

# A Growth Mode

An Interview with Sue Spradley,  
President, North America Region, Nokia Siemens Networks



Sue Spradley

**EDITORS' NOTE** Sue Spradley has held her current post since July 2007. She previously served as President of Global Operations for Nortel Networks Corporation from October 2004 through November 2005, after having held several senior positions at the company since 1997. She began her career at Data General as a Systems Engineer for a Fortune 500 business office. Spradley was a member of the National Security Telecommunications Advisory Committee, which reported to the President of the United States. She serves as an active member in her community as a board member for the Museum of Nature & Science, Dallas Chamber of Commerce, and Viewzi Inc. Spradley holds a bachelor's degree in computer science from the University of Kansas and graduated from the Advanced Management Program at Harvard University Business School.

**COMPANY BRIEF** Nokia Siemens Networks ([www.nokiasiemensnetworks.com](http://www.nokiasiemensnetworks.com)) is a leading enabler of communications services. The company comprises the former Networks Business Group of Nokia and the carrier-related businesses of Siemens. The company is one of the top three vendors in the telecommunications infrastructure industry and continues the legacy of Nokia and Siemens. Siemens has been a front-runner in the communications industry since the mid-19th century, while Nokia pioneered the development of mobile communications and became the world leader in this field.

**Where is Nokia Siemens Networks' business positioned today, and what is your outlook for future growth?**

Nokia Siemens is the second-largest telecommunications supplier worldwide. We supply wireless and wireline network equipment to communications providers globally. We are definitely in a growth mode, so that's exciting. The opportunity is there to grow our share in North America year over year. To do that, we've got to overcome competitors that have been in this market for many years.

**On the surface, products and services sound similar among competitors. Is it possible to differentiate? Can you be unique?**

There are a few things that make us unique. First, Nokia and Siemens, our two parents, come with 100-plus years' experience. Second, Nokia is among the leading mobile telecommunications handset providers, so we provide a network capability and the applications that make the mobile experience work end to end. Third, more than 60,000 employees globally really give us scale, particularly in professional services.

**Did the cultures of the two merging companies fit well together, and how critical was that in the merger?**

We did a values development program as a way to merge our cultures and identify which values both cultures respect. We got hundreds of employees from both companies together and had them work to define the culture. It's easy to think we're a Finnish/German culture because that is where the two companies are headquartered, but it's a very global company.

**How broad is the target market for Nokia Siemens Networks, and is it a niche?**

It's broad in that we provide services and equipment to everybody from cable operators to large wireless and wireline services providers. It's a niche in that we are in very strategic areas of communications network infrastructure and services, so we're not trying to be everything to everyone.

**Are you seeing opportunities when you look to Latin America, Brazil, and other markets?**

Absolutely. In some Latin America and Asia-Pacific markets, customers are using mobile phones as their only phone. In North America, we see that happening with younger users, but it isn't their only option. It's a very interesting market dynamic, which brings different market demands from region to region.

**Are young people excited coming into this business, and have you been able to attract and retain the talent you need to grow?**

At one year old, we've already established values and principles that support becoming one of the best places to work. This is a fast-paced industry – the technology is moving, and college grads are excited about becoming a part of that.

**Are there advantages to being based in Dallas?**

Dallas is home to several technology companies, and we have a diverse workforce here along with major universities in the area. Plus, Dallas is a central location, so bringing customers into our labs and getting out to service and manage networks around the country is easier.

**Is there a critical role that decision makers at leading companies need to play when it comes to giving back to the community, and is that important to you?**

It's something Nokia Siemens values. If we put our employees and the community first, we service our customers better. I sit on several nonprofit boards in Dallas. It's great to sell technology to big companies, but it's as wonderful to see young children get excited about engineering and see a future they might not have seen for themselves.

**You've achieved success within this industry. Are women coming into the industry and do they have opportunities to grow?**

There weren't as many women in this industry years ago as there are now. Our challenge is to show women that this is a great place to develop and to grow. As a woman, I have the opportunity to pave the road for some very intelligent female engineering graduates and show them they can have an education in math and science and really succeed in this industry.

**When this opportunity came up, what made it the right fit, and has it been what you expected?**

What excited me about the job was that two global leaders were coming together. Every day, we have a goal of doing a little more business than we did yesterday, and it's proving to be what we need to grow our share in this market. There's really exciting technology coming out, networks are getting used in a lot of different ways, and it's a cool area to be in. Maybe it's not everything I expected – it was new for me to come into a recently merged company – but I'm really having a blast. ●