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Inside Towers

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Top Company Profiles of 2015

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Company Profiles are written by Eleanor Snite unless otherwise noted.

Path to Success for One Tower Company

Datapath Tower LLC is a full-service telecommunications site developer supporting public safety, municipal and broadband communication systems. Started in 2012, its top officers, CEO Bill Tinsley and President Curt Jones, each bring long careers in the tower industry with them, including years on the Statewide Law Enforcement Radio System for the State of Florida. Datapath focuses on counties and municipalities that have tower issues, no matter what those issues are. They already own towers in Florida and Georgia and are currently putting together packages for municipalities in Tennessee and Virginia.

Jones' and Tinsley's business model fills the need for counties and cities that don't have the immediate capital resources to develop their own towers. "We are full service, we are flexible and we are very innovative," Jones said. "We believe we can make a difference in their tower solutions and continually find and help more counties that are wrestling with tower problems." Datapath can build new towers, purchase existing towers, move towers, update old tower systems, find and purchase sites, lease space on towers, market colocations and maintain and manage towers. Jones and Tinsley educate communities about how important towers are for public safety. "Sometimes we purchase a tower from the government and lease it back," Jones said. "It takes the headaches of owning a tower away from them. We can be the municipality's tower department. A lot of counties think that's the way to go."

CW Solutions Growing in Site Acquisition

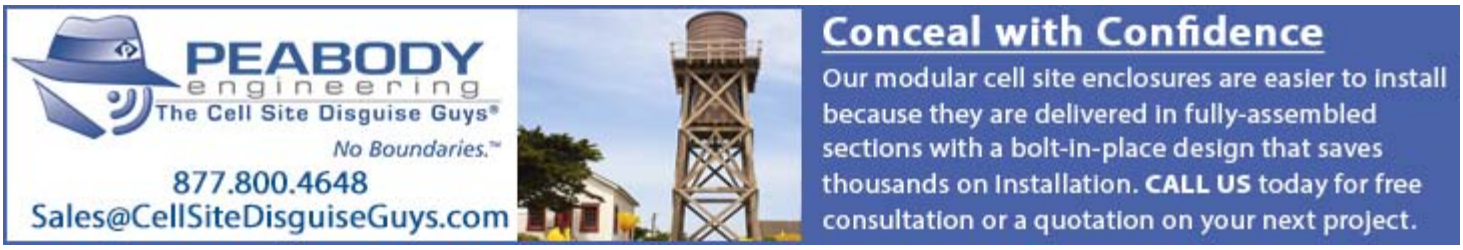
CW Solutions is a national real estate services firm that provides site and right-of-way acquisition, leasing, title research, permitting, zoning, project management and more, with a focus on wireless communications and utility projects. CWS' President Stacie Curtis founded the company in 2002 along with Robert Weible, an attorney specializing in site acquisition and zoning. Curtis was previously working as a consultant at another company and wanted to run her own business. Thirteen years later, the company has grown from 4 to 15 employees and is still growing. Headquartered in East Brunswick, New Jersey, most of the clients are in New Jersey, but CWS also has clients in nearby states and as far away as California. They are certified nationwide.

"One of the biggest challenges has been finding and keeping the right people," Curtis said. "As we have grown, we have expanded the services we can offer." Most clients are carriers and tower owners, and much of the business involves title searches and site acquisition. The highly skilled professionals at CWS provide customized solutions to clients in a timely manner, so customers can proceed with their projects. CWS knows that wireless companies operate in an increasingly competitive and regulated environment. "Customer satisfaction is the cornerstone of our core values," Curtis said. "We focus on our clients' success and are committed to overcoming any challenges that may arise during the project."

Inside InSite

This year, InSite Wireless Group announced it acquired 294 communication tower sites from CTI Towers. This transaction increases InSite's portfolio to more than 1,200, making them one of the largest privately owned U.S. tower companies. David E. Weisman, President and CEO of InSite said, "We felt that it [the portfolio] was an excellent group of tower assets with a good upside and a good group of carriers." While the CTI Towers deal was fairly large, the company makes many acquisitions throughout the year. "The announcement we made with respect to CTI was a larger acquisition, but we acquire tower assets throughout the year," Weisman explained. "We'll buy a few towers or we'll buy many towers. Our company has been very active in the wireless business since 2006, and we've done numerous transactions." InSite is involved in many aspects of the tower industry, from construction to DAS to ground lease purchases. "We build new towers in greenfield. We also have a platform for DAS and small cells that we own and operate probably in the mid 20s of some of the leading public venues in the country." InSite has installed DAS systems throughout the Boston Subway System, they are currently building out the L.A. Metro System, and Target Field in Minnesota. "We also have a division that acquires land under towers," Weisman said. "So we're multi-faceted with an emphasis on communication towers in the U.S."

