



iPhone 7 trendsetter or monopolization?

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December 2016



Transforming

Motel 6



INTERVIEW WITH

Nitin Rakesh

CEO of Syntel



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WELCOME

to the December issue of
Business Review USA & Canada.

This month we're featuring the story of Syntel, an expert in digital modernization led by CEO and President Nitin Rakesh. We discuss with him the story of the company, its unique innovations, and its 'customer for life' strategy. Also in this month's edition is an opinion piece on the impact of the iPhone 7, and whether its creation is the next natural step or simply monopolization.

As an unavoidable tribute to Christmas, our top 10 is a list of the best and most fondly-remembered American Christmas commercials to date.

December's bumper selection of exclusive profiles include Texas Trust Union, G6 Hospitality, Jones Lang LaSalle, North American Power, PlanNet Design & Coinstruction, and T5 Data Centers.

Enjoy this issue, and please do join the discussion on Twitter: [@BizReviewUSA](https://twitter.com/BizReviewUSA) and [@NellWalkerMG](https://twitter.com/NellWalkerMG)

Nell Walker

Editor

nell.walker@bizclikmedia.com

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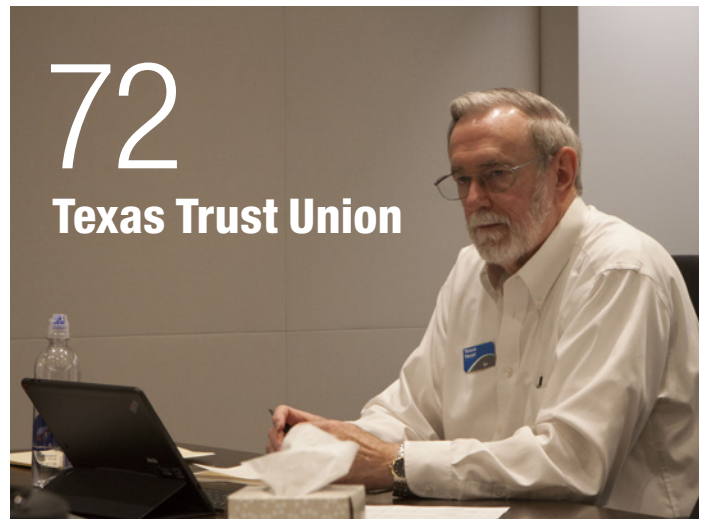
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Traversing the two-speed world

Nitin Rakesh, CEO and President of digital modernization company Syntel, tells Business Review USA & Canada about his company's quest to guide its clients through a two-speed digital world

Written by: **NELL WALKER**





DIGITAL MODERNIZATION IS

currently one of the most competitive industries in the world. Any business unable to keep its technological processes up-to-date risks being left behind, but most companies – whether brand new or well-established – will require guidance. Few are blessed with enough IT know-how to facilitate their own digital transformations, and this is where companies like Syntel step in.

Syntel is a global leader in digital modernization services. The company was founded in 1980 in Troy, Michigan, and serves multinational clients from 17 global developments centers in the US and India, bringing technology and consulting services to many sectors including banking, healthcare, and

manufacturing. It is a certified MBE

– a fully minority-owned business – listed on NASDAQ and run since 2014 by CEO and President, Nitin Rakesh.

Rakesh took over from Prashant Ranade, going on to deploy Syntel’s autonomic computing platform, SyntBots. Having started in financial services and dipping into other industries, he has worked in the technology sector for the past 25 years, focusing on building new businesses with new innovations.

“I look at business models and work out how to help take advantage of the technologies and capabilities available,” says Rakesh. “Then it’s about improving them.”

Syntel places a heavy focus on enabling businesses to cope with the ‘two-speed world’; this term refers to the idea that some parts of the world – such as Europe, North America, and Japan – are developing more slowly than quickly-developing economies like Brazil, China, and India. Rakesh has [written an article](#) on the subject, as assisting companies with this global struggle is a particular passion of his.

“We can classify clients predominantly as banking,





**“My view on
change is that
ANY CHANGE
IS POSITIVE”**

– Nitin Rakesh, CEO and President of Syntel

insurance, hospitals et cetera, but essentially they’re all enterprises with an existing business and a history spanning 30, 50, 200 years,” he says. “So when we say we help them deal with the two-speed world, what we’re really saying is a combination of two things: firstly that we know they have to adapt and embrace new technologies, and also they have to have the ability to speak to customers and find out

what they want. A lot of them have been using the same technology platforms for the last 25-30 years, and between us we have to find a way to preserve those investments and make the most of them. There’s a lot of

PROFILE



intelligence sitting in those systems.

“So how do you best help them manage existing IT applications? At the same time, you have to take them on the journey to becoming a digital enterprise: if you truly believe that every business is a digital business because of technology and disruption, you also have to believe every large enterprise in the domain will embrace technologies, turn them on their head, and become a digital company. We look at the best ways to help businesses manage through dynamics, lower

the costs of existing platforms, then take that saved money and use it to transform itself. It’s a self-funding cycle, and building this useable automation is what we’ve been working on for the last few years.”

Of course, any big change in an established business will meet with some resistance. According to Rakesh, resistance comes from mid-level staff: “My view on change is that any change is positive,” he explains. “The people at the top know where they need to go, and the young millennials they hire know

what the future is. The middle level is more resistant, but we're seeing some major initiatives from the top. Everybody needs to get more efficient and embrace technology. Everyone needs to innovate."

Syntel utilizes a variety of platforms to help its clients depending on the focus of their transformation. For a UK bank, for example, Syntel has spent the past 18 months helping to manage its existing platform whilst simultaneously launching a digital element to make it mobile-first. The idea, Rakesh says, is to reduce complexity.

"They had a branch service model which didn't work with the digital service model, and the latter has the advantage of giving the bank the ability to accept customers from anywhere. With this new digital process in place, the client began to see the average age of customers drop because they were suddenly attracting millennials, which they didn't previously because they were focused on the branch model."

Syntel thrives on helping companies to bring in younger customers, also aiding a large credit card company

to move from a plastic wallet to a digital one, and assisting an online payment business to almost move backwards and into the lending industry. Rakesh is more than aware that trends shift, and every company needs equal attention, meaning that Syntel too much keep ahead.

"Our business is a reflection of our clients," he says. "We are having to keep up and stay ahead so we can deliver to our customers and ensure we're able to invest in new areas, like developmental platforms and building skills more easily with better technology. We're doing dynamic development and are empowering people with more and more abilities. There's a number of moving parts in our business, and we have to constantly innovate to combat the digital disruption our clients are seeing."

It is this individual dedication and attention to detail which helps Syntel to attain and retain its 'customer for life strategy', the system by which the company chooses and nurtures clients. Rakesh admits that he is careful with who he and his team pick, because the business wishes

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to show value to every patron, and that only comes if Syntel truly can help: “Sometimes we have to say ‘no’ if we know we won’t be able to deliver,” he says. For those who are chosen, Syntel’s work is all about keeping companies relevant to their own customers by assisting them in their transformative journeys.

“We invest in them; we spend

“Our business is a reflection of our clients”

– Nitin Rakesh, CEO and President of Syntel

a lot of our capital investing with our customers,” he says. “It’s a relationship-driven approach, aligning our goals and objectives to theirs and taking a long-term view. These are basic elements of a partnership.

“How do you align incentives and objectives with the customer? If someone comes in for a consultation and I say ‘I don’t care about the outcome, I just want to make the

biggest number’, there’s no trust. If I say ‘this is my base rate and everything else is delivered flexibly to you’, that creates much more potential and heightens the relationship level. It builds trust; you invest in



those relationships and bring in the right talent. This is how we align our incentives and objectives with theirs, and that goes a long way.” ■

The iPhone 7 trend-setting or monopolization?

