



# Wired for Success

Jeanne Dindinger-Martinez of Star Telecommunications, Inc.

BY MATT ALDERTON

Everybody buys groceries. For more than two decades, however, Jeanne Dindinger-Martinez devoted her life to selling them. The daughter of a small-town grocer in southern Colorado, she began working for Safeway Inc. in high school, became an assistant store manager in college, and then spent nearly 10 years working in human resources doing hiring, training, and affirmative-action work for 120 Safeway stores in a six-state region. After that, Dindinger-Martinez was promoted to information technology. Then, her employer dropped a bomb: Safeway was moving her department to Phoenix.

"I decided not to move to Phoenix," says Dindinger-Martinez, 58, who left Safeway in 1994. "It was a big decision. I worked for Safeway for 23 years; all I knew was groceries."

Actually, her grocery career had taught Dindinger-Martinez valuable skills in sales, technology, communications, and management, which she used in spades at her next job with a Denver-based

telecommunications company. Initially hired as a temporary fill-in for the company's receptionist, Dindinger-Martinez spent approximately eight years at the company, during which time she was promoted to computer salesperson, sales manager, operations manager, and, ultimately, vice president.

"At that time, I decided to start my own business," says Dindinger-Martinez, who founded Star Telecommunications, Inc. in October 2002. "I'm an accomplisher. I need to accomplish things, and I need to be successful. I wanted a new challenge and starting my own business was a challenge."

More than that, it was an opportunity. Although she knew very little about telecommunications when she left Safeway, Dindinger-Martinez had spent the better part of a decade learning all there was to know about the industry at her new company. Star Telecommunications was her chance to test not only her knowledge, but also her leadership skills. "I'm not the person who goes out and installs cable," she

## At A Glance

**LOCATION:**  
Lakewood, CO

**EMPLOYEES:**  
17

**AREA OF SPECIALTY:**  
Voice and data systems, cable-wire installation, help-desk services, telecommunications consulting



Jeanne Dindinger-Martinez, Founder.



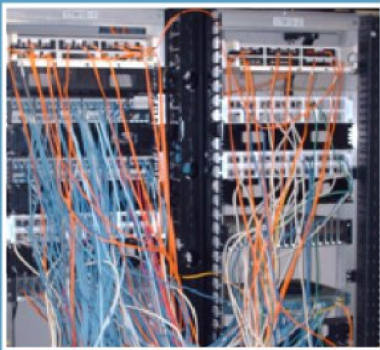
Telephony and IT Solutions

Specialist in low-voltage cabling,  
Norstar Phone Systems and  
Allworx Phone Systems

A woman owned business.

Shooting for Excellence in  
Customer Service  
SBA 8(a), SDB, WBE,  
MBE, DBE, SBE Certified

Before:



After:



7717 W. 6th Ave, Unit B  
Lakewood, CO 80214  
[www.startelinc.com](http://www.startelinc.com)



says. "I'm the project manager. That's what I do: I manage."

A natural leader, Dindinger-Martinez relies on talented technicians to do her company's ground-level work, which includes selling, installing, and troubleshooting telephone systems, data networks, and cable infrastructure. She relies on herself, however, to do the high-level work of strategic planning and growth—a job she's done well, according to her books. Although it ended 2002 with three employees and just \$89 in revenue, Star Telecommunications ended 2009 with 28 employees and \$2.3 million in revenue.

"It hasn't been easy," Dindinger-Martinez says. "I used my own personal money to build the business and didn't receive a pay-check for two years. Once we got our first big contract, however, we just kept growing and growing and growing."

Over the last eight years, Star Telecommunications has counted among its largest clients Qwest Communications, which signed a \$3.6 million contract in 2005; Buckley Air Force Base, which signed a \$364,000 contract in 2008; and United Airlines, which signed a \$286,000 contract in 2009. Currently, the company holds contracts with the Denver Housing Authority, Interlock Construction, MSN Communications, Safeway, and UMB Banks, among many others—including Denver International Airport, which last year signed a six-year, \$3 million contract.

To help it compete for business, Star Telecommunications has been certified as a small, disadvantaged, and woman- and minority-owned business, and as a Small Business Administration (SBA) 8(a) contractor, which helps woman- and minority-owned enterprises develop their businesses with support in the form of mentoring, procurement assistance, business counseling, training, financial assistance, surety bonding, and other management and technical assistance.

As Dindinger-Martinez says, however, Star Telecommunications hasn't grown because of its minority status.—it's grown in spite of it. "I think even when I was working in the grocery business I was held back a lot because I was a female and a minority," she

### Star Telecommunications' Certifications

SBA 8(a) Certified

Small Business Enterprise (SBE)

Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE)

SBA Small Disadvantaged Business (SDB)

Women-Owned Business Enterprise (WBE)

Minority Business Enterprise (MBE)

says. "Even now, with all the certifications we have, it's really difficult doing business. Because telecommunications is a male industry, women have to work 10 times harder to get contracts. I feel, as a minority woman, that people don't perceive me as having as much knowledge as a white male."

On the bright side, her struggles have prepared Dindinger-Martinez to weather all sorts of challenges, including her greatest yet: the economy, which has forced her to reduce her staff to 17 and to factor many of her invoices in order to finance payroll.

"The way I'm going to overcome this is I'm going to increase my sales force," Dindinger-Martinez says. "The only way I can get out of this is to increase my sales as much as I possibly can. Also, I'm the type of person who likes to do everything myself, but I can't do that if I want to continue growing. I'm not Superwoman. So, very soon, I'm going to hire a general manager to help run the operations part of the business."

In addition to expanding her sales staff, Dindinger-Martinez plans to expand her service offerings to include a new division dedicated to outside plants, which is the physical cabling of fiber outside of and in between buildings. Ultimately, her best strategy is the one that she used to get from Safeway to Star Telecommunications: persistence. "I'm a pretty aggressive person," Dindinger-Martinez says. "I don't quit. I just keep going and going and going." *H/E*