

# A Team Of Many Hats

## Consultants Cross-Specialize In A Field Of Converging Technologies

by Carolyn Heinze

Baltimore, MD -- With Internet protocol and networking driving technologies, the word "specialist" is becoming a broad term. To serve clients, not only do consultants require intimate knowledge of the details involved in audiovisual systems, but one also must be adept at acoustics, noise and vibration control and the programming language associated with integrating technologies together.

At Convergent Technologies Design Group, management is presented with the challenge of finding "specialists" who, in reality, prefer to wear more than one hat. So far, so good. Boasting a team of 10 professionals scattered across the firm's headquarters in Baltimore, as well as in offices in Phoenix, AZ and Buffalo, NY, Convergent has, for the last seven years, been designing systems for the higher education, K-12 and government markets, as well as for architectural design, mechanical and electrical engineering, and project management companies. The firm focuses on audiovisual systems design, telecommunications cabling systems design and acoustics, noise and vibration control design.

Founder and principal Paul Corraine attributes his company's success to the people that make Convergent tick. "We hire very smart people that are versed in the breadth of our technology; they are not necessarily specialists in acoustics, or specialists in telecommunications," he explained. "We like them to be able to adapt and wear multiple hats."

Those who join the Convergent team may have expertise in one area, but they will soon expand their knowledge base, Corraine promises. "We have people that are degreed in acoustics, but they will also, at any given time, be able to talk about telecommunications or audiovisual systems. Our firm is not a firm that was founded out of an acoustical firm that then did audio design, and then parlayed that into video



At Convergent Technologies Design Group, president and founder Paul Corraine (standing) and "second in command" Bill Holaday are presented with the challenge of finding specialists who, in reality, prefer to wear more than one hat.

design," he noted. "We focus on the converging technologies. Our designers are versed in all aspects of technology systems design. If you are smart in audiovisual systems, your goal, when you come to work here, would be to learn the other areas that we specialize in so that you can be out speaking with one of our clients comprehensively about the whole breadth of the technology on a project."

Bill Holaday, Convergent's "second in command," emphasizes the company's team-inspired culture: "The teamwork aspect is an important one. We make sure that everyone is always on the same page within the firm and working toward the same goals," he said.

This requires an intense amount of communication, considering the number of different tasks Convergent professionals take on

each day. "One of the keys to making that interaction work is that everyone here wears so many different hats. You can go from business development, to project management, to visiting a job-site for construction administration, to having a kick-off meeting on a new project, to writing up a scope of work all in the same day," Holaday explained. "You are constantly thinking about all aspects of the business. The result of strong communication within the team is that anyone at the firm is capable of stepping in at a moment's notice to make key decisions."

Corraine acknowledges that the challenges Convergent faces as a design firm are similar to those faced by the companies that actually install the technology: continuing education. "As systems are tied in with local area networks and internet protocol, the people that are

### Making It All Come Together

As everything moves to the network, consultants and contractors alike are becoming "specialized" in a broad range of systems. "The technologies—whether it's audiovisual systems or telephony systems or IP-based audiovisual system remote control—are residing over the local area networks," noted Paul Corraine, president and founder of Convergent Technologies in Baltimore, MD. "With a lot of our clients being in a campus environment, where they have multiple buildings and very robust networks, the evolution, transmission speeds and overall demand on the local area networks is driving a lot of the convergence of these systems. That is something that we didn't see five years ago, but we see all the time."

At Convergent, this requires professionals to be continually updating their skill sets. "Here, you have to be smart relative to local area networks, telephony systems, and audiovisual systems," Corraine said. "You really have to know how one will impact the other, and how that is going to impact the success or present challenges in a particular application. -C.H.

installing the systems have to be savvy on local area networks and understanding the convergence of the technologies and the software applications that are tied into these projects," he said. "They have to broaden the training of their employees so that they are not just able to tune audio systems or test scope for video systems; they also have to be able to understand nuances relative to local area networks. They have been challenged to get people similar to what we look for: people that are all-around technologists and practitioners of all technologies."

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