The iPhone is, without a doubt, the most popular single model of mobile in the developed world, and the distinctive branding gives it the unique ability to appear as elite as it is pervasive

Written by: **NELL WALKER**





WHEN ONE BUYS an iPhone, one is paying for an image - a particular minimalist colour scheme, an iconic symbol, and a certain degree of



quality to accompany it. Apple inspires customer loyalty in a way few technology companies are able to, and it has made strides in the world of mobile devices that many competitors have been unable to maintain. But could the increased exclusivity of the iPhone be seen as monopolization, outshining the company's genuine achievements?

The release of the iPhone 7 caused controversy regarding the lack of headphone jack. Apple has long manufactured its own headphones for use with the iPod, iPhone, and iPad, instantly recognisable by being vivid white – and when was the last time you saw an Apple fan using anything else?

iPhones are also now the only big cell to have their own brand of charger, which will differ depending on whether your mobile is pre or post-generation 5. While all other brands now use a universal adapter, iPhone sticks staunchly to its bright white cable. The devices are also favored regarding accessories, with cases and button covers readily available in way that they aren't for the wealth of Android or Windows models.



Apple's decision to take away the jack and offer \$159 wireless headphones confirms the exclusivity of its image. Many fans were underwhelmed by the real design compared with the fan-created concept art which featured smaller, neater, and more secure buds than the real things, which have inspired both mockery and apprehension over obvious security issues. Apple has attempted to sweeten the deal by assuring customers they can buy individual AirPods if one is lost, but the expense remains off-putting.

While iPhone customers can still use headphones via some complicated wiring wizardry, this latest evolution does appear to take away the last vestiges of choice. However, that does not necessarily negate the technological advancements – and they truly are advancements

– Apple has made. The iPhone brings in half of its revenue for good reason; it has reshaped its industry with features such as the voice-activated personal assistant known as Siri, the fingerprint sensor introduced as of the 5S, and increasingly large screens – all of which have since been replicated by other brands.

While Apple may not have plucked many of its features out of the R&D ether, it has used its expansive talent pool and influence to repurpose and perfect existing ideas, consistently influencing others. Apple did not invent multitouch, but it did bring make the technology prominent and accessible. Nor did it come up with the concept of an app store, the swipe-to-unlock

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function, or video calling, yet the iPhone is considered the gold standard for all of these things.

While other smartphone companies have emulated some features developed (if not created) by Apple, the iPhone remains unique. Rather than selling and running many models at varying levels of quality and complexity, Apple releases just one at a time and continuously works on it. Updates to both the iOS

and the handsets can be irksome, but the iPhone is like a much-loved game franchise for which one has to invest not only in new games, but newer consoles, in order to support the attachment to that brand.

The iPhone is a behemoth which cannot be overcome, and no amount of derisive AirPods memes will make a jot of difference to sales of the iPhone 7. Monopolization or not, Apple is unstoppable. Perhaps deservedly so. ■

TOP 10



Written by: **NELL WALKER**



Christmas commercials **OF ALL TIME**

Christmas commercials have a special way of getting under our skin and inspiring the kind of romanticism which gives us free license to spend, spend, spend. Here are our choices for the top 10 Christmas commercials of all time.



'holidays are coming'

Coca-Cola

THE BIGGEST DRINKS company in the world has never had to try too hard to draw attention to itself. The company began in 1886, creating medicinal drinks made with coca leaves and kola nuts in an effort for the inventor, Josh Pemberton, to wean himself off morphine. Coca-Cola has since become beyond iconic, something in both the background and foreground of every element of life.

Its best-known and best-loved commercial, featuring a brightly-lit Coca Cola truck rolling through a town and past bright-eyed children, has become synonymous with the season. It debuted in 1995 and has been revised several times since, but kept the brain-worm of a song intact, leaving one feeling almost unbearably ebullient.





'M&Ms meet Santa'

M&MS HAVE BEEN available to Americans since 1941, but it wasn't until 1954 that the instantly recognizable characters were introduced. Its 'spokescandies' have come to represent the company and ad campaigns have often linked into movie releases, keeping them relevant. The most famous mascots are the red M&M (milk chocolate, now voiced by Billy West) and the yellow (peanut

variety now voiced by JK Simmons).

The well-known 1996 commercial features the two interrupting Santa delivering gifts and being shocked to fainting that the other mythical character exists. It acts as a subtle advert for the holiday-themed green and red M&Ms, and at just 15 seconds long it is a short and sweet reminder of Christmases past.



**'Noelco Santa'**

NORELCO, NOW KNOWN as Philips or Philishave, was a personal grooming company starting in 1939 which mainly manufactured razors. Any popularity its electric shavers could gain was delayed by World War II, and didn't reach prominence until 1951. In the 1960s, a Christmas commercial was released, which

simply features a plasticine Santa riding the head of an electric razor across a snowy landscape. The ad then alters the company's name slightly to spell 'Noelco', and states "even our name spells 'merry Christmas'". The Norelco brand has slowly been phased out, but the advert is still remembered fondly.

PHILIPS**NORELCO**



'Campbell's snowman'

CAMPBELL'S SOUP COMPANY, commonly known simply as Campbell's, was founded in 1869 and its products – and branding – have gone largely unchanged ever since. The company was already a household name by the time Andy Warhol famously created a set of prints featuring Campbell's soup cans in 1962, but the event turned the business into an American icon.

In 1993, Campbell's released a Christmas advert which has stayed

with people across the US; a classic advert with a simple concept, this commercial fills the viewer with the cosiest holiday nostalgia. It shows a snowman enduring bitter weather before waddling its way into an idyllic winter home, hanging up its scarf, and sitting at the kitchen table as a steaming bowl of soup is placed in front of it. As the snowman begins to eat, the snow melts away, revealing a young boy who has been warmed through by the soup.





'We wish you a merry christmas'

HERSHEY KISSES WERE first introduced in 1907, characterized by their flat-bottomed teardrop shape and colorful foil wrappers, with novel strips of paper protruding from the tip to open them. There has been a large number of limited edition varieties available and several available year-round, and they remain the most recognisable Hershey's product around.

The classic Hershey's Kisses Christmas commercial has been running since 1989 and has remained unchanged ever since. It features Kisses arranged in a simple Christmas Tannenbaum formation, and ringing like hand-bells to tune of 'We Wish You a Merry Christmas'. As one of the least sentimental but still effective Christmas commercials of all time, it is ageless.



Folgers®



'Peter comes home'

SPEAKING OF SENTIMENTALITY, Folgers advertising is stuffed full of it, and its seasonal commercial is no exception. Created in 1850, the company set a course early on to become the largest-selling ground coffee brand in the US, and achieved that goal in the early 1990s. That status remains unchanged.

The most famous holiday commercial features a young man – Peter – returning to the family home for Christmas break in the early hours of the morning. He is

welcomed by his young sister and they begin making coffee, waking their parents, who welcome Peter warmly. This pure and innocent ad is more positively remembered than the almost-notorious 'brother and sister' version, for reasons obvious to any who have seen it.



MCDONALD'S IS UNDOUBTEDLY the most famous fast food company in the world, having infiltrated nearly every corner of the globe since 1940. Its mascot, Ronald McDonald, has been in circulation since 1963, and the company has not wavered from his bold clown image. While other characters have been introduced in the past, Ronald has mostly been shown simply interacting with children on his adventures.

One such example the well-loved ice skating commercial, in which a group of children trek through the snowy woodland and find Ronald McDonald skating around a frozen lake. They join in, watched by 2D cartoon animals, and have fun with Ronald until he skates away. This was released in the 1980s, a time when McDonald's was still marketing solely at children and before the health risks became such a concern.



'ice skating
Ronald
McDonald'





'home for the holidays'

THE BIGGEST CARD manufacturer in the US began in 1910, and has never hidden its agenda of tugging heartstrings worldwide. One of its most famous commercials, released in the 1990s, is not dissimilar to the Folgers concept, showing a family visiting some older family members on a snowy day. The house is filled with holiday decorations, and the main character – a young boy – starts off

excited and hopeful that his brother might also visit, but by the time he gets up to sing a Christmas song for his relatives, his confidence has waned. However, the brother arrives at the house and begins to sing with him, and thus the circle of emotional family-orientated sweetness is complete. A much longer advert at 2.5 minutes long, it certainly makes the heart ache.



