

Concert Technologies' Dennis Mazaris: Cabling Industry a Perfect Fit for Renaissance Man

June 1998 by Patrick McLaughlin, Chief Editor

Dennis Mazaris, Registered Communications Distribution Designer (RCDD), could be the cabling industry's true renaissance man. He has seen the industry from every angle you can think of—an installer, network designer, consultant and product manufacturer—and has spent 20 years in an industry that's arguably only 20 years old.



When he says that completing a contract on time and within budget requires hard work among other characteristics, he doesn't have to look any further than the DOT job—his first contract—for proof. The job scope included cabling the one-million-square-foot Federal Aviation Administration headquarters and the even larger U.S. Coast Guard headquarters, both of which are also located in the nation's capital and were occupied sites.



On taking the job and starting his business, Mazaris says, "I took the challenge, but I also knew the contract and the industry, as well as what would be involved with the transition. "If you're considering starting your own business, make sure you know the industry." He continues, "You need to transition into it, and that is very difficult. I have seen many installers fail at their attempts to start up a structured a cabling installation company because they didn't know how to operate or market the business. They may have had a few customers they did cabling for at one time and made a profit, but this profitability has to be maintained forever once you start a business.

"It's extremely important if you want to own a business," he warns, "that you consider where you're going to get the revenue during the building stage because it takes a minimum of three to five years to become stable."

He points out that owning a structured cabling firm is typically a feast-or-famine proposition. The number of people in his employment typically varied between 20 and 50, and he would subcontract out some work. "I was constantly dealing with managing the labor pool because jobs always vary," he recalls. "When I managed a project or multiple projects, I had to monitor the process and make sure that everyone was scheduled properly to make the transition from one installation project to the next a smooth one. I also had to get access, pull permits, and deal with ill-tempered general contractors on a daily basis. That's part of the job."

FROM INSTALLER TO CONSULTANT, AND BEYOND

Mazaris reflects that this challenging start as a company owner was appropriate and indicative of many of his projects over the coming years, as an installer and a consultant. "As a cabling-contracting firm owner and manager, I had to manage the employees. Now as a consultant and project manager, I manage companies rather than employees," he says.

He advises that just like hiring an installer, hiring a consultant requires careful thought and evaluation. "When a firm looks for a consultant, that firm should find someone who is knowledgeable and has hands-on experience installing structured cabling systems. This limits the wiggle room that contractors have with a client after being awarded a contract."

Mazaris' consulting firm is called [PerfectSite](#) and is based in Dulles, VA. In his capacity as a consultant, he performs a wide range of tasks, all germane to the cabling industry. For instance, he frequently conducts training and is also active in the Telecommunications Infrastructure Committee.

Other current endeavors include his position as coordinator of the ETL Field Verification Program, which is highlighted in the April 1998 issue of Cabling Installation & Maintenance. Mazaris has been instrumental in the program's development, which provides independent verification of installed cabling systems through Intertek Testing Services (Courtland, NY).

Additionally, he wrote and directed the industry's first comprehensive video series on pulling telecommunications cables in buildings. Labeled "The Cable-Pulling Series," it is a four-part video set available from Cabling Installation & Maintenance magazine. His experience shooting the videos after regular work hours and around the schedules of the general contract and subcontractors, reminded him of his days as a cabling-company owner. And the countless hours he spent in the editing room refining the raw footage into the final versions of the videos are in line with the preparation, dedication, and attention to detail necessary to successfully complete a cabling project—whether as an installer or consultant. His other current project, and one that has appeared at numerous industry trade shows, is the [PerfectPatch](#). The industry's first patch-cord adjuster, the Perfect Patch allows users to custom fit high-performance patch cords in seconds, contributing to the efficiency and aesthetics of the patch-cord management system.

Mazaris hold a U.S. patent on the product. According to his partner, Tom Suder, both invention and high technology are in Dennis's blood. "Dennis's father was part of the government team that invented the solar cell," Suder reveals. Also called the photovoltaic cell, the solar cell is a semiconductor device that transforms solar energy into electric power.

WHAT'S NEXT?

What lies in the near and far future for the cabling industry and its professionals? Mazaris points to one of his biggest concerns with respect to installers who perform strictly communications work. "Electrical contractors are being trained to do structured cabling," he says, "but it is difficult to cross-train cabling installers to be electricians. And to incorporate the electrical trade style of management into a structured cabling company is extremely difficult. It's just a matter of time before electrical contractors' level of expertise places them on a level playing field, on a national level.

"While training an electrician is plausible and is the top objective for the electrical-contracting industry," he continues, "there still exists a perception in the industry that anyone can do cabling. But this isn't true, because it takes training." He sees training as one of the most important ways for structured cabling installers to stay competitive and provide the quality installation required in the industry.

He also makes sure he spends time in the trenches with cabling installers because he knows he has to stay in practice. He goes to job sites at least twice a year as an installer. "I don't want to forget my roots or forget how difficult it is to be a structured cabling installer, and I'm reminded several times a year when I do this work," he concludes.

Perhaps you were a little skeptical when you first heard Dennis Mazaris described as a "Renaissance man." That skepticism wouldn't surprise even Dennis, who realizes that in the cabling industry there's no shortage of fancy, bold claims that aren't always backed up by solid fact or science. But looking at this individual's multidimensional experiences makes it apparent that he is qualified, perhaps uniquely, to comment on the past, present, and future of the cabling industry.

As an installer, manufacturer, video director, consultant, RCDD, and owner of several businesses, Dennis says the most important point he has learned about being an entrepreneur is that "you must have a clear vision of what is good and right for the industry and your clients, and you must be persistent in achieving your mission.

"The vision is what unlocks your creativity to achieve your objectives through the many stumbling blocks you will encounter along the way. The persistence will build your drive to achieve bigger and bigger visions in the future."

Patrick McLaughlin is the Chief Editor of Cabling Installation & Maintenance Magazine. He has covered the structured cabling space for more than a dozen years.