everything from Albert Einstein's theories of relativity to the discovery of penicillin. What's interesting about the book is how it addresses how these things came about. It highlights that most of the people who made these world-altering breakthroughs weren't necessarily looking for what they found. However, they had the intellectual curiosity to follow up on something that was not an expected result. Instead of saying something's wrong with the result, they followed that lead and, hence, made great discoveries into the things that have really changed our lives and how we view the

world.

### *Of the 25 greatest discoveries, which did you find the most interesting?*

I would have to say the discovery of penicillin. Its discovery came about in such a quirky way and has had such a dramatic change on humankind.

### **Do you have an embarrassing work moment? What is it?**

Other than some of my earlier video tapes, one of most embarrassing moments was my third day on the job at ADC. I started as this product manager and there were a couple of people from the Sales organization who decided they were going to test me a little bit. They called and told me that we had a major customer issue. Then they simply let me stew about that for the better part of the day to see how I'd react under fire. After most of the day had passed, they called me back and, in effect, told me that it had just been a test. Had it been a real emergency ...

### *How do you think you handled the situation?*

I think I did OK. I held my own, but it certainly made me have second thoughts about my new career choice.

### *Do you think it was an invaluable experience?*

I think it taught me a lot about culture at ADC ... and how to deal with it (laughs).

### **Tell us about your family life.**

I have been married to my wife, Mary, for 14 years, and we have three children: Abby, age 11; Emma, age eight; and Joe, age five. I actually moved to Minneapolis with Mary, had our wedding and started work within a two-week period. It was a hectic time. Today, the kids are, as I said before, involved in a lot of activities, including: baseball, soccer, skiing, snowboarding and camping. They keep my wife and I busy.

### **Do you have any pet peeves? What are they?**

I think if there's anything at work in particular that may bother me is the proliferation of e-mail versus the personal touch of a phone call or a face-to-face dialogue. If you look at the proliferation of the e-mail chains, a lot of what could be accomplished in a 30-second phone call takes an hour worth of e-

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*Pat enjoys a bike ride with one of his children, Abby.*



*Pat and his family enjoy traveling to state and national parks. Above the family is pictured outside a cabin.*

mail. I see the power of e-mail and the value of e-mail, but the amount of e-mail is an undesired consequence of its efficiency. I see more people hiding in cubes versus addressing issues straight on, and this is an issue of the global nature and not specific to ADC. I know we can never eliminate e-mail, but we have to remember to maintain a personal touch in our internal and external business dealings.

### **What volunteer or community service experiences have you had, earlier in your career or recently, that helped you be more effective in your current position?**

I stay pretty active at my children's school, Ascension Elementary School in south Minneapolis, as a school board member. I think being able to convey a sense of what I see in my global travels back to what I think is important to the educational

environment has been valuable. It's also been a valuable experience in helping me understand the pace of how change can happen within a U.S. education system.

### **If employees take away one key message from this article, what do you want them to remember?**

I have great hope for the future of this company. I believe very much in ADC. I think we have phenomenal employees, and I care greatly about our employees and the company. I personally strive everyday to be a better leader and help our organization move forward. I also think that part of this campaign is to help employees understand that all of us are not only employees in this company. We're members of our communities who may have lots to give at work but who also have lots to give in our lives and that's important.