TOYS "R" US

AMERICA'S FOREMOST TOY

retailer, Toys "R" Us, cashed in on the post-war baby boom by forming a store aimed specifically at kids in 1948. Its official 'spokesanimal', Geoffrey the giraffe (formerly and formally known as Dr. G. Raffé) made his debut in 1957, and he and his family feature heavily in many Toys "R" Us commercials.

The 1981 Christmas advert features

Geoffrey, wife, and child leaving their cosy home with a wood fire, driving through the snow in an open-top car (chilly, but necessary for those with long necks), and visiting Toys "R" Us to revel in the vast array of available products. A simple concept, but people very rarely need convincing to visit enormous chain toy stores.



'Geoffrey goes
Christmas
shopping'





'The song'

THE MULTINATIONAL TECH giant's products have saturated the world gradually since 1976, and show no signs of stopping. Its advertisements tend to be simple – because why complicate such clean, famed branding? – yet impressive. 2014's holiday commercial, known as 'the song', cleverly illustrates the idea of giving your loved ones something thoughtful rather than costly, whilst advertising both the MacBook and iPad.

The commercial shows a young woman discovering a vinyl recording of an elderly relative singing a song to her husband, to which she adds with her own voice and guitar playing, creating a duet with the aid of her laptop. On Christmas morning, the older woman discovers an iPad awaiting her and plays the song, reacting with absolute pleasure. With a touching theme and no dialogue, the commercial is sure to be a future classic.





Hospitality

No alarms *and* No surprises

Texas-based budget hospitality group is right on target for its ambitious expansion

Written by **Hazel Davis**
Produced by **Tom Ventura**



If you've ever stayed in a Motel 6 property you won't have been surprised with chocolates on your pillow (which probably only comes in one grade of softness). You won't have been spoiled for choice when it comes to breakfast items and you won't have top-of-the-range bathroom items. What you will have, though, is exactly what you thought you were getting when you booked, and that's what G6 Hospitality LLC has built the brand's reputation on.

"We hold our standards pretty tight," says Jon Bateman, Vice President Design and Construction. "Our rooms are very important to us. Our guests expect a clean, comfortable room at an affordable rate and that's the value proposition we offer consistently throughout the network."

G6 Hospitality LLC owns, operates and franchises more than 1,400 economy lodging locations under its iconic Motel 6 and Studio 6 Extended Stay brands. Headquartered in Dallas (Carrollton), Texas, the company employs nearly 10,000 team members across the US and Canada with projects in every state in the USA

including Alaska. The programme uses consultants and associations to train on the latest design construction and safety methods.

For franchises, G6 uses a prototype that allows flexible design and lets the franchisee configure their property in a shape that conforms to their site needs. The prototype is then designed with construction costs and profitable operations in mind and G6 provides the prototypical drawings for flexible layouts and sizes, preliminary site sketches and construction support.

"We hold our standards pretty tight"

- Jon Bateman,
Vice President Design and Construction

Jon Bateman
Vice President of Design
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Jake J. Maldonado, Owner

When the Blackstone Group bought the company back in 2012, says Bateman, “they committed around \$0.5bn in capital to renovate the corporate network. That was planned out over a five-year period. At the same time, the enterprise has a goal of growing the brand and hit somewhere in the neighborhood of more than 2,000 properties for the total network, and we are currently adding about 150-175 new properties a year.” In fact, he adds, the 500 plus corporate locations will be complete in spring 2017.

“There have been challenges, for sure,” says Bateman. “When you have a network as large as ours, half a billion dollars sounds like a lot of money but when you’re talking 500 plus properties, you have got to get creative on how you spend that money because, at the end of the day, you’re not going to be able to do everything you’d like.”

Motel 6 and Studio 6, the iconic brands managed by G6 Hospitality, are economy brands so, says Bateman: “Everything we do has got to be value driven. We’re great at going out to our





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"On the construction side," says Bateman, "We've found a very good niche of vendor. The midsize self-performing general contractor usually does very well for our brands."

The G6 design is a big part of what distinguishes it from other brands. Says Bateman, "I think the fact that we're able to design a very cost-effective platform for our franchisees is one of our key differentiators in the economy segment. We also have a very efficient operating model that

has been very successful for us."

Bateman was hired for the role in 2014, he says: "One of the things that excited me most was how we're changing the face of the economy segment. If you look at our rooms, they're new rooms with wood-effect flooring, granite countertops in the bathroom, flat-screen TVs, modern furniture and contemporary soft goods. This is different than what you would think of as a typical economy room."

One of the key challenges for budget brands is getting new customers, says Bateman. "We've got these beautiful new rooms and if you're a guest that's never stayed with us and you're driving by, you wouldn't know. How do you get



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that guest that has never seen inside our rooms to realise the difference when they walk through the door?”

The company has started upgrading some of its exteriors to match the interiors. It also opened nearly 10 brand-new Motel 6 or Studio 6 locations this year with another 20 properties planned for next year. Bateman explains, “Motel 6 is your traditional road-side motel with a limited service of a hotel room, flat-screen TV, etc. We don’t provide the extra amenities offered at other hotels like conditioner or breakfast. Studio 6, our extended stay lodging option, is geared more towards business, contractors or people who are on a job for three to six

months, and thus our locations are furnished with a kitchenette, dishes, refrigerator, and enough space to provide the comfort of home while away from home. “Everything you’d need to live comfortably for an extended period of time.”

Some new franchisees come in having operated a mid-scale brand, offering breakfast and other amenities that take considerable overheads. Says Bateman: “We get them up and running as a new and renovated property and they find that with less overheads and less services they can work less and make the same amount or more money.”

Bateman adds: “Several of our franchisees that have jumped on board with similar designs to ours.

They really recognize the value in a well-designed, cost



New construction franchise location in Polar Bluff, MO

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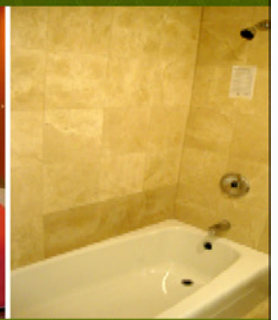


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effective building and an effective operating model. It's a good opportunity for both the franchisee and a network to improve its image and offer a better value proposition."

Design highlights for Bateman include the company's Denver corporate location. "We really redid the entire face of the property and it's a pretty dramatic difference from before," he says.

"We're pretty fortunate that we have got such a great group of franchisees that have really partnered with us

“Our guests expect a clean, comfortable room at an affordable rate **AND THAT’S THE VALUE PROPOSITION WE OFFER consistently throughout the network**”

– Jon Bateman, Vice President Design and Construction

and seen the value of renovating the properties,” Bateman adds. But still there are going to be hiccups along the way: “There’s always going to be challenges when you renovate approximately 150-175 properties a year. You might have permitting issues, construction issues, financing issues and any other variety of challenges pop up. But this is completely typical when you’re dealing with these kinds of numbers.

