

Engaging, Intuitive Applications for Commercial and Consumer Drones gathering Aerial Images and Data



**Ben Brautigam - Co-Founder
Airnest, Ltd.**

CEOCFO: *Mr. Brautigam, what is the concept at Airnest?*

Mr. Brautigam: We are a software company that is looking to build engaging, intuitive applications for commercial drones. We are looking at industries such as videography, news and broadcasting, and agriculture to build solutions that create efficient ways to gather aerial images and data.

CEOCFO: *Why is engaging so important over and above being practical?*

Mr. Brautigam: There is a safety component and a trust component to this technology. We want to make sure that the experiences we are building are engaging and intuitive so our customers are always aware of their surroundings and the safety protocols.

CEOCFO: *Are people using your services now?*

Mr. Brautigam: We have launched our first product on the Apple App Store. This app is mostly geared towards videography and photography. To control the drone and fly it, you just draw a flight path on a map and where you draw is where the drone will fly. You can control the camera simply by panning and tilting your iPad or iPhone just as if you were looking through the lens of the device itself. We were looking for natural and intuitive ways to get stunning aerial shots.

CEOCFO: *Why are you confident drones are going to become commonplace? Is it widely accepted?*

Mr. Brautigam: I think we are on the bleeding edge of this technology becoming very mainstream. It is allowing business and industry to get images and data that otherwise would be very difficult and expensive to get. By using this technology in a safe and effective way, they are able to get the data much more efficiently.

CEOCFO: *How do you address the safety issue?*

Mr. Brautigam: We do a couple things. In our app, we are able to visualize current no fly zones around airports. We also have an altitude maximum in our software that is just under the FAA regulation of 400 feet right now. Because we are a software company as the regulations evolve, we can push those updates and recommendations out to our users. We also provide real-time weather updates where our users are flying.

CEOCFO: *Why have you gone in this direction and why would people want to look at what Airnest is doing as opposed to competitors or the potential competitors that I am sure are lurking?*

Mr. Brautigam: I think what we saw in this industry was a lot of complex technology and complication. Our philosophy is to build tools that simplify it, that get right to the content, the data that the drone pilot is looking for. We saw an opportunity in the user experience side of things.

CEOCFO: *What has changed since people have started to use the system? What have you learned from your testers?*

Mr. Brautigam: We are learning that there is a need for software that is context aware, meaning an app for each specific use case. What has been very popular is our focus on simplicity. Could there be an app out there that helps to simplify and automate cell phone tower inspection? Or crop analysis? Software that knows the needs of the business and works to make it more efficient and safer.

CEOCFO: *Where might your software be applicable that people might not have embraced yet? Are there uses you see that most people have not even thought about yet?*

Mr. Brautigam: I think that our roadmap certainly has some of those things in place. Of course we are interested in specific commercial areas including agriculture and inspection. There is also pipeline management and land management, these types of things that have traditionally been very complicated, expensive undertakings.

CEOCFO: *How are you reaching out to potential customers?*

Mr. Brautigam: We have a growing web presence that we are proud of as well as attending conferences and shows. We are participating on a panel at the Unmanned Systems Institute next month. It also comes down to communication - we do case studies about twice a month on Airnest customers that are doing some incredible work with our software.

CEOCFO: *Do you see the public clamoring for more? Do you envision a public demand that will work in your favor?*

Mr. Brautigam: The demand we are getting now is in the area of photography and film. There is also certainly interest in specific commercial areas. I think as long as we continue to focus on engaging and simple solutions for complex problems, the demand will always work in our favor.

CEOCFO: *Are you funded for the steps and the growth you would like to take? Are you seeking partnerships?*

Mr. Brautigam: We received initial funding from Ben Franklin Technology Partners here in Pennsylvania. We are currently seeking partnerships and additional investment.

“What sets us apart is our dedication to the user experience.”- Ben Brautigam

CEOCFO: *What surprised you so far in the process?*

Mr. Brautigam: What we are most excited about is talking with the customers that are using our software and getting that feedback. There are use cases out there that we had never imagined just by drawing a flight path and setting a few parameters. These simple engagements can solve some interesting problems and generate amazing imagery.

CEOCFO: *Are people looking not only to get the real picture in photos but find beautiful or interesting things?*

Mr. Brautigam: There are a couple different angles to this. One is looking for data driven decision-making, whether I am analyzing crops or I am looking at buildings or construction areas. There is also this idea that aerial imagery is an art form. Photographers and filmmakers are able to capture amazing scenes and a new perspective very easily and affordably.

CEOCFO: *With so much opportunity, what is the key to staying focused?*

Mr. Brautigam: I think it is maintaining that communication with the customer and building good relationships. This industry is still very young and ripe for innovation. Constantly listening and exploring new, engaging flight experiences is what is going to ensure our continued growth.

CEOCFO: *Why pay attention to Airnest?*

Mr. Brautigam: What sets us apart is our dedication to the user experience. Our goal is to remove the technical complication so our customers can focus on their content, which is the whole reason they chose to use a drone in the first place. We are ahead of the game in that right now and we intend to stay that way.

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine

For more information visit: www.airnest.com

