



## The Patriot Ledger

# Granite Telecommunications of Quincy Gets its Message Across

By **Jessica Trufant**  
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Plaques of business awards and framed letters of commendations and thanks line the walls of Granite Telecommunication's atrium-style lobby at its North Quincy headquarters.

For Rob Hale, the company's president, CEO and majority owner, the lobby is a reminder of what Granite has amassed in the last decade: more than 1,550 employees, two buildings on Newport Avenue Extension and a half-dozen satellite offices, \$11.5 million contributed to charities and annual revenue exceeding \$1.1 billion.



Granite Communications CEO Rob Hale is seen in the atrium of their latest building purchase in North Quincy off Newport Ave. — Greg Derr/ The Patriot Ledger

"This is probably my favorite part of the building," Hale said, pointing to the letters from nonprofit organizations on the receiving end of the company's benevolence. "And that's my favorite part of Granite."

A Hingham resident, Hale launched Granite Telecommunications in 2002 with about a dozen employees in a small office on Copeland Street. The privately owned company started out by consolidating traditional land-line accounts for multi-location businesses through wholesaling.

Granite grew quickly to provide nationwide telecommunication services to clients as large as Walmart, Starbucks, Walgreens and Sears. It purchased its headquarters at the close of 2008, and a second building next door in 2013. Hale said Granite has no debt and no outside investors and has never made an acquisition.

At its core, Hale describes Granite as a “one-stop shop for voice and data needs for multi-location, big businesses.”

“For example, Target has 2,000 stores across the country. Instead of receiving a bill for each of its 2,000 stores, it gets one bill from us,” he explained. “When there’s an issue with a service, instead of calling a variety of people, they call us.”

Much of Granite’s sales team works out of the headquarters, where there is a 10,000-square-foot gym with 24-hour access for employees and on-site certified trainers for classes such as yoga and CrossFit. The second building houses around-the-clock customer service and technology support, which is becoming increasingly more important for the business.

While Granite manages more than 1.5 million outside voice and data lines, Hale said the company is increasingly using its own network, Granite Grid.

Launched earlier this year, Granite Grid is a fiber-based network offering voice and data services for multi-tenant buildings, such as shopping malls.

With Granite installing and maintaining the network, these buildings can offer their tenants Internet at capacities and speeds that would be otherwise impossible, Hale said.

The largest mall operators in the country, including Simon Property Group, have adopted Granite Grid for properties including South Shore Plaza, the Wrentham Village Outlets and Burlington Mall.

Hale said the company has about 150 technicians who visit sites around the country for installations. The network is monitored and managed in Quincy.

Pushing its own network has not only expanded Granite's potential clients and services, but its workforce as well. Hale said there's a growing need for more engineers and network technicians both to install the systems and manage them internally.

But instead of simply bringing in new tech-savvy employees, Hale said there is a strong push at Granite to promote from within, hence the need for Granite University.

Granite University is a training center for employees who want to advance within the company.

Hale said he believes in growing talent, rather than acquiring it.

"As we keep growing and getting more complex on the tech side, we need training on the technology," Hale said. "More and more it's our own network and we have to understand what we're doing, but we're not trying to hire trained technologists. We believe in promotion from within."

Each employee is given a path to progress, which Hale said outlines exactly what they need to do to move up on the career ladder at Granite.

Hale said the company is now bringing wireless Internet under its umbrella of services, with agreements in place with two of the four major providers. He said the company will adapt to the needs of its clients, and that everything it's done so far started as a suggestion from a customer.

Granite's growth primarily depends on what his workforce can take on, Hale said. The demand and potential are already there.

"We have the best relationships in the industry, so it's about whether we have the talent to work with them," he said. "Adding teammates is our first and foremost objective for the next year."

On top of its goal of hiring 20 new sales representatives each month, Hale said Granite plans to hire at least 200 new employees next year, including network and support technicians, engineers and sales associates to support large accounts.

Hale said the company will eventually need a third building, possibly along the Route 3 corridor.

If the current trend continues, Hale said, Granite will double its rate of growth during the next five to 10 years.

"The core of what we do won't change, but the delivery might," he said.

Jessica Trufant may be reached at [jtrufant@ledger.com](mailto:jtrufant@ledger.com).

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