

M&A

Peraton revels in hidden gems its Northrop and Perspecta deals bring in

By Ross Wilkers Mar 19, 2021

Peraton has drawn a pair of hard boundaries in its strategy amid the ongoing integration of Northrop Grumman's IT services business and pending acquisition of Perspecta.

Turning into large platform builder like Boeing, Lockheed Martin or Northrop Grumman is not on the agenda. Neither is trying their luck at commercial markets.

But the deal with Northrop did bring in some more product content on the unmanned front to Peraton. During our Power Breakfast event Friday, Peraton Chief Growth Officer Mike King said the company now has an unmanned ground vehicle portfolio that came over to them from Northrop.

A subsidiary the company has renamed Peraton Remotec builds UGVs and has a “worldwide install base of over 2,300 vehicles” used by defense, law enforcement and border agencies, King said.

Herndon, Virginia-based Peraton's focus areas in unmanned have been on operating and providing other types of support services for unmanned maritime vehicles, above the surface and under water, and ground vehicle components.

“For us, we look at the synergies that we can have with us being a mission operator of autonomous systems, and acquiring a developer and builder of autonomous ground vehicles, and how do we pull that together to create more synergies for our customers,” King said.

UGV platform content was not the only surprise addition Peraton learned it would have through the acquisition of Northrop's IT and mission support services business.

That business also is working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on communications, data analytics and information support efforts to support responses to emerging and future pandemics such as the current one.

King said that customer relationship dates back almost 25 years and the business also maintains the "single authoritative data source" for coronavirus test results in the U.S.

"That same architecture is being used now to support vaccine tracking: helping CDC track every U.S. COVID vaccine from the time that it leaves the factory to the time it is administered to the patient," King said.

A 16-year Northrop veteran himself, King had a fair amount of knowledge about the businesses that are now a part of Peraton. He joined Peraton in 2018.

One part of Northrop he was not familiar with that Peraton is bringing in is work on sub-orbital programs for NASA. King said that encompasses building sounding rockets and running a program to carry out science mission tests involving large balloons.

Then there is what Northrop has worked on in cybersecurity and figuring out what King described as "how much a pound of cyber cost" to put onto larger platforms.

Or in other words as King put it: "You can measure the stealth-ness of a platform," whereas the cyber aspect is more murky to measure.

Embedded in the now-former Northrop IT business is a team that focuses on that very problem. So when King asked the question of how much a pound of cyber costs, he said "they had the answer."

Peraton will be able to learn and share more about what it gains by adding Perspecta once that deal completes, after the antitrust review and shareholder votes are all done.

One aspect of Perspecta that King did briefly mention on Friday is its internal research-and-development organization in Perspecta Labs, which can trace its roots back to the very beginnings of Bell Labs.

King said Peraton will have at least 500 technology patents after the company completes the second of its deals that will essentially make the company seven times larger than it was just a few months ago.

About the Author

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