

Technology Staffing Services for the IT and Telecom Industries



Grant Baldwin Photography

Rebecca Hardin
CFO

"Verigent is a company to keep your eye on." - Rebecca Hardin

Verigent

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CEOCFO: Ms. Hardin, what is Verigent?

Ms. Hardin: Verigent is a leading provider of Technology Staffing Services to the IT and Telecom Industries. We currently staff projects in over 48 states for many of the leading technology companies in the world. We specialize in Technical Recruitment and Staff Augmentation Support for Converged Communications and Network Integration projects. Our personnel experience includes: architect, design, installation, engineering, application development, deployment, maintenance, administration, project management, technical support, network monitoring and more. These skilled resources have extensive experience with voice, data and video technology.

CEOCFO: What are the challenges in providing this type of service? Certainly, technology always seems to have a shortage of people available.

Ms. Hardin: Yes. There is a common theme in that I think everyone in our industry is scrambling to find qualified talent. There is a war for talent. To differentiate ourselves, from the beginning the philosophy of Verigent has been to treat our contract employees like clients. Therefore, we make sure that they are happy. They get as much customer service as if they were sitting in the office next to me, even though they may be in Montana. We offer benefits, paid time off, paid holidays and we bridge time in between assignments so that employees do not get penalized for taking a short term assignment. When they come back to work for us after a break we give them the credit for the time they have worked for us previously.

CEOCFO: Do you find that many people stay with you for an extended period of time, that it is not a stop gap anymore?

Ms. Hardin: We have found that people in the telecom sector enjoy the contract life. They would like to work for six months and then take three months off and then let us know they are available again. Some like the variety of work and being able to be exposed to several different clients within a year. The project lengths vary from one day to multiple years, but the average length of assignment for us in 2014 was 4 months. We re-deploy over 40% of the people we hire and that retention rate helps us to provide quality, proven resources to our clients on short notice.

CEOCFO: Are there many companies that specialize in the telecom industry?

Ms. Hardin: I would say no. Some of our competition comes from firms that specialize in telecom, but the bulk I would say comes from the larger staffing companies that may have a telecom division. It is a nice niche.

CEOCFO: What do you look for in your people? Obviously, we have talked about the shortage of talent, so I guess you want to have as many people as you can in your roster. However, quality is important. How do you put the two together?

Ms. Hardin: We are always looking for qualified people to work at Verigent, either in our corporate office(s) or as a contractor assigned to a client site. We are very proud to say that that the first employee to join the Verigent corporate staff eleven years ago still works here. We had quite a few others that hit their five, seven, eight-year anniversaries in 2014 and quite a few more will this year!

We look for people who are committed, honest, fair and who communicate. To ensure quality, we stress to everyone to take their time, follow the procedure and communicate if something goes wrong or provide feedback if we need to update a process. Safety and quality go hand-in-hand and we continue to make each a focus from the initial recruiting stage to follow up communications. Finding the right people and keeping them informed is critical.

CEOCFO: Do you do training as well?

Ms. Hardin: We train the corporate staff and stress continued professional development. With regard to the contract workforce, that is not a piece we have added to our repertoire as of today. We have thought about it, but since we do nationwide work and we do not have a branch in every city, it is not practical right now.

CEOCFO: What are you seeing as trends today that might be different than a year or two ago? How do you take advantage?

Ms. Hardin: I would say there is definitely more competition for the same talent. To take advantage we are really trying to highlight what makes us different, such as letting them know about our benefits (medical, dental, 401K (with a company match), PTO, Holidays). We are also trying to capitalize on automation. We have invested in an online time-keeping system as well as an electronic on-boarding system to get new employees their paperwork.

CEOCFO: How do you recruit talent?

Ms. Hardin: We are trying to build relationships. That goes for times we reach out to prospective employees with a specific job opportunity, to reaching out pro-actively to see how we can help a person with their

career. We have a social media presence, a very good website, attend job fairs, trade shows and host special events. We have done several in New York recently, where we invited different skill sets to come attend a meeting where they can get to know us and put a face with a name and not have it all be over the phone. We are able to share our story and get to them as well.

CEOCFO: *What is the key to running a successful company when you have offices in several locations and you are dealing with people remotely? How do you make it work well? What have you learned?*

Ms. Hardin: I have learned that the human touch is still very important even if you are remote. Just having a phone conversation is a lot different than exchanging IMs or emails. It is important to make time for that. Everyone is in such a hurry, but just taking five minutes to make the call to someone you have not talked can make a big impact. You can learn a lot more in those five minutes of conversation than in 10 emails. We have semi-annual company-wide events where we bring everyone together for training and socializing outside of work. Keeping that personal touch is an important part of building relationships.

CEOCFO: *Verigent was recognized on the Inc. 5000 list, so clearly business is going well. What might be different a year from now? How do you continue the trajectory?*

Ms. Hardin: We have been working diligently on planning for our continued success and growth. This winter we have put together one, three, five and even a ten year business plans. We do have some pretty aggressive but attainable goals. I imagine that we will continue to be on Inc. 5000 list for the next several years, hopefully, continuing to climb on the list. It does get progressively more difficult as you get bigger, but we are prepared for that and continuing to find the right people will be a key factor in our success.

CEOCFO: *Why choose Verigent?*

Ms. Hardin: I would say that; and this comes actually comes back from feedback from our clients, that one of the big benefits of working with Verigent is our flexibility. We understand the business that they are in as well. We have people who are twenty-plus year veterans from the telecom industry who used to sit on their side of the desk who now assist with finding solutions for them. We are very flexible. We are quick. We can deploy people nationwide, sometimes within a days' notice, depending on the skill set. We have over sixty-five thousand people in our database that we have screened previously. We help clients with creative labor solutions to help contain their costs and mitigate their risk.

CEOCFO: *Final thoughts?*

Ms. Hardin: I thoroughly enjoy working at Verigent and am proud to be part of its growth and success. It has been challenging and very rewarding. To see where we have come from and the goals of where we are going is very exciting. Verigent is a company to keep your eye on.

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine
