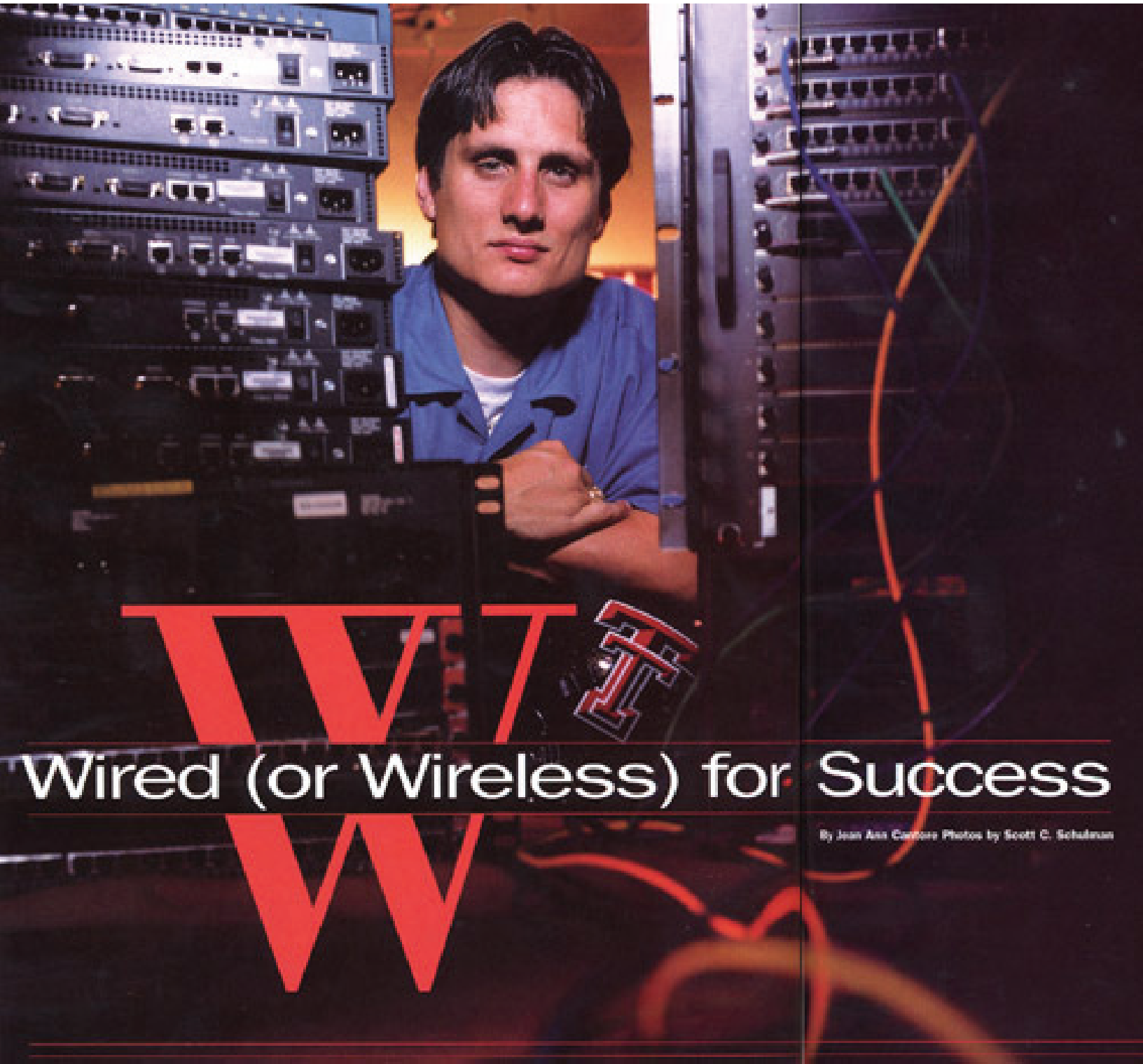


## Wired (or Wireless) for Success

By Jean Ann Cantore

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## BYTES AND BITS ABOUT SCOTT A. SMITH

**What do you do when you're not working?**

I have a boat, so I go out on the lake often, and my senior engineer and I have taken up a new recreation of paragliding—it's like hang-gliding but with a sail. I like to play the piano. I've taken flying lessons. I try to get back to Texas Tech for football games.

**Hometown?**

I was born in Austin, but we lived overseas most of our lives. My dad was in the Air Force, so we spent a good portion of my formative years in Germany and England. Lubbock is my adopted hometown.

**What do you listen to most often?**  
Journey.

**What's your dream vacation?**

To get out on an secluded island with no people around and to be able to relax and watch the waves come in.

**Best college moment?**

It's a toss-up. Bringing everyone together to protest possibly closing the ET department or being named Student of the Year for ET.

**Pets?**

Two cats and two dogs and a saltwater tropical tank.

**Last thing you read?**

"Good to Great" by Jim Collins, a book about entrepreneurs and business.

**Coolest computer game?**

"Resident Evil."

What do you do to keep those nasty viruses and worms from invading your office computer network? How do you stay on top of your e-mail messages when your second home is DFW International Airport? Is there any way to upgrade that antiquated telephone system in your department so callers don't sound as if they're trapped in a tin can? Scott A. Smith, president and CEO of SAS Network Solutions Inc., has the answers to these questions and more.

