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# TRIANGLE BUSINESS JOURNAL

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## Four heads are better than one

Triangle Business Journal - by [Frank Vinluan](#)

DURHAM - At most companies, big decisions usually fall to one person - the chief executive or president.

At **Trident Technology Solutions**, a Durham-based data and telecommunications services company whose name and logo suggest a three-pronged weapon, decisions are made by four founders - equal owners with equal say in how the company is run.

Nick Merola, Trident's vice president of sales and one of the partners, says the four always try to reach consensus. If a decision ends up being a two-two tie, they plan to turn to their lawyers for advice.

"It's never gotten to that," Merola says.

All of the partners - Merola, Vice President of Communications Scott Moore, Vice President of Engineering Rich DePierro and Vice President of Operations Tad Kuvik - are veterans of the telecommunications industry. Wanting to offer an alternative to larger telecommunications companies like Sprint and Qwest, the four formed Trident in 2004.

All of them had management experience but none had ever owned a business. They sought advice from lawyers and accountants and used their customer contacts from their previous companies to help build a customer base. Trident offers a range of communications and information technology services for business customers.

Trident has done jobs as small as a single Dairy Queen. But business is growing to the point where Trident services mid-size businesses to enterprise business clients. Customers include **EMC** and **Duke Corporate Education**.

In January, Trident finished work on Duke CE's new location at the American Tobacco Complex in Durham. The executive education company is now in the former Lucky Strike building, an old warehouse with a lot of exposed brick and wood. Kevin Maughan, Duke CE's director of information technology, did not want that character diminished by bundles of cables. He says Trident found ways to hide the miles of structured wiring behind joists and rafters.



Steve Wilson

Robert Capwell, Trident's business development manager, says the company has found new business through property management companies, general contractors and electric contractors.

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"Anyone can lay a wire down from A to B," Maughan says. "It takes a level of art and sophistication to do it in a way that it just disappears."

Most of Trident's work has been in the Triangle. But those jobs have led to work in other parts of the country; some clients ask Trident to work on their satellite offices as well. Trident projects 2007 revenue will be close to \$3 million.

Trident is also growing through an acquisition. Earlier this month, Trident closed on the purchase of TELE-Tech, a Chapel Hill communications and data services company. Though the purchase helps Trident expand its footprint in the Chapel Hill, Pittsboro and Carrboro areas, Merola says acquisition will be the exception rather than the rule. Trident, which has a Raleigh office in addition to its Durham headquarters, is looking to expand its North Carolina reach by opening a Charlotte office next year.

Trident also plans to get into security, as in cameras and alarms. These days, security systems for buildings run on the same kind of wiring that telecommunications systems use. Security is a natural progression, Merola says.

But security services aren't expected until the first quarter of 2008. Trident is still getting the approvals and clearances required of all security companies. When that happens, the Cannon School in Concord will take a look at the Trident offering. Cannon already uses Trident for all of its wiring and technology needs.

"It's important to have the same person, the same contact," says Cannon's director of technology systems, Rick Strickland. "If I call, they're familiar with me, with my school."

Trident's addition of new services and new office space is budgeted for 2008. Merola says the partners don't need investors. But he adds that the four partners realize there might be a time when Trident needs a single leader. He says they've been told since they started that a successful business needs one person in charge. Merola says that's a discussion for another day.

"Do we have to hire someone to come in and run the whole show?" he asks. "We're not dismissing it. But right now, we're fine with the business model of sweat equity."

### **Trident Technology Solutions**

Founded: November 2004

Owners: Nick Merola, Scott Moore, Rich DePierro and Tad Kuvik

Employees: 20

Projected 2007 revenue: \$3 million

Business specialty: Voice and data services for businesses

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