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Drakontas finds its niche with law enforcement

Philadelphia Business Journal - by [Adam Stone](#) Special to the Business Journal

CAMDEN -- Sometimes Brian Regli shakes his head in wonder at how little things have changed.

"The police radio of today is a fossil. It's the same basic technology that has been around for 60 years," Regli said. Advances in communications seem to have shot right past the guardians of the peace. "Even basic text messaging is almost revolutionary to the law enforcement community."

As CEO of software developer **Drakontas**, Regli is working to improve the situation. He's marketing a wireless communication system that helps facilitate information exchange between team members while enhancing "situational awareness" among those in charge during military or police activities.

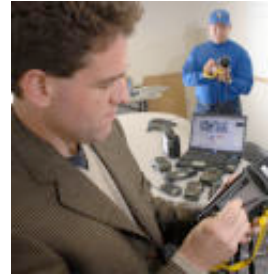
"Where are my people? What is the situation I need to manage?" These are the questions Drakontas helps to answer, Regli said. "What is the information my people need to receive, and how do I manage information flow as the environment changes?"

Important questions, yet answers have been in short supply, according to a recent white paper by **Cisco Systems**. "Public safety agencies and public officials experience the greatest need for situational awareness and collaboration during emergencies. However, timely information delivery is difficult to achieve when headquarters needs to deliver messages to diverse devices including phones, PDAs, laptops, and pagers."

Founded by Brian's brother Bill and a handful of like-minded **Drexel University** researchers, Drakontas has found success in marketing its ideas to the law enforcement community. That's no small trick, considering public safety's traditional reticence toward new technologies.

To overcome barriers, Regli relies on President and Chief Operating Officer James Sim, a longtime friend who has worked in law enforcement in the past. More than just contacts, he has industry savvy.

"You can't simply walk up to a police officer and sell something. It's a completely different kind of relationship," Regli said. Police are "inherently conservative and distrustful. That is their job: To distrust the people who try to hurt us, to root out evil."



Curt Hudson

Brian Regli (front) and James Sim test GPS communicators at Drakontas.

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That's where Sim comes in. "He can talk weapons. He can talk cars. He can talk things that, frankly, I couldn't talk," Regli said.

It may be tough to get the door open, but once inside, this is a market that can be generous to its friends, a fact that has helped drive Drakontas' success. "There is a very strong network in the law enforcement community. Once you are credible within a group of law enforcement professionals, they will give your name to others," Regli said.

This cascade of business has in turn led to Drakontas taking a major leap in recent months, from local and regional contracts up to the big time of federal work. Specifically, the Department of Justice has brought Drakontas on board to head up a Communications Technology Center of Excellence that will operate within the existing National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center (NLECTC) System.

In this capacity Drakontas will do for others much of what it has already done for itself: Test, evaluate and demonstrate cutting edge communications tools and technologies.

Those who know the company say Regli's approach to business helped Drakontas land the \$3.6 million contract.

"What Brian brings to the table is a true commitment to developing public/private partnerships," said Kevin Hagan, whose Cammarano and Hagan of Trenton lobbies the government on various issues. He lauded Regli for his willingness to adapt product to suit specific government needs. "It is by no means a cookie-cutter approach."

With the new contract, Regli said, the firm should grow from eight to 14 people this fall, and he's confident of further contracts to come. While many software firms have appeared in the security space since Sept. 11, Drakontas' early experience in law enforcement could give it a leg up.

"If a law enforcement officer comes to the Department of Homeland Security and says, 'Here is something you really need to look at,' you can bet DHS is going to be calling you soon."

An insider edge may have helped to win business, but Regli said his ability to manage that business successfully derives especially from his experiences overseas. He has worked in Russia and Czechoslovakia and he put in two-and-a-half years in Mexico doing marketing for Carlos Slim Helú, reportedly the richest man on the planet.

"My staff in Mexico worked so hard with so little, and if you are going to be an entrepreneur that's what you have to do. You work hard with nothing," he said. "That's what working in a Third World country will do for you. It will teach you to be an entrepreneur."

UP CLOSE

Name: Brian Regli

Age: 38

Company: Drakontas, 200 Federal St., Camden, N.J. 08103

Best business decision: To team up with James Sim, now president and COO.

Key challenge overcome: Achieving credibility in the criminal justice community.

Advice to other young entrepreneurs: Leave the country. An experience overseas can be critical to your business success.

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