

By Siobhán O'Grady

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SOUTH SHORE INSIDER: Exceeding expectations at Granite Telecommunications



GREG DERR/The Patriot Ledger

Granite Telecommunications President and CEO Rob Hale says he's come to realize the great importance in business of focusing on what you're good at.

QUINCY —

His desk is a simple cubicle. He plays intramural sports with his co-workers. He refers to his 1,200 employees as his "team," and sets aside funding for their midday CrossFit workout sessions and after-work rounds of golf.

Hingham resident Rob Hale, president, CEO and majority owner of Granite Telecommunications, isn't the stereotypical boss of a \$900 million company.

Hale, who graduated from Connecticut College with a degree in history in 1988, started his career as a sales representative in Boston before founding Network Plus, a telecommunications company, in 1990. The company grew quickly, but after building elaborate networks and running into financial trouble, it had to declare bankruptcy in 2002.

Two months later, Hale put his savings into founding a new company, Granite Telecommunications. Starting with just 17 employees, Granite grew quickly to provide nationwide telecommunication services to clients as large as Walmart, Walgreens and Sears.

The company recently purchased a second building next to its headquarters in North Quincy. It will hold employee training sessions there.

It is also adding 5,000 square feet to the employee gym in the original building.

You opened Granite Telecommunications after a devastating end at Network Plus. Did you ever imagine this kind of growth?

"Devastating" is an understatement. Everything I dreamed for, everything I had hoped for, the team I thought I was building, it was all taken away.

But now at Granite we've got 1,200 jobs, a \$900 million business, and household names for customers. Some of that I probably wouldn't have forecasted.

I'm delighted that we're here, but I'm not sure that I thought 11 years ago we would get this far, especially this quickly.

What lessons did you take from Network Plus that helped make Granite so successful?

The lesson that will resonate with me for the rest of my life is focusing on what we are good at, which is getting customers and keeping them.

We've been very fortunate that we were able to create strong relationships. Everything that we've grown into, that we've evolved into, has been directly a suggestion of the customer.

Positive workplace culture seems to be a big part of what you strive for at Granite.

I'm accountable to my own expectations, and I think that's important. If I ask you to get here at a certain time, I'll be here too.

I understand that this business will falter if we don't have great teammates.

Are there a lot of people that could sell telephone service to these companies? Yes. Why do they get it from us? Because they've come to trust us. So I need to have 1,200 teammates who are great.

The more we can hype exercise and activity into people's days, we're doing better for them personally, but we're doing better for us too.

Any words of advice for a young entrepreneur?

I think sticking with what you're good at is very logical and important.

Of equal importance is finding something that you love. If you pursue new ventures, get a job you like.

And the rest should take care of itself.