The company continues to grow, but they will remain privately-owned for the foreseeable future. "I think right now we'll continue on with private investors," Weisman said. "We think that at the right time we'll consider any options that make sense for our shareholders and our investors. Right now we don't see any need to access the public marketplace." Which makes sense as the tower industry is booming. "If you look at all of the demands coming out for broadband use, mobility, and wireless devices, and the expansion of those devices, there's a continued growth in that sector," Weisman said. "So we think the wireless infrastructure sector of the economy, and our business is excellent, and that we'll continue to grow. We're dependent on our customers and their needs, but I think everyone who utilizes wireless devices, the new growth of M2M, and the densification going on because of the bandwidth demand are all drivers of growth in our industry."



Increasing Client Revenue Through Site Marketing

By Michelle Choi, an insider at Lease Advisors

Operating globally, Lease Advisors offers financial services and lease consultancy for cellular and billboard lease owners. Specifically, these experienced consultants partner with their clients on acquisition, negotiation, financial, and real estate issues related to cellular and billboard leases. Overseeing hundreds of lease transactions with a range of clients that includes investors, businesses, non-profit organizations, municipalities, and individual landowners, Lease Advisors assists lease owners in making informed decisions that yield the greatest possible return from their assets.

As part of the firm's objective to secure the most advantageous terms and profits on telecom and billboard leases, Lease Advisors utilizes the importance of strategic exposure of a site to potential tenants in a hyper-niche market. The benefits that could result from a well-designed partnership may quickly eliminate the burden that a vacant cell tower site or property has on leaseholders. Lease Advisors' Site Marketing Program employs a full-time team of site marketers and decades of experience to bring clients and tenants together in a way that accomplishes the goal of adding tenants to qualified sites resulting in an increase in lease revenue for lease owners. Continue reading here.

Alpina Capital Targets Long-Term Value Creation

Alpina Capital LLC is a financial services firm that specializes in mergers and acquisitions and raising capital with a focus on the telecommunications and energy sectors. The company has helped clients raise capital, restructure debt, monetize non-core assets and sell fiber, wireless, spectrum and tower infrastructure assets. "When we first started investing in the telecom industry in 1990, we knew that towers were going to be extremely important," said Managing Director Kevin Brynestad, who joined Alpina in 2005 with Scott Soden and Ed Moise, the managing partners.

When a client is ready to sell tower assets, the team does its due diligence checking on all aspects of the portfolio including tenant and land leases, revenue and expense detail, compliance and structural detail as well as site inventory. When they put everything together, a book is made about the opportunity and presentations are done for equity sources to find the best deal for Alpina's client whether they are selling or buying. "We take every assignment seriously and are selective about our clients," Brynestad said. "Repeat clients are extremely important to us and we treat every deal with the utmost importance. Alpina is also involved with restructuring balance sheets in order to help maximize flexibility and better position for long-term value creation. The company assists clients in raising private debt and equity to help augment a company's growth goals, both organically and through mergers or acquisitions.

Joe Likes to Climb

Based in St. Augustine, Florida, East Coast Towers specializes in painting radio towers and has been doing it since 2005. Specifically, East Coast Towers paints the alternating bands, usually the aviation orange and white bands, which serve as visual obstructions and warning to air traffic. "The colors have to be FAA compliant," said Joe Sigda, owner of East Coast Towers. "We use a high-quality, high-solid Latex paint. We use different types of paint depending on each client's needs. We want to provide the best." Sigda became interested in the tower industry because his father was a longtime Voice of America employee and also an amateur radio enthusiast.

"I would climb small towers to set up his communications, and the climbing was something I knew I liked," Sigda said. “It was an opportunity to do tall tower work that sort of solidified my determination to make a business out of what I liked doing best." Tower painting was something he could do, and he saw the need would continue and grow into the future. The products available now are better than what were available years ago and coatings can be re-applied after several years. For very large jobs, East Coast Towers works with professional subcontractors, but most jobs are done in-house, and all the company's painters have climbing certificates.

