

SPECIALTY &  
CUSTOM CABLES

**DGC** DATA GUIDE  
**CABLE**  
*Electronic and Electrical Wire & Cable Products*

# SERVICE, HONESTY AND RESPECT: THE FOUNDATIONS OF DATA GUIDE CABLE



Don Irving, president of Data Guide Cable

One evening in the fall of 1983 I was overseas, sitting at a hotel bar. I struck up a casual conversation with a man sitting next to me. As the evening progressed, he told me how he had started a business many years ago with a single bulldozer and over time had grown it into an international, multi-billion dollar operation that involved many different industries. It was a fascinating story and when he finished he asked about my work.

I told him I was working for a company that had recently been bought by a venture capitalist and the ethos had changed from an

engineering driven company to a financially driven one. The new management group had little understanding of our products and knew even less about our customers. It was extremely frustrating as I saw the situation getting worse rather than better. I confided to him that a co-worker and I had been talking about leaving the company and starting our own.

He immediately asked, "What are you waiting for?" I said that I was presently making a decent salary, my wife and I had just had our third child, and we had a house with a substantial mortgage. With young children we had no savings and the general economy was in poor shape. I was very apprehensive about putting everything

we had at such risk; I wasn't completely sure it was the right time. He looked at me for a minute and said, "You only have to be right fifty one percent of the time!" That one statement gave me a very different perspective.

The following week I quit my job and proceeded to mortgage almost everything: the house, the kids, and the dog! My co-worker and I put a plan together and with the proverbial smile and a tin cup convinced a bank to lend us an intimidating amount of money. A few months later, in December of 1983, Data Guide Cable was incorporated.

We started Data Guide with the premise that everybody who works for us will have a thorough understanding of our customers, how we can best service them, and what products we make for them. It is also paramount that all of Data Guide's customers and everyone else who deals with our company are treated honestly and with respect. These are the foundations of our business.

After twenty-five years of growth and success these tenets are still valid. After purchasing my partner's half of the business a few years ago, I continue to embrace and emphasize these core principles. I feel Data Guide's success is due to our customers recognizing these fundamentals and consequently, their willingness to consistently share their opportunities with us.

Don Irving  
President  
Data Guide Cable



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## Data Guide offers new products, new ideas

"In a highly competitive, global market, we provide our customers with new products and new ideas," says Joel Sibley, vice president of sales. At the same time, escalating costs of materials have dramatically changed the dynamics of the cable industry. Copper has skyrocketed in price from a dollar a pound to more than four dollars and the volatility still persists.

"All these things have forced us to work more efficiently," says Don Irving, president. "Our supervisors have been trained to be much more aware of the cost of scrap materials. We purchased new equipment to help reduce a large portion of the scrap we generate. We also schedule our production now in ways that help reduce our start up scrap. In today's environment you have to do these things or you will quickly be out of business."

That means the days of quoting a firm price are long gone, Sibley explains. Now, escalator clauses are written into contracts to cover the swings in the price of copper. Recent surges in oil prices have also affected the cost of petroleum-based products such as PVC and polyethylene used in the production of cables. Data Guide uses 50 different types of PVC alone in its production lines.

Today's customers for cable products are much more sophisticated. "They know a lot more and are very specific about what they want and when they want it," Sibley says. Just in time shipments are now common. "If you get it there too early or too late, you're penalized," he notes. Customers are also very concerned about quality control and regulatory compliance. Data Guide's factory and quality system are routinely audited by its customers.



A braiding machine applies a woven bronze shield over cable to prevent external electrical fields from contaminating data in the cable.

## VERSATILE IS BETTER

Within the cable industry, Data Guide is certainly one of the most versatile players and that suits the Gardner, Massachusetts based company just fine.

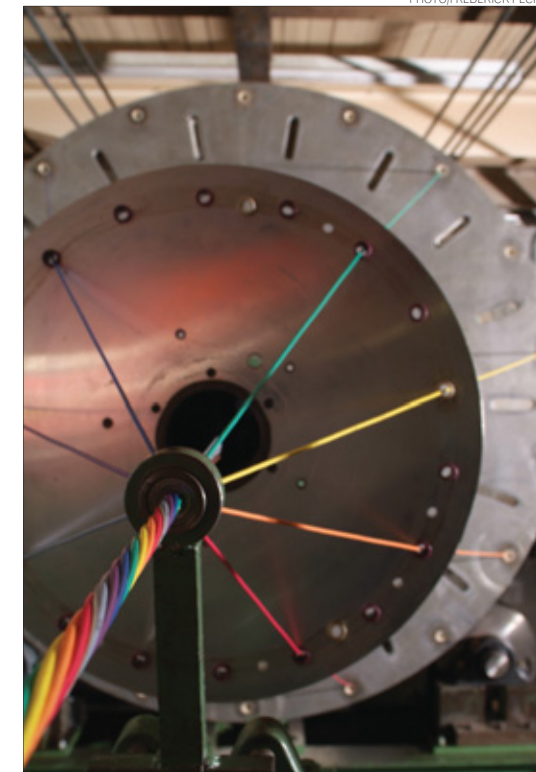
"Our niche is runs of highly specialized cable projects demanding a high level of service," says Joel Sibley, vice president of sales. While many cable manufacturers focus on large-scale production in a single type of product, Data Guide's machines are set up to handle a multitude of products. "We're set up for versatility," Sibley adds, "and often will do 125 different jobs in a week."

