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News

Unisphere Networks finds home in Boca Excited to be part of 'Internet Coast'

Released Thursday, October 1, 2000
by [John Harris](#)

Unisphere Networks is a start-up company – but one already on a fast-track roll.

The firm, which is developing voice and data networking equipment, was founded in March 1999 – just a year-and-a-half ago – as a subsidiary of the German industrial giant, Siemens AG.

The Massachusetts-based firm opened offices in Boca Raton by assuming control of a Siemens development team of 30 software engineers based in the T-Rex Technology Center.

But soon its staff had expanded to 56, and chief operating officer Tom Burkardt started an all-out search for larger quarters to better accommodate the ever-expanding fledgling firm.

It was not an easy task.

Burkardt spent the greater part of three months with real estate agents driving around Boca Raton seeking a suitable location with adequate space – all without success.

"Then I happened to drive by this new office building one night and saw a sign out front," says Burkardt. "I came back next morning and asked if I could put down a \$50,000 deposit check to hold it until we could negotiate a lease.

"That's how tough it was to find a suitable site in Boca Raton."

But persistence paid off, and Unisphere last month moved into its larger offices with more than 18,000 square feet in a new building at 7800 Congress Ave.

With the new offices in hand, Unisphere is now looking to ratchet its research and development team to more than 80, most of whom will be software engineers.

"In a year, we'll probably need more space," says Burkardt. "This is a significant R&D effort. Our team will be pushing the technology envelope, further converging voice and data transmission."

Asked why Unisphere chose Boca Raton for its branch office, Burkardt cited several reasons.

"We could have put it in the Boston area with our headquarters," says Burkardt.

"But South Florida is a booming high-tech area – one of the fastest growing in the U.S. There's a talent pool already here and the area's ability to draw people to the area is well established.

"We're essentially a big start-up, and start-ups like to be around other startups. There are plenty of those here. Another advantage is that there's a lot of venture capital coming into South Florida. The area is becoming known as the Internet Coast – and we're excited to be part of that."

Burkardt said another reason is that Unisphere's parent company, Siemens, has long had a successful presence in Boca Raton, so the area is a known one to company officials.

Unisphere sells two new Internet protocol telephony products, both aimed at the telecommunications industry.

One routes more communications through the Internet at a faster speed than previously used devices.

Another is a telephone network switch that handles more communications at a higher speed and in a more cost-effective manner than the present large, bulky switching systems still in use in most phone switching centers.

"Most of the massive switching networks are products of the 1950s," says Burkardt, "and they're going to have to be replaced over the next 20 years. So we call our product the next generation voice switch."

Burkardt also says the line between the methods of handling voice and data transmissions will be merged over time.

"Computers use the same technology to access another computer or person as humans through voice will access other humans," he says. "Presently voices run through the old switches and

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30-Yr		-0.18	56.69

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data runs through the new switches. But that's all starting to blend. That's what our Boca team will be doing – pulling voice and data into one."

As Unisphere gets settled into its new offices in Boca Raton, change is already on the way.

Last month, the firm filed documents with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission to launch a \$150 million initial public stock offering in a spin-off from Siemens, the parent company.

It hopes to trade on the NASDAQ market under the symbol UNSP.

The firm was formed in March 1999 when Siemens AG acquired, for almost \$1 billion in cash, three networking startups in the Boston area. These were Castle Networks, Redstone Communications, and Argon Networks.

The executive team largely originates from two of the three startups. Executives are:

- Jim Dolce, president and CEO (originally co-founder of Redstone);
- Tom Burkardt, COO (originally co-founder of Castle);
- John Connolly, CFO; and
- Kurt Melden, CTO (originally co-founder of Redstone).

Unisphere Networks

Corporate headquarters: One Executive Drive, Chelmsford, MA 01824

Boca Raton location: 7800 Congress Ave, Suite 100

Phone: (561) 981-7000

Web site: <http://www.unispherenetworks.com>

E-mail: kmcrae@unispherenetworks.com

Founded: March 1999

Employees: 60, Boca Raton - 574, total

Ownership: Siemens AG

Market listing: Privately held at present but has filed S-1 form with the SEC on August 4 for an initial public stock offering. Market symbol: will be UNSP

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