SAS Network Solutions Inc. is a two-and-a-half year-old technology company based in Canyon Country, Calif. The organization handles Internet protocol and other computer-related issues for a variety of clientele. Current clients include BMG Music, msn.com, The Bakersfield Californian newspaper, Bertelsmann's Services, as well as customers in Australia and India.

"Everybody needs Internet connectivity," Smith explains. "Everybody needs a network for their work."

Smith's company specializes in network security, wireless networking and IP (Internet protocol) telephony. He notes that security is always going to be a major concern for corporate networks, while wireless networks are constantly evolving. He adds that almost 95 percent of their accounts involve discussing how to add IP telephony, where voice communication is carried over Internet networks rather than the traditional phone lines. He also says that he thinks in the next five years, IP telephony will be common in homes.

Not one to shy away from challenges, Smith is open to all types of customers. His company works primarily with the commercial sector, most in manufacturing and communications/entertainment areas, but they also have worked in the education and medical arenas.

"My favorite part is being able to deal with the customers," Smith notes. "Every engineering situation we go into is different. Every customer has different requirements. We're dealing with the latest technology in wireless, security and IP telephony. Everything we touch has a little bit of a different twist. We tend to try to focus on things that are most fore-thinking, developing stuff that's already been done. We have a lot of customers that have unique requirements, and we try to be creative with that. It's always challenging. You have to be able to project what the customer is going to need in 10 years and design for that. Everyone is different."

Smith and his colleagues may work with clients to integrate older computer systems with new systems, or they may implement a completely new system for a company.

Much like the electronic puzzlers he solves on a daily basis, Smith's company has really come together. At the beginning of 2003, the company projected a sales revenue of about \$3.5 million. They met that goal in April and began looking toward \$6 to 7 million by the end of the year.

"The first few years of a business are the most difficult, trying to establish new relationships and objectives," Smith says. "For the remainder of this year and the next year, we're going to try to maintain what we have now and build strong relationships with our existing customers."

"Within the next five years, I'd like to see us in a position where we have tripled in size of staff and client base. I don't know that we want to become too big too fast. A lot of our customers enjoy the fact that they work with a small organization because they get a lot more personal touch. We'll try to maintain a steady growth and make sure we deliver quality and not just quantity."

Working hard is nothing new for Smith, who actually started his own computer support company while attending high school. He also held down a job as a computer technician in the College of Engineering Dean's Office while attending Texas Tech. He notes that he got his start working with networking and communications systems as a student employee in the college. It was there that he learned to integrate old technologies with new ones, something he does on a daily basis in his company.

"I am really proud of Scott and his accomplishments," comments Brent Guinn, director of distance learning for the College of Engineering and Smith's former supervisor. "When he first graduated from Tech with his electrical/electronics technology degree with a computer science minor and was interviewing for a job, he was hired by a company that normally does not even interview technology graduates. I think that this shows that the recruiters saw something very special in Scott from the beginning and he has moved forward rapidly ever since."

Another exciting aspect of Smith's college career was his involvement with student organizations. He was an Engineering Ambassador, part of a student group that spoke about the engineering field to prospective students and helped with college-wide events. He served on the college grade appeals committee.

Most memorable to Smith, though, was being active in the Society for Engineering Technologists. During Smith's senior year, 1996, the then-dean of the college recommended to the Board of Regents that the Department of Engineering Technology be disbanded. Smith led his fellow SET members in a protest, purportedly the first since the Vietnam War in front of the Texas Tech Administration Building during a regents' meeting. (The dean's efforts to close the department failed.)

"We took a lot of pride in everything we were doing," Smith recalls. "Speaking for my colleagues in ET, we always felt we were given the short end of the stick. This was our chance to demonstrate that we believe in what we're doing. It was a blast. The fact that it was successful was even better. The students and faculty were in the department because they wanted to be. It's a quality program; I got a lot out of it."

Smith also was named Engineering Technology Student of the Year his senior year.

After graduating with his bachelor's degree from Texas Tech University, the budding entrepreneur took a job with China Lake Naval Warfare Facility in California. After a year, he moved to Pasadena, Calif., and spent the next four years working for the NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory. He worked for Cisco Systems for the next year until he left to start his own company.

"I had developed a lot of relationships and made a lot of connections while working at Cisco," Smith explains. "It was a natural progression for me to start this company, which is a Cisco Premier Company. I surrounded myself with the right people and had the opportunities to move forward."

A typical day for Smith and his staff of engineers and support people is usually anything but. He and his colleagues wear several hats, something Smith relishes.

"I work anywhere from 10 a.m. to 2 or 3 a.m. and then start over the next day," the self-described non-morning person says. "I follow up on existing projects and place sales calls. Often I'm going to meetings with our existing clients to determine what their needs are now and in the next six months. It's a lot of planning. I still stay on the technical side. I do a lot of design work and a lot of the proposals. Typically, it involves a mix of those things: working on engineering proposals, working on designs for new customers and then contacting and meeting with new customers just in the initial phases."

Despite the long days, Smith is up for the challenge.

"You have to have your thinking cap on all the time," he quips.

There's no question Smith has his on.