Jim Ayers, national sales manager, notes that, "our customer base is off the beaten path. We don't compete for big accounts; we can offer small customers personal service."

Data Guide's experienced sales staff offers customers a wealth of knowledge of the cable industry. Collectively they represent more than 100 years of experience. "Instead of doing just one job, we will take the time and effort to find what else we can do for our customers," Ayers says.

Over its 25-year history, Data Guide has grown with many of its customers and in doing so developed strong bonds with them. "We offer service they are not going to get from a big company," says Kris Danault, account manager.

Another major difference between Data Guide and its larger competitors is the



Data Guide's planetary cabler makes highly flexible cable that can be used in robotic applications.

ease of communication with customers and within the company itself. Each of the account managers controls his or her accounts.

"I don't have to get approval from layers of management," Danault says. "The sales staff is empowered to make our own decisions; there's not a lot of red tape to go through to get something done."

## Data Guide Cable sales staff contacts

**JOEL SIBLEY**  
vice president of sales  
978-632-0900 ext. 30  
Fax: 978-630-1872  
joels@dataguidecable.com

**JIM AYERS**  
national sales manager  
978-632-0900 ext. 23  
Fax: 978-630-1872  
jima@dataguidecable.com

**MARY-JO FLUET**  
senior account manager  
978-632-0900 ext. 16  
Fax: 978-630-1872  
maryjof@dataguidecable.com

**KRIS DANAULT**  
account manager  
978-632-0900 ext. 14  
Fax: 978-630-1872  
krisd@dataguidecable.com

## Why partner with Data Guide?

- Our sales staff members are experienced and knowledgeable; they can handle most technical questions on the spot.
- 98% of our shipments meet or beat promised ship dates.
- Our quality standards are high.
- Our quote times are 24 hours, and often less than one hour.
- Our versatile assortment of products — with thousands of UL-approved styles — allows you to solve many of your cabling problems.
- We care about all our customers, large and small.
- Your phone call will be answered by a real person, not a machine.
- Data Guide Cable is privately owned and operated.
- All Data Guide Cable products are manufactured in our factory in the USA.



Data Guide president Don Irving, center, with employees; back row, from left to right: Sean Sorsanavongsa, Arthur Bessel, Randy Weidler, James Morse, Dennis Savoie; front row, left: Manuela Costa, (sitting) John Krauss, (kneeling).



Data Guide Cable's sales staff: Top row, left: Kris Danault, account manager, Joel Sibley, vice president of sales, Jim Ayers, national sales manager. Bottom row: Mary-Jo Fluett, senior account manager, Carly Goguen, customer service representative.

## OUTSTANDING QUALITY AND SERVICE DEFINE DATA GUIDE CABLE

**W**ith a strong belief in the ability to provide quality wire and cable products and outstanding customer service, Don Irving and Don Benoit launched Data Guide Cable Corporation 25 years ago.

With a loan backed by the Small Business Administration, Data Guide Cable shipped its first order in 1984. At that time the company had just three employees working in an old wood frame manufacturing building in Gardner, Massachusetts. Gradually the company became known for its problem solving and engineering ability; its satisfied customers have contributed a large portion of Data Guide's intrinsic growth.

Data Guide makes electrical/electronic cable in a wide variety of sizes for hundreds of different uses. Products are used in robotics, surveillance, security, ships, oil drilling rigs, x-ray machines, entertainment, specialty lighting, and video applications to name a few.

With state of the art materials, Data Guide manufactures cables that can be used in harsh environments and in temperature extremes. Most cables comply

with both North American and European regulatory requirements.

"Our forte is engineering," Irving says. "Most of our products are custom designed and built. We help our customers design the cables they need for special applications using the most cost effective materials available."

Within eight years of its launch, Data



Guide Cable had grown to 42 employees and accumulated an earnings record that demonstrated steady growth. Recognizing their remarkable success, the Small Business Administration honored Irving and his partner as Small Business Persons of the Year for the state of Massachusetts in 1992.

"Our philosophy was not to leverage ourselves to the point where we were vulnerable to economic downturns," Irving says. "We paid our original loan back within a few years and since then the growth has been slow and steady by design."

