

Jeremy Burkhardt "Retires" From Speakercraft

Written by Bob Snyder
22. 05. 2012

Jeremy Burkhardt, industry character and one of the industry's most influential leaders, announces his retirement from **Speakercraft**. Keith Marshall, president of Proficient Audio (and sister company to Speakercraft) will step in.

No doubt the full story will come out, but **why is 40-year old Burkhardt retiring?**

Watch him in his announcement video ([link below](#)) and hear him repeat the word "retirement." And then he explains, "I'll probably go sit under a tree and do something else."

And that's exactly the point.



"Do something else." This doesn't sound like a man about to retire. It sounds more like a man

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who has decided to leave for whatever reason and has agreed with a corporation on the best way to walk away "in the best interest of the corporation."

Nortek is the corporation that owns Speakercraft, and an impressive list of companies with important residential brands. Nortek bought Speakercraft in 2004 for \$58 million and Burkhardt made a lot of money, money affectionately known by most entrepreneurs as "FU money." Money that enables an entrepreneur to walk away from large companies at the appropriate time.

When is the time appropriate? Normally, when you get fed up of big company constraints...or new management steps in and you disagree with new philosophy or have conflict with new personalities...or you feel under-appreciated..... or maybe when you lose your **Nirv**.

SpeakerCraft had been working on Nirv for about three years and started shipping at the end of January 2012. **Nirv was a whole-house A/V system using only a single Cat 5 cable to deliver content and two-way control using CobraNet networking technology.**

By end of April, after just 3 months, Nirv was cancelled.

Why was Nirv cancelled? "Nortek is working very hard to better integrate all its brands," Burkhardt told press at the time. There was too much overlap between Nirv and sister company **Elan**

Overlap that went unnoticed during years of development? Or a shift in Nortek corporate politics that collided with Speakercraft's will to create?

At the end of February, **new management came into Nortek's Technology Products Segment** that controls *Speakercraft, Niles, Xantech, Proficient Audio, Panamax, Linear, Gefen, TV One, Magenta Research, Ergotron/Omnimount* and others.

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Sean Burke became Group President of the company's Technology Products Segment. Burke served as president, FlexComputing at **Flextronics International**. He previously held senior management positions at Iomega, Hewlett-Packard and Compaq. Not exactly an audio guy by his background.

Last December, Nortek got a new President and CEO, Michael J. Clarke. Guess where Clarke came from? For the past six years, had Clarke served as a senior executive at **Flextronics International**

Both Clarke and Burke worked for one of the world's largest OEM supply chain companies, a company that prides itself on its business culture. Not audio culture.

We're not saying that's wrong; we're just saying it's different and you audio folks know what we mean.

Burkhardt started in the business as a wire puller, a custom installer, and succeeded in business by truly embracing the technology and the channel. He walked the talk. It seems likely that for high-spirited Burkhardt who lives and breathes custom audio that life at Nortek became the perfect storm rolling in. Not much fun anymore. And exhausting as well.

Burkhardt once claimed his two favourite books are: **Man's Search for Meaning** by Viktor Frankl, and

Way of the Peaceful Warrior

, by Dan Millman. One contemplative book and one call-to-action book.

If there's one thing you notice about Burkhardt, it's the duality of the man: an excellent businessman who doesn't look like a traditional businessman. A "peaceful warrior." A "corporate entrepreneur."

His choice of books reflects his dual nature. It's just another way of saying: "I'll probably go sit under a tree and do something else." **Good luck, Jeremy.** We expect we'll be hearing more from both of you again soon.

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[Watch Jeremy's Retirement Announcement](#)

[More about Speakercraft and Burkhardt's rise](#)