

TECH TITANS
WINNER
EMERGING
COMPANY CEO

Nina Vaca

Chief Executive Officer
PINNACLE TECHNICAL RESOURCES INC.

Company leaders may have a hard time revving up their employees' enthusiasm these days, but Nina Vaca has that covered.

The CEO of Pinnacle Technical Resources, which specializes in information-technology vendor management and staffing, is staging a yearlong pep rally —

with a race car theme — to communicate with and motivate her employees.

The racing theme is a deliberate metaphor. Her 65 corporate employees and 3,000 consultants are her pit crew and integral to the success of the company. Employees wear their pit crew shirts every Friday and are treated to quarterly events.

"People are really motivated by it," Vaca said. "The point I'm trying to get across is that every single person, regardless of what they do, makes a difference.

It's part of our strategy to make people understand they are valued. It's our collective efforts that make us who we are today."

Vaca founded Pinnacle in 1996. The Dallas-based company provides staffing, payroll and vendor management services to *Fortune* 500 companies that include Dallas-based Energy Future Holdings and Texas Instruments Inc., Hewlett-Packard's Electronic Data Systems and AT&T.

Pinnacle's revenue hit \$200 million in 2008, up from \$2 million in mid-2002. While the IT staffing industry is experiencing declines of 27% and higher, she expects Pinnacle's revenue to stabilize in 2009.

"Remaining steady is a huge win for us," she said.

Vaca added three executive members to her team this year, including a chief legal counsel who spearheaded the company's first acquisition, Performance Recruiters in Southlake. Pinnacle just inked a large contract with Unisys, a global IT services and software provider, to manage half of its IT contract labor in the Americas.

The company also took its first official leap into Canada, opening an office to accommodate its client, Enterprise Rent-A-Car.

"In these kind of economic times you have to strategically plan your future," she said. "Canada is a piece of that; the acquisition is a piece."

Vaca is making another kind of investment — in people. She supports Dallas Mayor Tom Leppert's minority intern program and hosted eight interns last year and three this year. She also works with the Women's Business Council Southwest, mentoring entrepreneurial women from the Middle East who have started their own micro businesses.

As a woman and minority — she was born in Ecuador — Vaca has both the passion and the resources to help others.

"There's an old saying, 'Where there's success, there's responsibility,'" she said. "I feel so blessed. I know it's come through hard work and sacrifice, but personally I am crazy passionate about education and entrepreneurship. Those are two things that changed my personal life. If every individual that ran a large-scale organization had something they were passionate about and touched lives, we could all help each other."

— Karen Nielsen

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Steve Steinheimer

CEO | SSG LTD.

When the dot-com bubble popped, Steve Steinheimer, CEO of SSG Ltd., wasn't sure if his small consulting firm would survive. With many of his clients reducing their spending, Steinheimer was forced to regroup. "We got more focused on our offerings and narrowed them down," he said.

The company concentrated on three Oracle product implementations and also took a more proactive marketing approach, using newsletters, events and call campaigns to reestablish business with past and current customers in hopes of gaining future referrals.

With his plan, Steinheimer renewed SSG's growth, which increased 30% year to year from 2006-2008. The company marks the first quarter of 2009 as its best.

Steinheimer has increased client satisfaction — as well as employee retention. He implemented an annual company ski trip, as well as employee volunteer opportunities, such as sorting gifts for the Salvation Army's Angel Tree program or raising funds to benefit Mothers Against Drunk Driving and the North Texas Food Bank.

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Paul VanMeter

President and Chief Technology Officer | COLO4DALLAS

As co-founder of Colo4Dallas, Paul VanMeter sought to fill a need in the local technology market. What Dallas businesses needed, he decided, was a facility that could house IT equipment off-site and provide unflinching uptime for their Web sites and networks.

Starting the venture in 2000, however, proved to be difficult. During the first year, VanMeter poured his efforts into the fledgling company and did not collect an annual salary.

As emergencies came up with employees, VanMeter and his business partner would often have to fill in and serve as the 24-hour support staff member.

Fortunately, that has changed with company growth. "It's been several years since I've had to make a mad dash to the data center," VanMeter jokes.

As the price of energy skyrocketed in 2005, the company's profit margins reduced considerably. Fortunately, VanMeter said, Colo4Dallas was able to hold the line. He's an executive who believes in investing in employees: VanMeter recently increased all employees' salaries by about 10% and paid their health insurance premiums.

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Alastair Westgarth

CEO and President | TANGO NETWORKS INC.

Whether it's raising company capital or employee morale, Alastair Westgarth always stays positive. The Tango Networks president and CEO has maintained this attitude despite having to reduce the size of his team and increase individual workloads.

"You try to look for ways to inspire and motivate everybody," he said. "If everybody sees you down, they're going to be down."

Leading by example, he said, is essential, and he routinely encourages an open-door policy to facilitate information-sharing and employee inclusion.

The telecommunications technology company develops products that integrate mobile phones with business communication networks.

Westgarth has served as a board member of Tango Networks since its inception in 2005. He joined the company's management team in 2007.

In his spare time, Westgarth supports cancer and diabetes research causes and has served as a volunteer for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society's MS150 Challenge.

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