This conservative philosophy allowed Data Guide Cable to survive the recessions of the early 1990s and 2000s during times when many of its competitors were not so fortunate. In 1996 the company moved to its current location, a 175,000 sq. ft. manufacturing facility. Relocating in the same city allowed them to retain their entire workforce. Employee turnover is very low with most workers being with the company for more than ten years. Many have been there for over twenty years.

Two years ago, Irving bought out his partner and set about re-energizing the company to compete in a rapidly changing industry. Data Guide upgraded its quality control procedures to ISO 9000 standards and invested in new, state-of-the-art equipment. New additions to the sales staff have contributed new ideas and the company is focusing on steady growth.

Despite all the changes, Data Guide has remained true to the founding principles that served the company throughout its 25-year history.

"We continue to stress our quality and our service," Irving says. "We spend time developing and maintaining relationships with our customers."

## Data Guide solves problems

Early in its history, Data Guide Cable proved it could handle a vital project in record time. At the outset of the Gulf War in 1991, a Midwestern customer of Data Guide's needed specialized cables for high-tech weaponry: night-vision systems for missiles. Usually, specialized orders such as this one take about a month to produce and deliver. But Data Guide received the order as the war got underway; cables were needed as soon as possible. Data Guide's staff and suppliers all pitched in and after round the clock production, the cables were delivered in four days.

Such personal service has become Data Guide's hallmark and, as a result, the company has developed strong relationships with its customers. When one of them, a supplier of cable to the oil industry, lost its entire factory in Hurricane Katrina, the staff of Data Guide worked with the company for a year and a half to help it get back on its feet.

"They needed cable; everything they had was destroyed," Don Irving explains. "Their entire inventory was lost. Even though they had outstanding invoices with us, we provided them with cable so they could get back in business. We sat down with them face to face and worked out a plan. We helped them re-stock so they could rebuild the business." Today, the company is thriving again and Data Guide remains as one of its top suppliers.

Problem solving is Data Guide's strength. Jim Ayers, national sales manager, notes, "We can work with materials that larger companies just can't deal with. We're mavericks; we'll try new things to meet the needs of our customers. We haven't found a material we couldn't run."

For example, Data Guide produces cables designed to carry cameras through sewers for inspection. The cables have to withstand harsh chemical environments, so they are coated with a highly specialized material called Nylon 11. It's a viscous material that has a very small window of process temperature to work with. With the engineering expertise and the proper equipment, Data Guide is able to consistently run materials like this.





## MADE IN THE USA

### Going Green

Data Guide's recent improvements at the 175,000 sq. ft. production facility in Gardner, Mass have also made the company more energy efficient. Following are some of the highlights in Data Guide's process of becoming a greener company:

- Overhead lights have been replaced with high efficiency fluorescent lighting, an investment that's expected to lower the company's electrical energy consumption by 10% within the first year.
- The company installed a state of the art boiler control system and added new loading dock doors and windows throughout the building. As a result the company's fuel consumption has been dramatically reduced.
- Data Guide reduced its consumption of solvents and paints by investing heavily in new zero contact dot matrix printers that print data directly onto cable sheathing. The new printers have closed loop systems that, unlike older printers, don't emit hydrocarbons into the atmosphere.
- The company's scrap material is recycled off site for use in other products and industries.
- A water recycling system has cut company's consumption of water substantially. Water is used during extrusion to cool hot insulating materials. The recycling system pumps water to a cooling tank on the roof and then back into use on production lines. ■

PHOTO/FREDERICK PECK



Sean Sorsanavongsa, quality assurance inspector, tests cable for continuity.

**D**ata Guide Cable is rightfully proud of its strong local and national ties. All products shipped from the company's warehouse in Gardner, Massachusetts carry the sticker "Made in the USA."

"We're seeing a backlash against so much of the manufacturing that is done overseas," says Jim Ayers, national sales manager. "We're extremely proud that our products are made here."

All of Data Guide's employees live in or near the small Massachusetts town where the production facility is located. Historically known for furniture manufacturing, Gardner was experiencing an exodus of many of its manufacturers when Data Guide Cable was founded in 1983. Most of the furniture factories had moved out of state and overseas. Data Guide offered many of the industry's unemployed workers retraining for jobs on its cable production lines.

As Data Guide grew, the company retained a growing staff of skilled employees. Today, half of the employees have been with the company 15 years or more.

"Our first two production operators, Yvon Gallant and Steve Gay are still with us," says Don Irving, president. Irving, whose hobby is building clocks, awards one of his handcrafted timepieces to each Data Guide employee who has been with the company for 15 years.

"I've presented 22 clocks so far and I'm currently working on five more for this year," he says. For a company with 60 employees, that's an outstanding record of longevity.

