

Meet Melissa Allen, CEO at University Technical Services

Jim Ries: Hello and welcome to Java with Jim. I'm Jim Ries, Director of Business Development at Offit Kurman. Joined here today with Melissa Allen, CEO at University Technical Services. Melissa, how are you today?

Melissa Allen: I'm good, Jim, how are you? Great to see you.

Jim Ries: I'm doing great. Yeah, good to see you too. I run into you all the time and so glad we're able to get together and record this Java with Jim segment. So Melissa tell us about University Technical Services. What does your company do there and how is your company different from other companies in your industry?

Melissa Allen: Okay, great. Happy to tell you that. I love seeing you around town too. Just so you know. UTS is a woman-owned small business that was started in 2008 by Dr. Norris Crohn. We were an offshoot of University Research Foundation, which is a nonprofit who [00:01:00] had an NSA contract and the contract had no longer had a need for a nonprofit.

It needed to be a for-profit, therefore, UTS was formed and for many years, Dr. Crohn ran UTS. And then after he passed away, Dr. Jewel Barlow with the University of Maryland, he runs the wind tunnel, took over and currently our chairman of the board is Retired, Vice Admiral David Archizel.

He was CEO for many years. So UTS has pivoted with different CEOs and been through some changes over the years. I was elected CEO in 2023. As woman owned, the board decided to go, woman owned and I proudly took on the role. So we basically now after some silver sitter contracts which have faded out with the government and the climate today.

We are [00:02:00] now focused on cable and fiber infrastructure in data centers. And not just data centers, but government buildings, op centers. We do the switches and the racks and the trays and lay the cable in the fiber for inside plant, all the way up to outside plant. And we do the connectivity for our customers.

We get them to a point where they are connected. They have network capabilities in a secure environment, we can do secure or non-secure. Our technicians are S-C-I-T-S-S-C-I cleared. We can obtain clearances for them. That is a capability we have as we are a clear facility. And if you don't need that, our technicians are just as capable without clearances.

That's what we do. We're cable and fiber [00:03:00] fit out.

Jim Ries: Right? Focused on the data centers right now, of which there are many. And I know they're large spaces I'm sure that keeps you busy. So Melissa, when it comes to UTS, what are you most proud of?

Melissa Allen: This is gonna sound a little corny, but I'm most proud of the employees because we've had, these employees have been with us some up to 10 years or more, and they're loyal, they're dedicated, they work hard.

They could go anywhere. They're very skilled, very talented. They could go anywhere and people will be happy to take them, but they choose to stay with us. I'm proud that we've changed the culture that they wanna stay with us. We've done some, I think, good employee retention programs. So I'm most proud of that.

And another thing I'm proud of is we've recently rebranded UTS, so we have some new branding, getting new colors, a new name out there. Not a new name, [00:04:00] but a new logo out there. And it's fun. That was a lot of fun picking, how to celebrate UTS in a logo, and I've never seen so many logos in my life then when I was looking for what we were gonna do with a logo. Suddenly it's like looking for a red car. There's red cars everywhere.

Jim Ries: Of course. I'm excited for you and I can't wait to see the new branding. So Melissa, what do the next six months look like for you and UTS?

Melissa Allen: I am hoping I shouldn't say hoping 'cause I should say I am visioning.

I'm envisioning that the next six months is our prime allows us to grow with the current contracts we have. And I say that because they need the government to allow them to grow. I know they're happy with us. I feel that, we get that impression and they've been good to us so [00:05:00] that they allow us to continue to grow with them, and that we get smack in the middle of the data center boom. I know there's some environmental issues that are, a little controversial, but I'm hoping that, everybody does the right thing for the right reasons, and it would make me so happy to create jobs for people and families.

Jim Ries: Yeah, sounds awesome. And growth is a wonderful goal to have. All right, Melissa, here's the big one. What do most people watching this video not know about you?

Melissa Allen: Okay. So I have always been fascinated by building things. When I was a little girl, I used to take two by fours and nails and build barbie doll furniture. So I should have gone into construction years ago. But I went into accounting because my mother was a tax accountant and that was what we knew. So I've been CFO for 35 [00:06:00] years, but I love to build things, which is why I'm fascinated by the construction world and the data center and the contracting. And so my hobby is refinishing furniture. I love to take something old and look at it and have a vision and change it and give it a new start. And I feel like that's what I'm doing with UTS. Took it over in 23 with the support of the board. And we've done some changes. We've revamped, we've recultured. I feel good about where we're going. Met some wonderful people who are encouraging us to continue to build and I feel like there's a new start for it, just like a brand new piece of furniture.

Jim Ries: I love the analogy. That's wonderful. Melissa, great to see you and thank you for sharing your time and your story with us about University Technical Services. I know I'll be [00:07:00] seeing you soon but take care until then.

Melissa Allen: Great to see you, Jim.

Jim Ries: All right, bye

Melissa Allen: bye.