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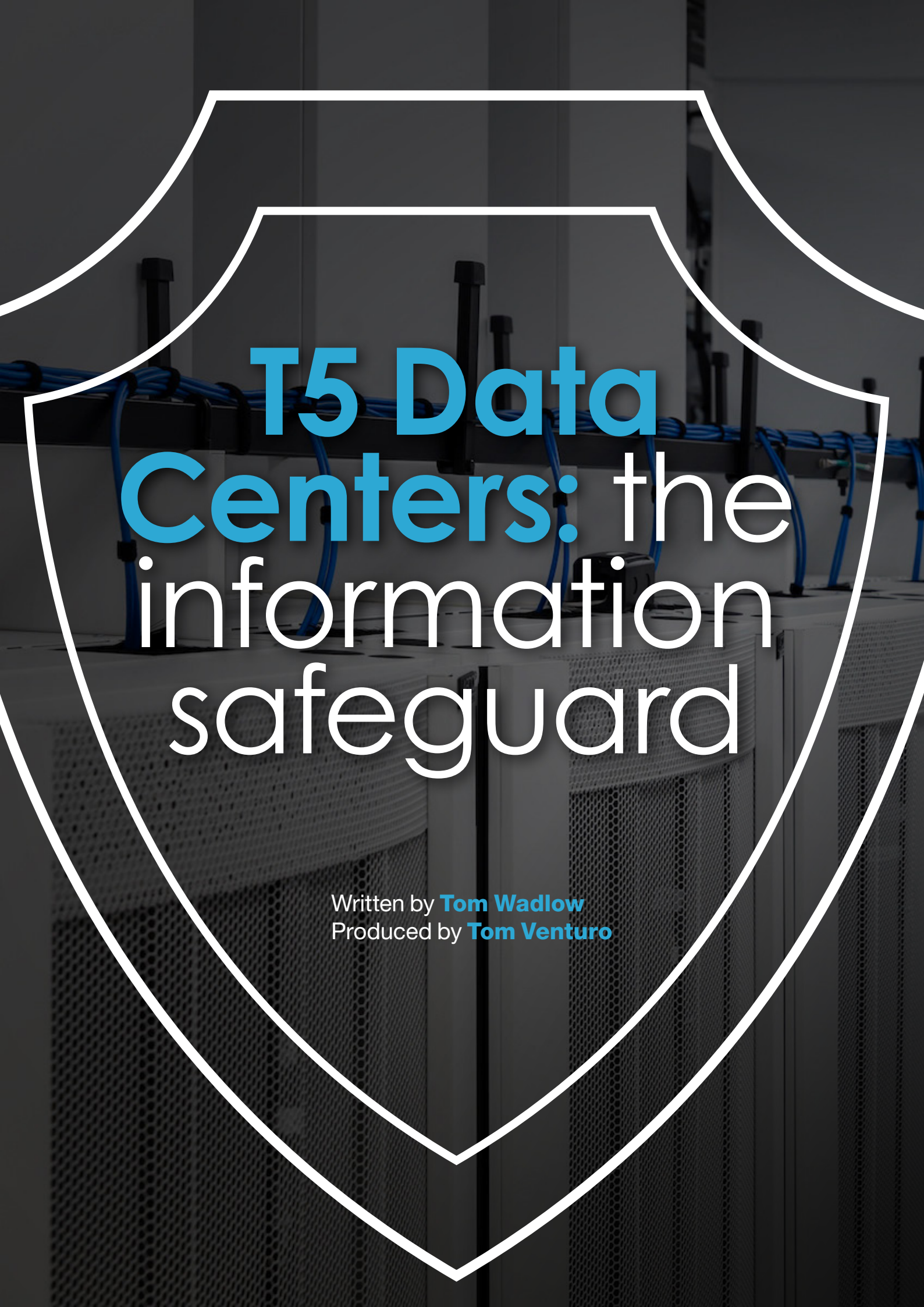
Through it all, one of the things the group prides itself on, says Bateman, “is that everything we do is in support of our operators. We have got a great group of project managers, architects, engineers, and support staff that can provide guidance to our franchise partners. Our team is here to provide project support to both our Corporate and Franchise Operators.” ■

Denver, CO M6 after exterior renovation



Franchise Studio 6 new construction location in Muskogee, OK exterior





T5 Data Centers: the information safeguard

Written by **Tom Wadlow**
Produced by **Tom Venturo**



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Data has arguably become one of the world's most precious commodities. The sheer volume of information stored and network/computer activity occurring within a data center facility has grown dramatically.

Enter T5 Data Centers and its nine state-of-the-art facilities spread across the USA. Though the dramatic escalation of data storage may feel like a relatively recent phenomenon, T5's executive team has been working together to deliver best-in-class solutions since 1995.

Over the past 20 years it has been responsible for delivering or operating more than 100 mission critical facilities spanning more than 11 million square feet of space. T5 prides itself on bespoke solutions and aligning its own principles with those of its clients, which include some of the largest companies in the world.

Solutions and services

T5's portfolio of solutions and services is extensive and flexible. Its five main solutions comprise colocation, wholesale leasing, build-to-suit

T5 DATA CENTERS

programs, powered shells and sale lease-back. Services include network, smart hands and third party operations, all controlled and directed by comprehensive compliance.

The latter is of critical importance to clients operating in industries including healthcare, insurance, retail

and financial services,

where personal data protection is of

paramount importance to a company's sound

operation and external reputation.

A key figure in the solutions team is Chief Development Officer Jimmy Bailey, responsible for the design, engineering, construction and commissioning efforts for every T5 project. It is his role to ensure that customers' projects are delivered on time and within budget.

As well as deploying its data storage solutions, T5 is also a proven expert

in building and managing data center buildings. From procuring first class equipment to carrying out data center upgrades and extensions, the T5 team is also on hand to provide expert consulting and project management support.

T5 Facilities Management

provides on-site mission critical services to data center owners.

Not only does T5FM operate the company's own sites, it also operates

data centers for Fortune 500 companies in

sectors including financial services,

technology, retail, aerospace, and energy.



“Chicago is becoming an increasingly hot market for reliable data center services”

– Tim Bright,
Executive Vice President
of Wholesale/
Enterprise Markets

Expansion to Chicago

T5FM has been rising to a new challenge since the summer. In August, T5 expanded its own network of data centers to nine, following the opening of T5@

Chicago. The company bought the 208,000 square foot Tier III facility, which is located in the Elk Grove Village suburb of the city.

T5@Chicago is currently operational and partially occupied.

Additional capacity is being added to provide server-ready space for future customers. The building features a baseline Tier III infrastructure with an N+1 electrical and mechanical topology, secure private data halls available from 540kW to 9.0MW, and the ability to easily customize operational controls in each data hall to accommodate each customers' unique data center services requirements.

Speaking at the time, Tim Bright, Executive Vice

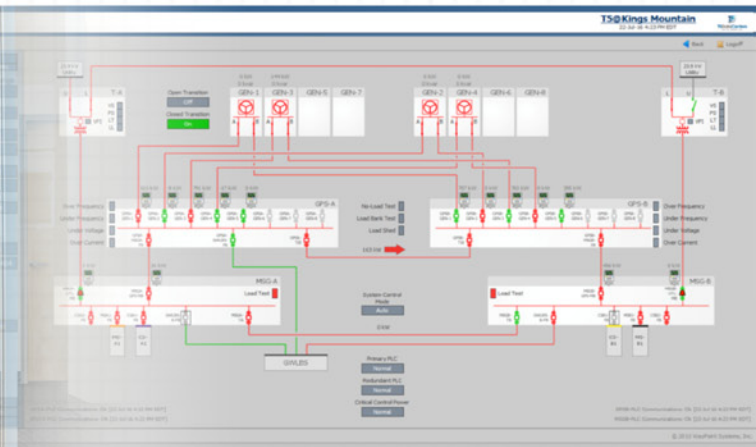


T5@Chicago

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**Mike
Casey**

“The M&O Stamp of Approval provides validation that our T5@Atlanta data center has world-class staffing and management protocols”

– Mike Casey, President of T5FM

President of Wholesale/Enterprise Markets for T5 Data Centers, said: “Chicago is becoming an increasingly hot market for reliable data center services. We were fortunate to find an available, operational facility with the data center architecture and quality consistent with T5 Data Center standards. With this acquisition, we can offer Chicagoland regional customers move-in ready data center capacity, customizable and expandable to meet any need.”

In addition to the existing 208,000 square foot, LEED Silver certified

building, T5@Chicago can be expanded on the adjacent, four-acre parcel by up to 28 MW.

Comprehensive coverage

Sitting alongside the new site in Chicago are several other state-of-the-art facilities spreading across the country. These include data centers in Dallas, Colorado Springs, New York, Portland, Charlotte, and Los Angeles.

