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# In Business LAS VEGAS

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Q&amp;A:

## Terry McGowan

### Datanamics CEO



Sam Morris

Datanamics CEO Terry McGowan is shown in the company's Henderson headquarters June 18.

By [Richard N. Velotta \(contact\)](#), In Business reporter

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Although his company is all about technology, if you ask Terry McGowan about its greatest assets he will start talking about how his employees work with their customers.

McGowan is president of Datanamics, a Henderson-based tech company that designs, installs and supports voice and data networks using a variety of vendors. In addition to developing networks for the hospitality industry and coaxing computer systems to talk to each other, Datanamics has a new educational services division that offers courses for information technology professionals and certification programs.

McGowan talked with In Business Las Vegas about the people and services of Datanamics, the warm welcome

he received when he moved to Henderson and his thoughts on social networks.

**IBLV: Datanamics has been around for more than 30 years, but for most people outside of Henderson, it really isn't a household name. What does Datanamics do?**

McGowan: We design, we install and we support and educate people about computer networks.

**What are some of the things you do for customers?**

We start by designing a network to fit the customer's needs. Ultimately, we inspect the hardware and everything else that goes with it and install it. In many cases, we then support it. In addition, we are a Microsoft- and Cisco-certified learning center so folks come in to take classes and earn their certification for their respective companies.

**How do you determine what type of a network a company needs?**

We look at the customer, we look at the data and look at what's going on and what he needs. Everyone is very individual.

**How many employees do you have and what's the breakdown of their responsibilities?**

We have around 110 to 115 employees. Maybe half of them are in the field any given day, installing networks across the United States and Canada. We have more customers in, say, Georgia than we do in Las Vegas or New York or Indiana or Florida. So our folks are always somewhere installing something. Separate from that, we run a 24/7 support desk here in Las Vegas where we support networks from across the United States and Canada.

**So it's a nationwide operation based here?**

Everybody pretty much is based here, and installers fly out of here every Monday morning to go somewhere and install something and come back.

**You have a national profile and could have located anywhere. So why Henderson?**

Originally, we were looking for a place and we found a place that fit us and it worked well, and the price was right and it's great for the staff to get to — all those kinds of things you look for. What I didn't expect was the warm welcome. A city councilwoman knocked on the door and said, "Hi, we'd like to welcome you to Henderson, we're so glad that you're here." And the Henderson economic development folks knocked on the door, "Oh, we're so glad you're here. Anything we can do for you? How did you find dealing with Henderson? Was there anything that could have been better?" You couldn't have asked for a warmer welcome. The people were really very appreciative of the fact that we were here and brought our business here. In Las Vegas, we were a small fish in a big sea, which is OK, and I understand that. If you're Steve Wynn or MGM and you're creating 12,000 jobs, you certainly get a lot more attention than we would get sitting at the corner of Flamingo and Spencer. Coming out here, we got a welcome that far surpassed anything I could have possibly imagined.

**Where are some of your largest networks located now?**

Major cities in the United States. One of our largest single customers is the Hilton Hotels Corp. So we have designed, installed and supported all of its major hotels and most of its brands.

**Much of the company's roots are in the development of hospitality technology. What does that mean exactly and what kinds of things does the company do for the hospitality industry?**

We didn't start out to be in the hospitality industry, but we certainly have a niche there. Hospitality networks are inherently very complicated and require the kinds of services that we provide. You might have 20 or 30 different vendors, all of whom are operating on the same network. Inherently, that creates problems for a network because Software A doesn't work with Software B or Software Company C puts out a new version of its software and subsequently that interferes with something else that's already running on the network. So one

of the things that we do here is we have a lab and we bring software into the lab and we run it before it goes out to the field so we can make sure that it is interoperable with whatever else may be running on that particular client's site.

**When I go into a hotel, what am I going to see that is network based?**

The back of the house is everything. Certainly the front desk, housekeeping, engineering, room service, every kind of amenity, the spa, the golf course, restaurants, the bars. Anything you touch in that hotel is in some way, shape or form influenced by automation. Of course, high-speed Internet access in the guest room has really been a focus of ours for the past four or five years.

