

# Security Solutions

An Interview with Steve Jones, Global Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Allied Universal

**EDITORS' NOTE** As Global Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Allied Universal, Steve Jones presides over Allied Universal companies and their respective divisions. He was previously CEO of Universal Services of America, which merged with AlliedBarton in 2016 to create Allied Universal, the largest security services company in North America. He began his security career with Universal Protection Service in 1996, after holding executive level and management positions within two Fortune 500 companies. Jones is the author of *No Off Season – a story of his path to success and the priceless wisdom gained along the way*. Over the years, he has received numerous honors and awards including being named the top job creator for two consecutive years by Inc. Magazine, winning the Vistage International Leadership Award, and earning the prestigious Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award™. Additionally, he is a member of the Young Presidents' Organization and serves on various boards, including that of Allied Universal. Jones recently won the prestigious Entrepreneur of the Year 2020 award from Orange County Business Journal.



Steve Jones

**COMPANY BRIEF** Allied Universal ([aus.com](http://aus.com)), a leading global security and facility services company, provides proactive security services and cutting-edge smart technology to deliver tailored, integrated security solutions that allow its clients to focus on their core business. Through its vast network of more than 800,000 employees, Allied Universal leverages global best practices in communities all over the world. With revenues of \$18 billion, the company is supported by efficient processes and systems that can only come with scale to help deliver on its promise locally: keeping people safe so communities can thrive.

**What have been the keys to Allied Universal's growth and leadership in the industry?**

Growing the company from a small business to a billion-dollar enterprise through a mix of organic growth and M&A came through a carefully articulated plan. We spent a lot of time laying out the strategy, and then we spent even more time figuring out how we were

going to execute that strategy, and what resources we'd need. We have acquired over 75 companies in the past 20 years, and each and every one of those companies share common values, strength and leadership with us. Our history and heritage highlight the importance of honoring the customer with the best possible security program.

Before the G4S acquisition, we heard from some of our Fortune 500 clients about their desire for us to help with their security needs in

other markets around the world. G4S brings a global footprint and world-class operating capabilities. With the integration, we were able to combine two phenomenal companies, each with rich histories in technology and security innovation.

The integration provides a unique opportunity to work with a talented global team, take the best building blocks from each, and requires that you recognize and adapt to the cultural and business differences in multi-cultural/global environments to build the world's best services company.

**Will you provide an overview of Allied Universal's business and key areas of focus?**

As the world's leading global security and facility services company, our excellence starts with our local leadership and local presence. In fact, in North America alone, we have an extensive network of offices to support our

local communities and customers. We take pride in our extensive knowledge in a range of specialty sectors such as education, health-care, retail, commercial real estate, logistics and distribution, government and corporate campuses, etc. We believe there is no greater purpose than serving and safeguarding customers, communities and people in today's world which is why our slogan is: "Allied Universal is There for You®."

As an integrated services provider, we offer our clients a one-stop shop to receive an array of security solutions to meet all of their needs. Allied Universal is so much more than manned guarding. We have raised our profile as a leader in security services by going beyond manned guarding by offering risk advisory and consulting, executive protection and intelligence services, event services and advanced technology solutions. We understand that risk mitigation is multi-dimensional, which is why we continue to evolve and adapt with the ever-changing security landscape.

**How do you define Allied Universal's culture and what have been the keys to mainlining culture as the company has grown in size and scale?**

The company's ascension didn't come without growing pains. When you're growing organically, you want to keep up and promote from within or acquire great people to build your business. When we started to acquire businesses, we had to make sure we had the

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right playbook to integrate those acquisitions. The successful integration becomes key. When you bring in a half a dozen people into your company, it’s easy to teach them your culture. When you bring in thousands of people, it becomes much more difficult. This is why we have built an inclusive culture that encourages, supports, and celebrates a diverse workplace. It fuels our innovation and connects us closer to our customers and the communities in which we serve.

**How is Allied Universal attracting new talent to the company in order to meet its workforce needs for the future?**

We are currently in the midst of a mysterious economic recovery – there are more than 10 million job openings, yet more than 8 million unemployed are still actively looking for work and, we can’t forget, we are still in the middle of a pandemic. With over 300,000 employees in North America, we are continually looking to hire new people. In fact, we hired approximately 45,000 people in the fourth quarter of 2021 alone. Attracting talent in this tight labor market is not for the faint-hearted.

As security professionals, we are frontline workers who are deemed essential workers. We completely re-hauled the way we recruit and hire, we implemented creative hiring programs and tactics and shifted to virtual and online hiring so people would feel as comfortable as possible going through the recruiting process. We are also leveraging our AI technology to

schedule, interview and on-board candidates and new hires remotely. In this challenging labor market, we are also offering hiring bonuses for new employees in certain states.

The opportunity for growth within Allied Universal is unlimited. We take great pride in our promote-from-within culture. We have many examples of employees who began their career as security professionals and now are working in all facets of the organization, from the finance department, to sales, to human resources, to marketing to operations – there is truly something for everyone.

In addition, we are committed to employing men and women who have served in the military by helping advance their second career in the security industry. Allied Universal connects veterans with military groups/mentors and offers specific training to ensure a smooth transition from the military to Allied Universal.

**How critical is it for Allied Universal to build a diverse and inclusive workforce and will you discuss the company’s efforts in this regard?**

Recognizing diversity is a top priority for Allied Universal. By fostering diversity in the workplace, we are able to attract and retain outstanding talent and provide optimal service for clients. We celebrate our diverse employees with the company’s Diversity in Security editorial spotlight, which includes a focus on different leaders in the company.

We also believe that Supplier Diversity is an important component of our business strategy.

Through subcontracted security partnerships and centrally sourced products and services, we work to integrate Supplier Diversity processes into how our company purchases goods and services. The ability to effectively attract and engage minority-owned, women-owned, veteran-owned and small business suppliers is critical for successfully achieving our goals. We make every effort to be inclusive in all of our sourcing activities.

**What do you see as the keys to effective leadership and how do you describe your management style?**

As most of us have experienced, failure will be part of your career and personal life. But you should never give up. Never accept less than your maximum effort. Whatever the task may be, keep doing that until it becomes second nature. And then do it some more. Be the hardest worker and you will eventually succeed.

Throughout my career, I have recruited, hired and mentored more than 1,000 people. Even though I have always been keenly focused on the success of my company, I have been equally committed to pushing every employee I have to realize their true potential as individuals. The rewards for this have been tremendous for all involved. At the end of the day, there is absolutely no question in my mind what a leader gets out of their team members is directly related to the investment that he/she is willing to make in them. That said, I have shared equity opportunities with hundreds of members of the company’s leadership team so they feel invested in the business.

**What advice do you offer young people beginning their careers during this challenging and unprecedented time?**

The pandemic has devastated economies around the world resulting in less job opportunities in some countries for young people who are beginning their careers. Whether young or old, there are still outstanding opportunities available that offer training and continual opportunity as part of the pathway. You may need to try something different, even if it is not your dream job. I advise young people who are beginning their careers to look at industries that are growing, even in tough times, and assess whether that industry can be the first building block of their professional career. Whatever you decide to do, focus on being the best in your craft. ●

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