Atlanta houses arguably the finest example of T5’s best-in-class facilities,



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described by the firm as ‘a purpose-built, server-ready multi-tenant data center offering concurrently maintainable infrastructure to support companies with various data suite sizes and density requirements from 10 racks to over 2,500’.

It is a 105,000 square foot bastion for compliance, assuring clients’ data are safe by meeting the stringent requirements of HIPAA, HITECH and PCI, creating a safe haven to support crucial IT functions of many blue chip companies. Clients are provided their own autonomous suites that are separated from one another by slab-to-deck fire-rated walls.

In September the site received the much coveted Uptime Institute’s Management & Operations (M&O) Stamp of Approval.

The M&O assessment process evaluates data center staffing, organization, training practices; preventive maintenance, operating conditions, as well as planning, management, and coordination practices for data center resources.

On receipt of the award, Mike Casey, President of T5FM said: “The M&O Stamp of Approval provides validation that our T5@Atlanta data center has world-class staffing and management protocols. We agree with the Uptime Institute’s notion that operational and management issues are fundamental to data center operations, and that with the right people and procedures, you can minimize risk and reduce operating costs. In fact, we formed T5 Facilities Management as an independent operation

T5@Atlanta



T5 DATA CENTERS

because we recognize the critical value of M&O.”

Though specifically granted for T5@Atlanta, the company is planning to request Uptime Institute certification for other data centers in its portfolio.

T5 is not stopping in Atlanta however, for another purpose-built data center is on its way in Dallas, a market where T5 has already seen success. T5@Dallas III will deliver 10.75 critical megawatts of capacity when it opens in Q2 of 2017, with leasing underway.

Partner power

The company also draws on the expertise of partner companies in order to deliver industry-leading solutions to clients.

One such partner is STULZ Air Technology Systems, experts in data center cooling and able to provide anywhere from three to 730 kW cooling capacity. Another is Hood Patterson & Dewar, specialist in data center and mission critical facility commissioning, while WayPoint Systems also provides



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The T5 Executive Team

GET TO KNOW US



mission critical services to T5.

By continuing to work with and harness the knowledge of various companies operating in their own niche within data center operations and processes, T5 will no doubt continue to provide flexible, efficient and best-in-class services to businesses all over the USA.

Its growing network of data centers, which continue to pick up industry-recognised accolades, are a safe bet for safeguarding critical data for enterprises big, medium and small. ■



T5DataCenters™



BUILDING TECHNOLOGY to make your business work

Written by **John O'Hanlon**
Produced by **Tom Venturov**

PlanNet is a young business – a business for today – constantly reinventing itself as the market changes to keep data flowing, systems working, and helping businesses formulate and implement their IT strategies

Dan McNary loves to start and grow new businesses. Back in the early 1990s he learned the business of construction project

management as a senior engineer with Bechtel. But by 1998 he had found an outlet for his entrepreneurial passion by starting a new business within



the giant Syska Hennessy Group. “I enjoy creating new businesses, and creating new divisions within existing businesses that can leverage the skills of the organization in a new way and create new revenue streams for that business,” he says. That is why he was the ideal person to build out and lead a new division for PlanNet in 2011, when founder Steve Miano decided it was time to move forward from technology

consulting
into data
center general
contracting.

Now CEO of all three PlanNet companies (PlanNet Consulting, PlanNet Design & Construction and PlanNet Works) McNary is in his element as head of a company that has evolution as its strategy. “When Steve Miano founded the company in 2001, the technology consulting industry was quite new and he worked with Fortune 500 companies to help them optimize low-voltage systems in a building, the structured computer cabling, the telecom, phone switch, the AV

components and the security to all be designed consistent with their business needs.” The business of PlanNet at that time was design consulting around workplace technology, supporting architects and contractors in this specialized field.

Expanding with demand

It’s still working effectively in that space, having recently completed a technology consulting project for Martin Luther King Jr. Hospital in Los Angeles; the new hospital required structured cabling to run its communications, security, nurse call and other systems. However, it morphed into other areas.

In 2004 PlanNet moved into the data consulting field, helping

organizations like Mentor Graphics, Safeco Insurance and other similar corporations to develop strategies around their data portfolio. The company, it’s worth noting, has never thought it a good idea to expand by acquisition. Its strategy has been to identify market needs and grow solutions organically. Data center consulting remains a valuable business for PlanNet, he says.

When McNary came in to add a new design and construction division for the business, the organization took a bold step into becoming a general contractor, construction manager and builder of data centers for large corporate clients, and colocation data centers (or ‘colos’ – independently run data center ‘hotels’

**“We build technology
to make our customer’s
business work”**

– Daniel McNary, CEO

where any large or small business can rent space as a way of outsourcing their servers and connectivity into a secure and dependable facility). This service expanded last year to include PlanNet Works, a design and build integration service that leverages the company's consulting expertise to assess the needs of a client that is building or expanding a high technology space, providing them with a guaranteed price upfront and installing the equipment they need.

By never standing still, PlanNet has achieved quite remarkable growth. From a turnover of around \$3 million in its first year, it had grown to \$8 million by 2010 and this year expects to hit \$24 million. Through its strategy of growing new organic businesses to meet demand in the marketplace it has tripled its revenues in five years.

Today PlanNet employs around 100 people, equally divided between technology consultants, design engineers and construction and implementation specialists.

McNary estimates that two thirds of the entire company's work is now in general contracting as opposed to



in

Daniel McNary, CEO

Dan McNary has focused his 25 year career learning about his client's business and technology needs and building solutions for these needs. He wants to know what keeps them up at night. He is also constantly investigating technologies, systems and innovative techniques emerging in the data center industry to help solve data center problems and allow clients to return their focus to their own business demands.

Dan uses his client-focused experience to lead a team of designers and construction professionals in developing facility infrastructure and building solutions that specifically address the client's business and technology issues. Dan's professional experience includes responsibility for the engineering and construction of some of the largest and most complex technical data center projects in the country.

In the last 15 years, Dan has focused solely on working with fortune 500 clients providing project development, site selection, mechanical and electrical engineering and general contracting/construction management services of mission critical facilities.



Global telecom data center

technology consulting. The business is multi-faceted by design, bringing a construction component, a technology consulting component and a data center strategy component as the client wishes. “We build technology to make our customer’s business work.”

Strategic partnerships

Large companies these days are constantly having to make vital investment decisions around IT. “Moving from on-premises servers to the cloud or a colo has created the opportunity for us. We help customers that have large data center and technology portfolios to evaluate their options and translate their business needs into a technology strategy that works for them.” PlanNet is trusted by the very largest IT companies in Silicon Valley and around the world, as well as telecoms giants like CenturyLink to implement their data center construction.

“We are also the quality assurance and safety engineers for these sites. Our construction business is formulated to deliver the service the customer needs, whether it’s general contracting, construction management of engineering assessments, or just staff augmentation in the construction management field.”

There’s no standard way to approach a project. For one client which can’t be named but is building leading-edge data centers throughout the United States, PlanNet is acting as construction manager for a new \$300 million data center in southern Virginia, directing the complete build out of the data center site work, shell, and MEP systems. It’s a large, long-term phased project, and the team

leading the program planning, construction phasing and incremental commissioning is bringing lean construction and quality assurance skills to the job. “Clients come to us either as a

Type of Industry

Technology consultancy and implementation



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general contractor or to renovate live data center space.” It takes a very special background and skill set to work on electrical and mechanical systems within an operational data center without disrupting the systems on which its service level agreements (SLAs) depend.

About a third of the work is done in California, but clients expect PlanNet to look after them in other places, so it now has offices in Phoenix, Dallas, Chicago, Portland and Clarksville, Virginia, as well as doing a

“Clients come to us either as a general contractor or to renovate live data center space”

– Daniel McNary, CEO

considerable amount of work over the border in Montreal where it has helped build four data centers. Contracts with major clients like Mentor Graphics have taken it to Ireland where it designed and oversaw the construction of a data center, a mirror facility to another in Hillsboro Oregon.

Addressing multiple markets

There are far too many completed and live projects to list; even too many different business areas. In every case though, the relationship has to be a partnership in which PlanNet and its customers work out the best system together. For example, it

does a lot of work for Daimler Trucks North America (owned by Daimler AG who also owns Mercedes-Benz), which relies heavily on PlanNet to understand how to utilize colo services and the cloud: “On the corporate side we have a real opportunity to translate business needs and help clients understand financial impacts and opportunities from these options. They want us to be their advocate and help them as a business partner to negotiate the right space, with the right partner, over the right technology.”

PlanNet leadership (pictured from left to right): Gary Davis, Dan McNary, Steve Miano, Bob Otoupalik



PLANNET DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION

A lot of the time it is about smart buildings in smart cities. One major partner is building hotels and mixed-use facilities in California. PlanNet, along with performing the technology program management for all aspects of the technology systems, provides low voltage systems planning and design and implementation oversight for these facilities. In the case of one hotel in Hollywood it is also acting as the procurement agent for its hospitality systems including property management,

the point-of-sale system, Wi-Fi and the hotel service optimization systems. “We are helping them strategize around IT and how their hotel can create opportunities for their clients and we are installing that IT as an integrator,” says McNary.

As the landscape shifts, PlanNet will shift. The big movement in the industry right now is data center consolidation. “Over the coming five to seven years I wouldn’t be surprised to see the number of data center players come down from 25

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to maybe five. I think we will also see the large technology companies like Facebook, Google, Amazon Web Services, HPE and Microsoft leaning more on the colo space to build their data center capacity. For us, all that is an opportunity. Upgrading is a

continuous process in the data center space, and that is just what we do really well. The facility infrastructure needs to change rapidly: a data center is a huge capital outlay, and we can ensure they upgrade effectively without impacting their SLA.” ■



Year founded

2001

Number of employees

100

Revenue

\$24
Million





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JLL: Guardian of information

Jason Bell, Vice President of Data Center and Technology Services at JLL, describes the fast changing world of data and technology services

Written by **Jackie Cosh**
Produced by **Tom Ventura**



With over 62,000 employees in 280 offices in more than 80 countries, JLL (Jones Lang LaSalle) is well placed to advise on an ever changing data center industry where changes to data sovereignty and cyber security in one country impacts across the globe. From modest origins in London in 1783, JLL has grown from a family auctioneers, through many mergers and acquisitions, to become a

Fortune 500 company, with a record gross revenue of \$6 billion in 2016.

Now a global professional services and investment management firm specializing in real estate, JLL's expert teams provide integrated services to clients seeking increased value by owning, occupying, developing or investing in real estate.

Jason Bell is Vice President of Data Center and Technology Services and took on this role in October 2015, after



having built up a successful career in IT services over more than 20 years. Coming from a leading provider of wholesale colocation and knowing the market well, he was impressed by the mature, global data center practice at JLL and could see why the company has been so successful. Bell says: “The intellectual capital, JLL’s investment in its global platform and latest technology, and geographic coverage has positioned JLL to where it is in the marketplace.”

JLL’s Technology Real Estate and Data Center Practice provides advisory services that support client’s data center, 3rd party colocation and cloud selections. Furthermore, JLL offers a full portfolio of IT services with strategic alliance partner, Hidalgo Communications, who assists JLL in providing IT network and managed services over a vendor neutral platform that aligns with the client’s IT strategy.

This combination has a successful global track record of generating IT and real estate savings for corporations by completing a comprehensive diagnostic on their IT and real estate costs. They



Jason Bell **Vice President**

Jason Bell is Vice President in the Technology Services Group in JLL’s New York Office where he is responsible for providing Data Center, Colocation, Cloud, Managed Services and Network Services to JLL’s global client base. Mr. Bell provides mission critical infrastructure, data center and cloud solutions and strategies ensuring optimal cost structure and operational efficiencies that align with each client’s security thresholds. In addition, he advises clients on network and managed services that support client’s connectivity in terms of latency, cost, scalability and interoperability.



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have successfully represented clients such as IBM, JP Morgan Chase, Verizon and Level 3 Communications to name a few, saving companies millions of dollars by implementing a comprehensive diagnostic and strategic plan.

Bell says JLL creates an IT Playbook based on the client's IT strategy supporting the various business needs. Areas of evaluation include IT and application assessment, security and compliance audit and an application and physical infrastructure utilization review. Once completed, JLL and their client reviews this evaluation and then the selection process starts on choosing the optimal data center and cloud portfolio.

From cloud adoption to data sovereignty, the data center industry is experiencing a host of new change drivers, all while it continues to explode with vigorous growth. Bell mentions: "We are seeing complexity

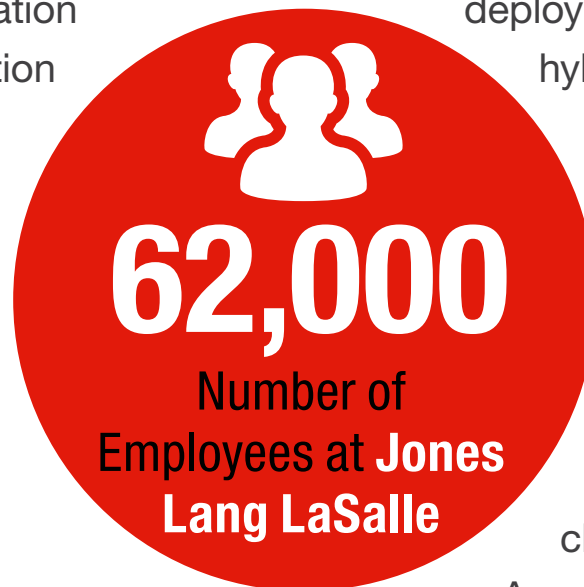
in the market with this explosive growth. JLL helps companies simplify the choices in the marketplace for colocation and cloud services.

Bell explains: "Security is very important in terms of how clients are adopting the cloud. Today, you are seeing more businesses being vulnerable to cyber security attacks which plays into what type of cloud deployment- private cloud, hybrid cloud or public cloud, best completes each business application.

We also see clients needing to connect to the largest technology cloud providers-

Amazon Web Services, Microsoft, Google, IBM Softlayer, and Oracle Cloud to name a few as part of the client's cloud strategy to support the client's needs for agility, scalability and on-demand needs.

When discussing global deployments, data sovereignty is an issue which now comes up often. Data sovereignty, in short, data laws



pertaining to specific countries, has been brought to the fore since the UK voted to leave the EU. Brexit is keeping many busy, working out whether data in UK will still be able to connect and migrate to other parts of Europe, and the impact this will have globally. As Bell says: “That is another big determinant in terms of where deployments are made.”

Globally, the multi-tenant data center market is expected to rise at an annual growth rate of 12.1% between 2016 and 2018. North America remains the most competitive with 44% of the global data center market.

The cloud managed services market is predicted to grow an annual growth rate of 16.6% through 2021, from \$35.54 billion in 2016 to \$76.73 billion in 2021. The top cloud providers are expected to pull in \$120 billion by 2020, up by an annual 61% growth rate from \$11 billion in 2015.”

In a rapidly changing world clients have high expectations. “One of the

things that really excites me is that JLL has the resources, the tools and platforms to align with the changes in IT, real estate and technology, as things are quickly evolving every day. Our clients are looking to optimize and we have the platforms to allow them to make accurate decisions in line with this evolving change.”