Many Facets, One Focus

The LBA Group Inc. is made up of three distinct corporate units, all primarily oriented to the wireless industry, towers and broadcasting. Lawrence Behr Associates Inc. is a consulting group that provides services in communication system coverage, radio frequency interference and compatibility matters, electromagnetic shielding, regulatory compliance and communications facility collocation. LBA Technology designs and manufactures sophisticated high-power antenna tuning and coupling systems for a range of radio frequency bands and manufactures and markets advanced lightning protection systems. LBA University provides on line safety training courses and learning management services. Course content is designed and presented primarily for the needs of tower and construction workers. RF safety is a core competency.

President and CEO Lawrence Behr started LBA in 1963, as a broadcast technology consulting firm. "We were users of computers and data communication well before the Internet," Behr said. "The world has changed since then, and we've evolved with it. Where once we were broadcast oriented, now we're a wireless oriented technology company." LBA is involved in some of the major issues in the industry today. For instance, its proprietary technology allows a carrier to put cell antennas on a hot AM tower without interference between the AM and the carrier facilities. LBA also places emphasis on safety training and is constantly looking for new ways to relate to the safety needs of the wireless community. LBA University is involved in aspects of safety from online radio frequency awareness training to managing needs of large companies for new hire training. Headquartered in Greenville, North Carolina, LBA Group, which is a Hispanic minority-owned company, has a field office in the Chicago area and provides its services nationwide and internationally.

Cell Side Only

Quantum Group LLC brings wireless infrastructure tower assets buyers and sellers together to structure favorable deals for both - but only represents sellers. "We work for sellers and sellers only," said Philip Brown, president and founder. "If they control an asset, we can represent their interests. The Overland Park, Kansas, privately owned company works with all sizes of customers from large public companies to small mom-and-pop businesses. They help sellers liquidate towers, tower assets, rooftop wireless and leases, and provide site valuations at no charge. In fact, Quantum Group works for its clients on a contingent-fee basis.

Accurately evaluating the assets of clients is important at Quantum Group. If a business is over-valued, it won't sell.

If it's undervalued, the owner will lose equity - sometimes in the millions. "The paper process behind tower deals is extensive, and we underwrite entirely every aspect of our deals," Brown said. "Every document comes through us. If anything is missing, we follow up until it gets our seal of approval." Brown credits his staff for the company's high customer satisfaction. It includes an attorney on staff, project managers, underwriters and the front line people who work directly with the clients. The average employee has been with Quantum for 8 years. "We have done 700 tower transactions since going into business in 1996," Brown said. "Currently, we are completing 35 to 40 each year and have done network deals in the tens of millions."

ISCO International Improves Wireless Capacity, Coverage and Data

ISCO International, which started in 1989, brings to the wireless market a suite of highly differentiated technologies and solutions for mobile operators, network infrastructure providers and other resellers of wireless products and software solutions. Bill Myers, vice president product management and strategy, said the company's main offering is a product family called Proteus. Proteus is a high-end digital signal processing platform that fits between the antenna and the base station and does a variety of filtering and processing algorithms on the uplink signal between the cell phone and the base station.

"We use cutting-edge technology to provide the best possible signal," Myers said. "We can tailor the signal specifically for a given environment or application." ISCO holds more than 42 U.S. and foreign patents on spectrum conditioning solutions that improve how wireless spectrum is utilized through visibility, manageability and conditioning. You can see what's happening in the spectrum, it allows you to take action based on what is found in the network and incorporate the digital algorithms necessary to improve the customer's experience.

Myers said the major challenge in the past few years is the industry evolution and move to LTE and 4G networks. "There were a lot of questions and problems with the LTE networks," Myers said. "But the solutions have a lot of value and are creating new opportunities for us to help the network to perform even better." Headquartered in Schaumburg, Illinois, ISCO primarily focuses on the United States market and Canada, but also does some international business.

TowerCom is in Expansion Mode

TowerCom is primarily a tower developer and owner involved in everything from site acquisition to construction management. Started in 1994 and headquartered in Jacksonville, Florida, TowerCom is driven by the needs of its clients. The company is currently in an expansion mode. George Davis, who along with Chip Bulloch is a managing partner, said for the past 18 months, the company has been spreading to the mid-Atlantic, midwest and other select markets.

"The time was right for us to grow and be more of a nationwide company once again," Bulloch said. "TowerCom has been very stable, and we always try to interact with our clients to understand how their needs are changing." TowerCom is focused on new tower development, whether it be carrier sites, relo sites or strategic sites. They are turnkey developers and have master leases with national carriers. "We're very adaptable to changes in the industry," Davis said. "We build traditional towers and alternative structures when necessary. We also help carriers

when they have a high-rent situation or need to move off a site. Both managing partners are proud of their staff. "We don't just have other people do all the work and put our name on the fence," Davis said. "Our people are experienced and are hands on from start to finish."