**Is that market still growing?**

Places like Nielsen and the folks who do guest surveys for hotel companies have listed high-speed Internet as the largest single decision made by businessmen on where they are going to stay. And if they stay at your brand and they have a bad experience, they actually not only ding the hotel, but they ding the brand. Originally, it was just get high-speed in, and now there's really a whole second tier of companies that are going in and revamping to provide the guest with the best experience possible because they know it's important to the guest, specifically the business traveler.

**How did that hospitality expertise lead to the growth of other initiatives within the company?**

When Datanamics originally started, it was in the construction industry. It was the same principle: software. But it was more of a software development house, and we developed software that general contractors would use building construction projects. We had five or six local construction companies that were the original clients. What happened subsequently was that the Las Vegas Hilton became a client, and Hilton Hotels Corp. was happy with the work that was done there and came in and asked the company to do more work. Subsequently, we rolled out a lot of the front-office and back-office systems for Hilton across the country.

**It sounds like evolution is part of the business plan.**

We're in a marketplace that changes and literally re-creates itself like every Monday. What we're doing today bears no relationship to what we were doing five years ago. Literally, all of what we are doing wasn't invented five years ago. The key to being around for 33 years in this business is to try to stay ahead of the curve and stay one step ahead of your customers in terms of what they're going to need and when they're going to need it so that when they decide they need it, you've got it and you're ready to deliver it and support it and keep the customers happy. It evolves continually.

In fact, we've had the same customers for 20 or 25 years, and you don't keep the same customers for 20 or 25 years unless you anticipate their needs and not only keep them happy on the back side, but you've got to anticipate their needs on the front side because when the next product or service comes out, you've got to be on top of it.

**The company's newest opportunity is its educational services division. What will it do and why is it important?**

Educational services are the foundation of the entire IT business. The networks and the hardware and software have gotten so complicated today that it needs a high level of expertise in order to get it running and keep it running, certainly on a large scale. Anybody who has a home computer knows how frustrating it can be when your machine is not working right. When you apply that to a business where it has payback and it has customer service and those kinds of things involved, specifically in hospitality where you run 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, having the kinds of skill sets necessary to keep the thing running is really what differentiates you from other people.

**How does Datanamics train people in IT? Classes? On-site instruction?**

We have classes, we have on-site instruction, we will bring instruction to you. Two weeks ago we were in San Francisco doing classes there. We often go to a customer's place of business and run two-, three-, four- or even five-day classes there. We also run classes here and we have a certification center where, after you've had your classes, you can take your testing and be certified in your specific area of expertise. A lot of employers today, in today's job market, are looking for those kinds of certifications. The marketplace for education and certification has really increased significantly. Even given the economy today, it's increased more because folks who don't have certifications are deciding that they're required, either to get the next job or move up the ladder or get the next promotion.

**In an average month, how many classes do you have?**

We hold at least one class every week. But some are one-day classes, some are two- or three-day, some are a week long. So the number of classes in any given month varies. And they're in different areas, different products. Microsoft Exchange Server, I think, is what's running this week. A couple weeks back it was Cisco switching and networking. We have the folks on staff who teach the courses.

**The company has vendor certifications with a number of companies, including Microsoft, Cisco, Novell, Oracle, Apple, HP, IBM and Sun. Explain why it's important to have multiple disciplines and not specialize in one company's system.**

Everything in our company is geared around the customer so the first thing you look at is the customer and you say, "What does the customer need?" And the customers' needs are varied individually. So we're always looking for the right product to fill the customer's needs and that doesn't mean just selling from one vendor who might have a great product for you but not the next person. It really is sit down with the customer, look at his needs and fit a product that fills those needs.

**Your company has expertise in a variety of systems, thus you know the pros and cons of all of them. So what system does Datanamics use?**

We have a little bit of everything. And again, it's for our specific needs.

**But your advantage is that you know how to tie them all together.**

Sure, and we tie them together for a lot of other people, too. We have a Cisco phone system, but that is not to suggest that Avaya and several other companies don't have good phones, also. The real issue here is: "What is your need?" If you're a car dealer, you have a different need than if you're running a call center. So you look at the software. Software drives most of these things today. And you say, "Which software best fits your need?" And then, the hardware oftentimes becomes a given based on your specific requirements.