Following on from JLL’s recent acquisition of BRG, a leader in workplace technology services, the company is going from strength to strength and Bell is looking forward to what the future brings. “The exciting reason why I am in this industry is that there has been double digit annual growth in data center, colocation and cloud industries. Cloud adoption and the size of the data center industry are predicted to both double for the next five years. Users and providers are spreading out across multiple locations, bringing new technologies onboard, and they are all looking for flexibility and agility to succeed.” ■





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Written by: **Nye Longman**
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From the moment he became CIO of Texas Trust Credit Union (TXTCU) just over three years ago, Ron Dinwiddie had his work cut out. Faced with legacy systems, ageing equipment and under-qualified staff, he was tasked with not only putting out fires, but rolling out a completely new approach to IT across the entire company. Nearing the end of its transformation, TXTCU is reaping the benefits that come with a next generation IT landscape while ensuring that this translates to increased opportunities for its members. Business Review USA & Canada speaks to Dinwiddie to get a closer look at how a company-wide IT transformation was delivered, and how this has set up the company for growth.

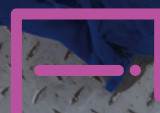
“Our CEO had been here for two years at the time,” says Dinwiddie, recalling when he first took on the role. “He took over from a CEO that was just dedicated to increasing net worth – if a computer turned on, then it was good enough to keep. There was pretty much no investment in technology.

“When I talk about building IT infrastructure, it was everything - we had to rebuild the internal network and we went to a completely virtual environment. When I arrived, there were 45 servers spread across many locations – every branch had its own server.”

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Operations

Texas Trust's footprint covers a considerable portion of the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex – it offers full coverage in Dallas, Tarrant and Henderson counties and the majority of Ellis and Johnson counties. Personal banking members can select from a range of services, including online banking, IRAs, loans, credit and investment services. Businesses can also take advantage of the company's diverse offering and benefit from checking, loans, merchant services and a range of online capabilities. A modern IT infrastructure has played a vital role in ensuring that the differing needs of its members are met to the highest possible standard.

Network

TXTCU recognized that there

were problems, but it took the breadth of Dinwiddie's experience developed through years of experience in the industry to identify them and get things back on track. He says: "It took 30 minutes to watch a five minute video on the Internet. Sometimes files would not open. If you went to a website, it would just spin and you would have to close the

"In just three years, Dinwiddie and his team have transformed the IT department at Texas Trust from a brake on growth to a fit-for-purpose operation"

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– Ron Dinwiddie, Chief Information Officer, Texas Trust Credit Union

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browser and reopen it. They knew they had a lot of problems but not exactly what they were.”

The pace of change quickly gathered momentum but, again, it was his fresh insight that set the wheels in motion: “The credit union had hired a network person, but his solution to the network issue was to increase bandwidth. It wasn’t a bandwidth issue from what they described during my interview,” Dinwiddie adds.

“I discovered that computers and servers were old but the underlying issue was the infrastructure – the network. We quickly identified that the people who set up the network – who knows when – years before, set it up as if it were a home network.

“That was not an easy project,” Dinwiddie explains. “It’s like changing all the tires on an 18 wheeler going at 100 miles an hour – it can’t stop and it can’t slow down. And you have to change them one at a time.”

The power of people

In order to fully realize his vision to modernize the business, Dinwiddie needed to source the right talent, both in terms of internal employees and external partners working with Texas Trust. Those working in the IT department had to be up to speed with the latest technology and processes: “They were putting band aids across the organization when we needed fixes,” he explains. He completely

“It’s like changing all the tires on an 18 wheeler going at 100 miles an hour – it can’t stop and it can’t slow down. And you have to change them one at a time”

– Ron Dinwiddie, CIO



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rethought job descriptions across the organization – he created, re-wrote and, in some instances, eliminated roles in line with skill requirements.

“We now have what I consider to be a great staff,” Dinwiddie adds. “People have the width of professional skillsets they need. We can send them to training and the CEO understands it is what we need technology-wise. When we are going to be changing or adding new technology I will find professional training for them.”

“Nearing the end of its transformation, Texas Trust is reaping the benefits that come with a next generation IT landscape”

Ron’s task has been an ongoing challenge and his passion for getting technology at TXTCU to a stage where it can support the company’s growth, rather than hinder it as it had previously, has played a hugely important role in the development of the organization. This involves a changing of mindset, being forward thinking, and getting the entire team to understand its position regarding the end user and a service based mentality from the technology side of the business.

As part of a carefully thought-out strategy, Ron not only worked with his team inside TXTCU, but also with some key external partners who were able to take on some of the functions previously handled by the IT department, freeing up his full-time employees to work on more mission critical aspects of the business. Ron’s experience and instinct on when and how to outsource has been a fundamental part of such a successful transformation.



Jim Minge, CEO and Dr. Marcelo Cavazos Arlington

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“Instead of one guy taking care of 15 locations and 200 devices, I now have a company I can call that can send a person out to each location”

– Ron Dinwiddie, CIO

Partnerships with a number of key players have played a major role in the transformation – moving over to Juniper for Ethernet switches is a key example of this: “They all have a common operating system so we didn’t have to learn an OS for different models, configuring them was easy. The switches themselves even saved me some money,” he adds.

Once the decision was made to use Juniper, the Trust engaged a local provider, M&S Technologies, to request some senior network engineering assistance to help with the implementation and configuration. Dinwiddie explains: “We were

changing our entire IP scheme as well as upgrading the switches, M&S provided two excellent engineers that were indispensable in getting this project completed in a timely and proper manner.”

TXTCU also needed to adopt next generation firewalls - Dinwiddie had encountered Solutionary (now NTT Security) in several previous professional circumstances and knew they could be relied on to provide responsive, 24/7 firewall provision and monitoring that would enable threats to be logged and identified instantaneously. “I have a lot of trust in them. They’ve done an excellent job,” he says.



245

Number of employees
at **Texas Trust
Credit Union**



Ron Dinwiddie, CIO

By partnering with Adapt, the company replaced a common phone system and what was essentially pens, paper and log books for trying to account for member support through the Call Center with a modular unified communications system (UCS). “We can now look at how many calls an individual received, the length, what it was about - if someone gets an abusive caller, the employee can raise an electronic flag so a manager can get on and monitor,” Dinwiddie says. “It has enhanced the communications throughout the organization.”

Dahill Office Technologies has helped Texas Union completely overhaul its printing functionalities – after Dahill either replaced or updated printers and copiers, it was then able to provide ongoing service support – an aspect of the relationship that has brought numerous benefits according to Dinwiddie. “Instead of one guy taking care of 15 locations and 200 devices, I now have a

company I can call that will send a service technician out to the location requiring support.”

In just three years, Dinwiddie and his team have transformed the IT department at TXTCU from a brake on growth to a fit-for-purpose operation that enables daily operations to run seamlessly while giving the company room to grow. “We intend to be a billion dollar company by the end of the year,” Dinwiddie says. “We continue to look at expanding. We can expand quicker with the new technology and be more flexible – we can adjust to new technology much faster than in the past. We are prepared to move forward and everyone’s happy.”



NORTH AMERICAN POWER BUSINESS: A powerful partner

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Written by **John O'Hanlon**
Produced by **Tom Venturo**



LOGIN

WELCOME



As we noted in these pages a year ago, North American Power's residential business, founded in 2009, has been a runaway success and continues to grow, having already served more than a million electricity and natural gas customers across twelve states. Since Deryl Brown's arrival as CEO in 2014, however, the company has stated its intention to also enter the Commercial and Industrial (C&I) market in order to further grow and diversify its business. This year, the company realized this intention by entering the Texas C&I market under its new C&I brand, 'North American Power Business', and is already making a big first impression.

In many respects, North American Power has taken the ingredients for success from its residential business and applied them to North American Power Business. While the management team for its residential business is stacked with individuals possessing decades upon decades of combined industry

experience, the same can also be said of North American Power Business' leadership.

North American Power Business is led by chief executive officer Deryl Brown, chief information officer Jim Crysdale, chief sales officer Kris Hertel, chief operations officer Jason Bear and senior business development manager Taylor Brown. Together, this team boasts over 150 years committed to leading and innovating in the retail energy space. Moreover, this team was largely responsible for starting two other enormously successful C&I companies.