Focused Exclusively on Wireless

Ronald Tucceri is an attorney and sole proprietor whose practice is all about towers and wireless infrastructure. He only represents tower owners, DAS neutral host providers, related vendors, and landowners. Tucceri spent nearly 10 years working for two wireless infrastructure companies where he focused on all aspects of the business. In 2011, he set up his own office with a partner, and in 2014 he decided to set up a solo proprietorship focusing exclusively on wireless. Tucceri provides a number of services, including securing land rights for tower companies buying or leasing land, as well as construction and colocation agreements and the purchase of existing assets. He also works with neutral host DAS providers and companies developing small cells. "I like the challenge, and I really, really enjoy working with clients to try to get the right deal for them and knowing that they understand and minimize risks," Tucceri said. "It's fun to be in an industry that is so involved with so many people's lives. I love being in the wireless industry as it grows and evolves."

He also enjoys being a sole proprietor who can't and won't pass off any aspect of the deal with the client to an anonymous associate. He has worked with clients nationwide, from small upstarts to large companies. "What I realize more and more is that clients want more specific advice with respect to their projects," Tucceri said. "They want more than just a legal answer, they want recommendations based on my experience."

Tarpon on the Line

by Kristen Sibbitt

Tarpon Towers LLC offers a variety of services to companies involved in wireless communications, including site and tower acquisitions, providing capital and co-location. Headquartered in Bradenton, Florida, the team has a total of over 100 years of experience in the industry. They come to the table with experts in management, finance and all phases of operations in the tower business. "We love the business," said CEO and co-founder Ronald G. Bizick II. "We like the long-term growth aspects. There isn't a better business out there to be in." Tarpon Towers buys towers, builds their own and also likes to jointly partner with developers who have local opportunities but require financial and back office assistance. Local developers have the grass-roots knowledge about where assets need to be in their market, which results in great towers, Bizick said.

The company recently closed on a $50 million equity investment with Redwood Capital of Baltimore. "With debt and management's equity investment, our current capitalization is $100 million, and we will invest that capital wisely buying and building towers," said Bill Freeman, Tarpon's co-founder and president. "It's a very competitive industry," Bizick said. "Experience and relationships aside, cost of capital is critical to long-term success."

Aarcher Inc. Grows by Leveraging Relationships

Aarcher Inc. has provided environmental compliance assistance for telecommunications tower owners, wireless carriers, site acquisition firms and supporting vendors since 1997. Services include, but are not limited to, Phase I

Environmental Site Assessments, National Environmental Policy Act compliance screenings, archaeological and architectural surveys in support of NEPA, asbestos and lead identification, survey work, permit application assistance, spill prevention and more. "We always work to limit liability for our clients," said Jason Los, national wireless account manager for Aarcher. "We determine what environmental risks there are at proposed sites or existing facilities and then take steps to fully analyze these risks. Ultimately, our goal is to eliminate the need for additional testing or analysis through extensive due diligence efforts."

Aarcher is headquartered in Annapolis, Md., and also has offices in Dallas and Denver. "We have been growing rapidly and will continue to grow," said Los, who has 15 years of experience in the environmental consulting end of the business. "Our extensive experience has allowed us to establish relationships with local municipalities, federal agencies and Tribal nations that we consult with routinely. Because of our constant interaction with these groups, we've been able to decrease project turn-around times." Much of Aarcher's growth can be attributed to its trained and experienced staff, which includes senior scientists, biologists, natural resource permitting specialists and Secretary of the Interior qualified architectural historians and archaeologists.

JDSU Enables Mobile Nets

In an industry best described as one of rapid change, wireless companies are scrambling to finding ways to adapt to ever-evolving industry technologies. These changes include a massive increase in data usage by mobile users, the expansion of Wifi networks and a higher prevalence of fiber optics. JDSU, a publicly traded company of over 5,000 employees, aids business in adapting to these changes. Founded in 1999 with the merger between two fiber-optic companies, JDS Fitel and Uniphase Corporation, JDSU has specialized in optical products and broadband communications for over 15 years. JDSU's services cover a broad range of markets, including the mobile industry, anti-counterfeiting, aerospace and defense, gesture recognition and even commercial lasers.

