

THE CONSUMER'S PULSE

CLARION GOT ITS START SELLING BATTERY-POWERED RADIOS IN 1940 AND WAS THE FIRST JAPANESE COMPANY TO MAKE RADIOS EXPRESSLY FOR THE CAR BACK IN '48. WHAT'S YOUR VISION OF THE CAR OF THE FUTURE?

MINAREK: Our vision hasn't changed much since we introduced the car radio. It is centered on the belief that people should expect more from the time they spend in their cars than just transportation from point A to point B. It's that belief that led us in 1995 to originate the idea of car multi-media: the integration of audio, video, entertainment, navigation, and communication features into a comprehensive system that's easily operated in a mobile environment.

PROFILES: As part of that vision, earlier this year you introduced the Clarion AutoPC which, while based on the Microsoft Windows CE platform, uniquely offered a driving directions application more typical of higher-end navigation systems. What was the strategy behind this move?

MINAREK: Our goal with the AutoPC is to combine car audio, computing functions, navigation and wireless communications to provide information and entertainment to the driver accessible through hands-free voice activation. With it, we wanted to impart a sense of comfort and confidence to the driver by helping them to reliably reach their destinations. InfoGation's Odyssey car navigation software and the Navigation Technologies' digital map as well as its SDAL Format helped us to achieve this.



James Minarek
President & CEO Sales
Clarion

PROFILES: Recently, the Clarion AutoPC tied for the #1 post in Consumer Report's review of navigation systems. Did this surprise you?

MINAREK: We were delighted by the report, but not surprised by it. The navigation-equipped Clarion AutoPC provides the lowest cost, fully functional navigation system on the market today. But what the report did do was to validate our confidence with regard to the technology and the marketplace, and that's always welcome. As a matter of fact, Clarion is also recognized in the Guinness Book of World Records as the "first in-car computer."

PROFILES: So what's next for the Clarion AutoPC?

MINAREK: We're working on significant improvements for the AutoPC that include new and faster processing speeds. The next generation system will take the driving directions application to the next level, with full dead reckoning, gyroscopic positioning, and a 4-inch screen. Again, we are relying on the NAVTECH map database as well as SDAL technology to expedite development and provide the advantage of map media compatibility.