Irving attributes Data Guide's success at retaining employees to the culture of the company. "There is a sense of respect at all levels that makes this a decent place to work," he says.

When Irving takes one of his daily walks on the production floor, he greets employees by name



PHOTO/FREDERICK PECK

Steve Gay, left, and Yvon Gallant, right, have been with Data Guide ever since the company was founded in 1983.

and stops to see what job they are working on. Observing the camaraderie between owner and employees, it's easy to understand Data Guide's success.

"This is a company that cares about the employees," a production line worker recently told a visitor.

"As the company grows it's a challenge to maintain that culture. I see it as one of my primary roles," Irving says.

Mary-Jo Fluet, senior account manager, has been with Data Guide for 25 years. She notes that the company's culture extends to the relationships she and other sales staff develop

PHOTO/MARGARET LEROUX



with their customers. "We know the families of our customers," Fluet says. "Many of our top 10 customers have been with us for 20 years or more."

That's a sterling record for a company's 25th anniversary.

### Company's canine support helps solve problems for disabled

To its customers, Data Guide Cable is known as a problem solver. With its donations of time and financial support, the company is also solving problems in the community and beyond.

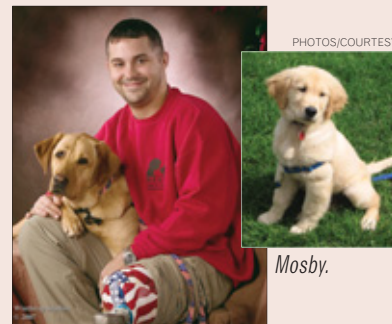
A cause foremost in the heart of Data Guide's chief executive is NEADS/Dogs for Deaf & Disabled Americans; support for the organization that trains and provides canine companions has been strong throughout the company's history.

In fact, one of the Irving family's dogs, a shepherd-collie mix named Mayer, was one of the first dogs trained by NEADS when the organization began in 1976. Mayer went on to 12 years of service to a deaf resident in the neighboring town of Winchendon.

"Don and his family have helped us spread the word about the important contribution service dogs make," says Sheila O'Brien, executive director of NEADS. "Their support has made a big difference," she adds. "It's support you can see, feel and actually pet."

Through donations companies such as Data Guide Cable as well as individuals are able to name puppies trained at the NEADS facility in Princeton, Massachusetts. "Mosby," one of the dogs sponsored by Data Guide Cable graduated in June and is serving as a ministry dog, visiting hospice and hospital patients.

NEADS trains all breeds and mixed breeds of dogs to help people who are deaf or physically disabled live more independently. The organization's newest program, NEADS Canines for Combat Veterans, is working to provide service dogs to wounded veterans returning from combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. ■



PHOTOS/COURTESY

Mosby.

One of the disabled veterans who received a NEADS dog.

## MEETING OUR CUSTOMERS' NEEDS FOR 25 YEARS

**"Industrial Electric Wire and Cable was Data Guide's first customer and we've remained a good customer for 25 years. As a worldwide distributor of wire, cable and wire management products, we need a fast response from our suppliers and Data Guide always comes through for us. Whether it's half an hour for a standard product or a couple of days for a specialty product, we count on Data Guide. We are a very people-oriented company, so we appreciate the personal service we get from Data Guide Cable."**

David Nestingen, president, Industrial Electric Wire and Cable

**"With Data Guide we get quality products at fair prices and timely delivery. They work with us to make sure our customers get what they want and stand by us as the manufacturer of their products. When we need a specialty product or problem solved Data Guide always comes up with a solution. We've been a customer of Data Guide since 1987; they've worked with us as we grew through consolidation from a small, private company to the world's leading supplier of wire and cable products."**

William Hale, materials manager, Anixter OEM Solutions

**"Lapp Tannehill is known as the premier wire and cable specialist in the markets we serve. For the past 25 years we have relied on Data Guide as our niche manufacturer for high end, specialty cable. We depend on Data Guide for good quality and good service; they always come up with a solution for our customers."**

Patty Lietzau, director of sales, Lapp Tannehill

Published by Worcester Business Journal's Custom Publishing Division, 2008.

Mark Murray  
Group Publisher

Andrea Shamgochian  
Marketing/Sales Assistant

Julie Jepsen  
Graphic Designer

Chris Juetten  
Project Manager

Margaret LeRoux  
Principal Writer

Frederick Peck  
Photographer

For information regarding Custom Publications call Chris Juetten, WBJ Custom Publishing Project Manager at 508-755-8004 ext. 270 or [cjuetten@wbjournal.com](mailto:cjuetten@wbjournal.com).



**DATA GUIDE CABLE CORPORATION**

560 Main St. • Gardner, MA 01440  
Tel. 978-632-0900 • Fax 978-630-1872

*[www.dataguidecable.com](http://www.dataguidecable.com)*