Paul Gowans, who has five years of experience at JDSU, currently serving as its Global Marketing Manager, described JDSU's role within the mobile industry. "We work primarily with enabling networks, so not just getting them turned on, but making sure they're customer ready and taking care of any troubleshooting issues, so we're really focused on managing and optimizing networks for our clients," Gowans said. With over 20 years of experience in the mobile industry, Gowans has seen a number of changes within the industry. He said, however, that recently he has seen a quickening of the rate of change in his five years at JDSU.

Among these changes include the manner in which mobile users interact with their devices and the quickness at which data is delivered to personal devices. "People are much less tolerant these days of not being able to access their main applications," Gowans said. "We're in much more of a mobile data world than a voice world, and that has obviously changed the networks that are needed to support that." In order to adapt to these changes, as well as more effectively manage the gamut of services offered by its company, JDSU will split into two separate, publicly traded companies on August 1. The company will split into the soon-to-be-established entities: Lumentum and Viavi Solutions. Lumentum will focus on JDSU's CCOP business, which includes optical and photonic products, commercial lasers, and three-dimensional sensing. Continue Reading

Wireless Company Represents Landlords, Ensures Fair Negotiations

For many landlords, negotiating a lease with a carrier or tower development company can be rather daunting. In an industry as specialized as telecom, evaluating a ground lease is, quite frankly, something the typical landlord doesn't have the expertise to do. Enter Airwave Management. Since 2008, Steve Kazella, founder and president, has been providing consulting services to cell site landlords in negotiations with wireless companies. His clients include municipalities, large hospitals and homeowners all across the United States and Canada.

“You name it, we’ve probably represented it. From farmers in Nebraska getting $100/month to sovereign Indian nations—landlords large and small, we’ve helped,” Kazella said. After 15 years in the wireless industry working in site acquisition, Kazella said he began Airwave Management when he noticed an “untapped market.” Many carriers and tower companies were being “heavy-handed” with their landlords, said Kazella, and, as Airwave Management’s slogan reads, it seeks to “level the playing field for cell site landlords.”

“I was getting a lot of calls from senior citizens and churches, people from the heartland of the country, who were getting $500 a month and were getting threatening letters about lowering their rent or the tower would be taken down, so we decided to advocate for the landlord,” Kazella said. Continue Reading

Providing a Gamut of Services, Pinpoint Services Continues Strong

Most wireless companies are specifically focused on just one area of the industry. To name a few, tower construction, Internet and telephone services, or site development. Then there’s Pinpoint Services, Inc. Based out of Papillion, Nebraska, the telecom engineering company began nearly a century ago, when its parent company, Cambridge Telephone Company, was founded. This company eventually gave birth to the Pinpoint brand. Rather than simply applying to one entity, however, this brand includes nine separate companies: Pinpoint Towers, Communications and Broadband, TMA Group, Digital Capital Partners, LLC, Viteum, Nevada Broadband Networks, Pinpoint Services, Inc. and Cambridge Telephone Company.

Ed Dennis, who works for the safety training division of Pinpoint Services, joined Pinpoint in 2012, after nearly two decades within the wireless industry. Although Dennis works directly for Pinpoint Services, Inc., his job requires him to assist with other companies underneath the Pinpoint umbrella. “Probably about 75% to 80% of what I do is within that department, but I do whatever’s needed,” Dennis said. Dennis got his start in the industry as a Safety Manager at Leary Construction in the early ‘90’s, then moved to Com-Tech Construction in the early 2000’s, eventually landing at Pinpoint in 2012. Dennis had very practical reasons for entering the tower construction industry. Continue Reading

Tower Ticker

Thursday, December 24, 2015

SYMBOL	TIME & PRICE		CHG & % CHG		DAY'S LOW & HIGH		VOLUME	AVG VOL
AMT	01:04pm EST	98.14	-0.36	-0.37%	97.92	98.70	668,387	2,000,250
CCI	01:05pm EST	86.94	-0.36	-0.41%	86.83	87.44	675,782	2,137,570
SBAC	01:00pm EST	104.04	+0.66	+0.64%	103.22	104.54	267,987	1,180,170
S	01:00pm EST	3.81	-0.11	-2.81%	3.81	3.92	4,905,865	19,858,400
T	01:00pm EST	34.66	-0.12	-0.35%	34.54	34.77	6,862,360	24,461,800
TMUS	01:00pm EST	39.67	-0.46	-1.15%	39.65	40.25	882,270	4,843,210
VZ	01:03pm EST	46.71	-0.24	-0.51%	46.60	46.97	4,279,919	13,610,400

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