



MAKING THE CONNECTION

**DONNY KRINGEN HAS A RISING CAREER
THANKS TO A MARKETING DEGREE AND
A LOVE FOR TECHNOLOGY**

**STORY AND PHOTO BY
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When Donny Kringen was a young boy, he loved to take things apart – but not always getting them put back together. As he got older, he was interested in technology and building his own computers, as well as doing freelance web and graphic design.

Kringen got his first summer job when he was 14-years old because he wanted a cell phone. Later, summer jobs included working at an amusement park and then in a factory, where he enjoyed the hands-on maintenance of the machinery.

With technology and machinery being high on his list of interests, a person might think a logical career choice for him may have been in those areas.

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But, Kringen says, actually, he loves the technology as an end user.

"What I like most is using the products, not so much the technology of building it," he says. "I built my own computers because I knew what I wanted them to do."

In high school, Kringen was envious of two relatives who had good paying jobs, were doing very well for themselves and driving nice cars.

"I wanted that," he says.

His relatives had both graduated from WITC-Rice Lake with two-year marketing degrees. Kringen learned from them that marketing is a broad degree that could lead to a career in a variety of industries, with touches of creative design, human resources, psychology, selling and more.

It was then that he set his sights on a marketing degree and, with that goal in mind, decided he needed to start applying himself during his last two years in high school and improve his grades.

After graduating from Turtle Lake High School in June 2006, he was admitted to WITC-Rice Lake that fall.

Marketing instructor Renelle Gill says that even though Kringen was right out of high school, "He was smart as a whip, interested in everything and had a real drive to succeed."

He also got a part-time sales job at the local Dobson Communications CellularOne store. The job fit his personality.

"Talking to people and selling doesn't seem like work," he says.

Soon after, Dobson Communications was acquired by AT&T, and Kringen got to experience firsthand the merger and transition of the two wireless companies.

In his last semester at WITC, Kringen used his job at AT&T as an internship, an elective course that boosted his load to 20 credits. Working full time as well, he felt himself falling behind in his courses.

"Renelle Gill took the time to sit down with me, and we worked out a plan to get everything done and graduate on time," he says.

Kringen says he will never forget all the instructors and staff at WITC who, like

Gill, "really connect with students."

After graduating in 2008, Kringen was rapidly promoted at AT&T, moving to a variety of stores in southern Minnesota as assistant manager, then manager, and on up the ranks.

"The marketing courses [at WITC] were directly relevant to my job now," he says. "There were some things I didn't completely absorb at the time, but later proved invaluable in my career."

Kringen is now Northern Plains Market Lead of the Regional Market Execution Team, his territory encompassing Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska and the Dakotas.

"Not having a four-year degree has not been an issue in my rise in the company," Kringen says. "If asked, I just say I wanted to develop the required skill set in a shorter amount of time."

As project manager, Kringen spends about half his time traveling to stores throughout the five-state region, building relationships with operations managers and vendor partners, giving presentations and talking with store employees. He also performs random spot checks on the new AT&T Digital Life home security installations, making sure all facets are operational, personalized for the customer and user-friendly.

Kringen also got married right after graduating from WITC and lives in Wyoming, Minn., with his wife, two- and four-year old boys, and a baby girl born last summer.

He has big goals for the future. Since AT&T offers tuition reimbursement, Kringen is now "chipping away" at a bachelor's degree online from UW-Stout and, he is happy to say, "100 percent of my WITC credits transferred." Then he plans to earn a master's degree and continue his rise to the top of the company.