North American Power Business, headquartered in Bedford, Texas, for the most part operates independently of its North American Power retail business based in Norwalk, Connecticut. Although NAPB has a different leadership structure and home base, the new C&I affiliate intends to mirror the rapid growth that the residential side of the company has enjoyed. The company's



Deryl Brown, Chief Executive Officer

Deryl Brown is responsible for North American Power Business' overall strategy and composition. He is a seasoned energy business executive with a proven track record of value

creation in the competitive retail energy industry. He has over 40 years of experience in the retail energy industry, which includes strategy development, engineering, operations, customer service, technology, marketing, and sales.

confidence to do so resides in NAPB's leadership, which has been there and done it all before.

Energized Partnerships

While North American Power's residential business is entirely focused on the end user, North American Power Business has a slightly different strategy. With gas and electricity making up a major proportion of overheads across

the board from manufacturing to IT and data heavy businesses, and the need to comply with complex regulations across different states and jurisdictions, big business invariably turns to consultants, aggregators and energy brokers to obtain the best advice and the best deals available.

In fact, more than 60 percent of energy transactions in the United States are done through

a broker or consultant. This is because brokers and consultants can not only find a great price for a business' energy supply, but many also advise on energy efficiency tactics such as energy management systems, equipment and lighting retrofitting as well as renewable energy sourcing. Several brokers and consultants also specialize in selling ancillary products and services that assist customers in achieving LEED compliance for their facilities.

North American Power Business' leadership therefore understands the importance of focusing on these key players in the market,

“The portal is our conduit to get the data from the broker to price the customer”

supplying them with the power their clients need, in the way they need it and with outstanding transparency and flexibility when it comes to pricing, billing and commissions. NAPB approaches the market almost exclusively through these third-party brokers. “The brokers we work with, we call them sales partners, are vital to our company's success,” chief sales officer Kris Hertel said. “As a result, our value proposition to potential sales partners needs to be just as strong as our value proposition to the end user.”

Powered by Best-in-Class Technology

So, what is that powerful value proposition that is already attracting top brokers in the industry? According to Hertel, in addition to its highly experienced management team that knows what brokers want and need, it's North American Power Business' technology that is the competitive advantage in the marketplace.



Kris Hertel, Chief Sales Officer

Kris Hertel is responsible for leading North American Power Business' customer acquisition channels throughout the US. He brings 25 years of sales and marketing experience to NAPB, including 17 years of retail energy industry experience. Most recently, Kris served as Chief Marketing & Sales Officer for Pro Power Providers, a Circular Energy company. He also served as Vice President of North American Commercial markets for Hudson Energy, a Just Energy company.



Jason Bear, Chief Operations Officer

Jason Bear is responsible for leading the middle office and back office functions of North American Power Business in all markets. He brings more than 15 years of customer operations and IT experience to NAPB, including 12 years of retail energy industry experience. Most recently, Jason served as Vice President of Operations for Pro Power Providers, a Circular Energy company. He also served as Senior Director of US Operations for Hudson Energy, a Just Energy company.

“We see our partnership going well beyond the usual scope of that overused word”

Specifically, brokers have come to expect supply partners to make sales, commission and account management as easy and transparent as possible—that’s why Hertel said that developing the technology to meet and exceed that expectation was number one on the to-do list when NAPB was founded. “We’ve developed top-of-the-line broker sales and commission portals, powered by our new end-to-end system we’ve named ‘Joules,’” Hertel said. “Jim Crysdale led the development of the industry’s first sales portal and has more than 26 years of experience in this space, so having him on our team as a primary architect of all three of these proprietary pieces of technology has put NAPB in a league of its own when it comes to its technological performance and capabilities.”

Elaborating on the company’s broker portals, Hertel said, “The

portal is our conduit to get the data from the broker to price the customer. It will generate pricing, proposals and executable documents – we are very proud of it, and our brokers love it!” It is a completely integrated platform that takes the broker right through customer pricing, to enrollment, to billing and to commissions, says Hertel. “It gives us the ability to move from market to market very quickly, and it is entirely scalable.”

The portal ultimately gives the broker control in whatever way they choose to use it. Being able to upload customer data and generate pricing and documentation means that deals can be automated, with no manual intervention on the part of NAPB. A commissions platform is integrated with the sales platform, giving a broker the ability to see its past commission statements alongside its projected income from NAPB. “It allows



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our brokers to self-serve. Having this accounting-like function through the commissions portal is rare in the industry, and it underlines our commitment to the broker channel,” Hertel said. “It is a really neat system: they can opt for full automation of customer accounts or any level of intervention they choose.”

The strength of the technology platform gives NAPB scalability and consistency as it moves from market to market. That’s

a long-term advantage that the broker will appreciate more and more as the end customer becomes accustomed to dependable pricing and transparency – it’s a frequent occurrence, he says, to have issues with billing timeliness and accuracy, or the common practice of outsourcing billing to a third party.

As it develops, NAPB wants to expand the technology it has introduced to the market to become increasingly integrated with its



Jim Crysdale, Chief Information Officer

Jim Crysdale is responsible for developing and maintaining North American Power Business' IT systems and processes. He has over 26 years of executive management and technology consulting experience, focused specifically on utilities and competitive energy. He has delivered solutions in the areas of IT strategy, large-scale system implementation, organizational strategy, process management, product management, enterprise architecture, program management, office development, operational efficiency, customer relationship management, custom application development, and sales force automation.



Taylor Brown, Senior Business Development Manager

Taylor Brown is responsible for managing the growth of NAPB's commercial indirect sales channel in multiple markets. He brings six years of energy sales experience to NAPB. Most recently, Taylor was a Senior Business Development Manager for Hudson Energy in Houston, Texas. Taylor earned a BA degree from Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas.

large brokers. “The more integrated we can become with their systems, the more advantageous that partnership becomes,” Hertel says. “That may mean integrating with their CRM packages to make that customer experience better. We plan to provide more reporting and integration with their finance packages like Quicken and MS Dynamics. We see our partnership going well beyond the usual scope of that overused word, to a point where we become indispensable to them and they in turn help us grow quicker as we enter new markets.”

Hertel was quick to point out that beyond its own leadership, the company’s development partners have been integral to its technological success. Specifically, Znalytics has been a key partner in the building of the company’s end-to-end system, Joules. “Jim Crysdale and Znalytics made

for an ideal pairing when it came to creating Joules,” Hertel said. “Because of their combined efforts, we believe that Joules truly stands alone in the industry.”

For the size of the company, such a level of investment and the sophistication of the technology is almost unprecedented in the industry, he adds. Technology never reaches a finished state, by definition, but the platform has been refined to a level that allows NAPB to run its current business effectively, and it can easily be given added functionality as the company expands.

Just Getting Started

From a soft launch with ten or so brokers in February 2016, North American Power Business is already well into its full launch in the Texas market. NAPB is now approaching the number of

“50 percent of the brokers we work with in Texas also do business in PJM”



brokers and aggregators it needs to call itself an established player in Texas, and is now looking to expand into other states. In the US, many brokers are licensed in multiple states, and indeed a number of the customers it works with in Texas are not headquartered there. The relations NAPB has with these brokers is an excellent springboard for it to move into New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Ohio in the very near future.

These states are all within what

is called the PJM Interconnection that co-ordinates the movement of electricity within Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia and the District of Columbia. “50 percent of the brokers we work with in Texas also do business in PJM,” explains Hertel. “Additionally the relationships we already have with brokers headquartered in the northeast also operate in multiple



states. So, if a broker is licensed to do business in Ohio it is most likely licensed in Pennsylvania and New Jersey: even in New York and across New England.”

For now, a consolidation of Texas and a phased expansion into PJM will take a lot of hard work. Kris Hertel is keen to expand into as many states as possible as quickly as possible. Much of this will be achieved by following the existing broker network, though, and many of these brokers have an

international footprint. Suffice it to say that it was CEO Deryl Brown who established Hudson Energy as a leading independent provider of electricity and gas to businesses across the UK. It would be in no way surprising to see NAPB quickly achieving its expansion goals in the USA, then perhaps even looking further afield. ■



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