**And then you make recommendations?**

Yes. And very individual and very specific. If we don't have what you're looking for, we'll go get it or we'll find somebody who does. And, frankly, we'll tell you to go there. What we don't want is a customer who we've tried to fit a square peg in a round hole and now we have an unhappy customer. You don't keep the same customer for 20 or 25 years if you don't ultimately take good care of them, and don't act in their best interest and don't do things that they need to be done. They'll just find somebody else and move on.

**A number of cities are pursuing the development of wireless networks. Good idea or bad idea?**

Yes and yes. I think it's too early, probably. Over time, I think they'll pick up steam and they'll become more valuable. I'm not sure that a lot of cities have implemented them in such a way that it both makes money for the city or at least pays its own way and has the kind of penetration that it needs to have in order to be viable. But will it get there one day? Very possibly so.

**How long do you think it would take?**

It depends more on the people than the technology. I've not seen anything that the technology holds us back on in a long time. This business, in the end, is not about technology. It's about people and how fast people change. I think there's a whole generation today, for example, of folks who are coming up who don't have a land line. All they have is a cell phone. Folks of my generation have a land line and a cell phone next to each other. My son wouldn't have a land line. He thinks that's not what you do. So you're back to what people are comfortable with and how willing they are to adapt. That's really what determines most of these things.

**What's your take on the social networking phenomenon?**

From my perspective — and, in fact, I'm doing some work on this currently because I'm a skeptic by definition — I think it's a neat thing to do. It's one of those things that's captured the imagination of the press and the public and so everybody's kind of saying, "Oh, I'll give that a try." Is it a Hula-Hoop? Is it going to be out of fashion in a couple years? We'll find out. When I talk to businesspeople today, and I say, "Are you in there?" They say, "Oh yeah!" And I say, "Well, why are you in there?" "Well, everybody is." "Well have you done any specific studies or surveys where you have determined that you get 10 percent more business or some value to your business because of your presence in these markets?" Well, nobody's really answered that question yet.

**So the jury is still out on the potential value?**

Yes, I think it's a great social experiment that's under way. We'll see where it goes. If at the end of the day it adds 5 percent to your business, everybody's going to want to be there and they'll stay there for the long term. If it's a passing fad, then it's neat, and everybody will move on to something else.

**OK, so do you "tweet?"**

No.

**But you do have a presence on other social networks?**

A lot of people in the company do. Not me. Not my generation. Personally, I'm still into the more traditional kinds of things for networking. We have organizations that we belong to and people we participate with, both locally and internationally. Obviously, we find these very beneficial. We have a lot of people in the company who do Twitter and are part of LinkedIn and Facebook and some of the others, and we're looking at different ones and seeing what comes out of each of them as I guess most other companies are today. In the end, how will it end up? I don't know. It's fun to watch.

**I know that you have customers nationwide, but are there any challenges or opportunities that set Las Vegas apart from other markets?**

We have a lot of big boys here with a lot of big networking needs. The entire gaming industry runs on a network. Every casino floor is a network. That's what it is. Every slot machine is a node on a network, and so this town has a lot of technology, and it uses a lot of leading-edge technology in order to service its customer base and keep its customers current.

**Nevada is well known for being a low-tax environment. Why aren't more technology companies clamoring to be here?**

I don't know that they're not. I've seen many come over the last few years. We've worked very closely with the Nevada Development Authority, since probably the '70s or the '80s, certainly a long time. They've been really doing a great job of bringing folks in and exposing them to all that Nevada has to offer, both in technology and other kinds of companies. Henderson has seen a lot of folks move in here in the past 10 years and built manufacturing facilities or warehousing facilities or call centers.

**What would it take to attract more tech companies to Nevada?**

One of the great things that I found about moving to Henderson, personally, is just the warm welcome we

received in moving here. So a lot of it is the people. There's a great workforce and a lot of great people here.

**Do our schools do enough to teach students about technology?**

We participate in a great internship program with the College of Southern Nevada. We've worked with them for a number of years. We take folks who are in the school, we put them through an intern program, they work with us for a while. We actually grade them on their results here. A good number of them over the years, after they graduated, come and work here and are still with us. Some others have moved on, but we keep in touch; but it's a really close family here. CSN has a good program. They have a number of good folks involved with it and the right kinds of equipment and some really good professors. They've produced some really great people. The people who we get out of the classes, we think, are terrific. It's a way for folks to stay in Nevada.

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