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Issue: October 22, 2018



CEOCFO Magazine

Q&A with Dawn Cole, President of Kerberos International providing Customized Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance and Electronic Warfare Platforms to Law Enforcement and Government Agencies and Physical Security/Protective Services to Government and Commercial Customers



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CEOCFO: Ms. Cole, your site indicates, “Tactical solutions. Strategic impact.” What does that mean at Kerberos?

Ms. Cole: We support military and law enforcement customers whose missions have very unique requirements that change from mission to mission and to moment to moment. We specialize in providing customized intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance platforms to support specific mission requirements. What we do is very tactical in nature, but it has a very strategic impact on our customers’ ability to succeed in what they do – protect our country, save lives, and bring everyone home safely.

CEOCFO: What goes into creating a solution that is effective and what might you look at that less knowledgeable companies do not take into account?

Ms. Cole: What we do that is unique is that almost all of our staff is comprised of former military operators or former law enforcement, many who also have very technical degrees and engineering experience. We are able to combine real-world operational experience with senior technical expertise to create solutions and processes that solve a wide-range of our customers issues. We know failure is not an option. Our intelligence, surveillance and recognizance (ISR) platforms and the processes for supporting those platforms work under stress, work in the field and work in combat. It’s as simple as that.

CEOCFO: How long has Kerberos been around and what has changed in your approach over time?

Ms. Cole: We have been around since 2006. When I founded the company, I was a one person consulting firm, helping technology companies sell ideas into the Department of Defense and various law enforcement organizations. In 2011, I took a contract to help an NGO, a nonprofit organization in Afghanistan, establish a network of clerics who were proponents of democracy and begin to open schools in Kandahar. I met a number of service people over there who had requirements for technology that I believed I knew how to build. In 2012, after returning from Afghanistan, I changed the focus of the company from being a one-person consulting firm to a firm that creates, deploys and supports specialized intelligence, surveillance and recognizance (ISR) solutions for the DoD. We continue to work closely with our customers to understand their requirements and work closely with engineers all over the US to design platforms that deliver what our customers need. Over time, we have evolved to provide both these platforms as well as security and protective services for our customers.

CEOCFO: Are there many companies that specialize in your arena, particularly that work with law enforcement and military?

Ms. Cole: Even though we work in a specialized market niche, we have competitors, especially among the major prime contractors that work with the DoD. We try to remain at the top of the market by making sure that the people we hire have both the military or law enforcement experience and the technical background to deliver innovative, solutions that work. We also endeavor to remain lean and nimble and deliver our solutions more cost effectively than the larger companies. What truly separates us from most others is our ability to be nimble, reactive, and cost effective providing innovative solutions that work in the field.

CEOCFO: *Do military and police agencies typically look outside for solutions or do they try themselves first and then recognize they need a different approach?*

Ms. Cole: Sometimes they do try it themselves. Several of these organizations have what I call their internal “skunkworks” organization that works to develop various communications or radio platforms. They come to us when they realize they need something that will have a more enduring support organization behind it or something that needs more extensive engineering to design and develop.

CEOCFO: *Do you work on an ongoing basis once you have created a solution or do you get it in place and then whoever you have crafted this for continues on?*

Ms. Cole: We work with some of both. Sometimes we will develop something for a specific, short-term purpose and, once it is gone, there is no more need for us to support that product. Other solutions, we support for three, four and five years once they hit the field.

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CEOCFO: *Are there some solutions that work in a number of situations with maybe a little bit of tweaking or is every engagement unique?*

Ms. Cole: We have developed what I call base administrative platforms that support many of our solutions. Whether it is a broadcast solution or a surveillance solution, we can typically start with a base that we have already developed and adapt that base to the particular requirements of the customer. That enables us to deliver these solutions more quickly and at a more attractive price point for the customer.

CEOCFO: *Is price a big consideration? What role does that play when people are looking for something that saves lives and makes a real difference?*

Ms. Cole: One of the reasons I think our customers like us is they understand that we are going to price our products fairly. Price is usually not the major consideration, but it is definitely a consideration. Our customers trust us that we will price at a very fair value for them and we are not going to take advantage of a situation by trying to charge an artificially high price.

CEOCFO: *Are there particular types of projects you prefer to work on given a choice?*

Ms. Cole: The projects that I know are going to say lives are always the most rewarding. Right now, we are developing some very innovative radio jammers that we hope to put on drones, so projects that are first to market with a new technology are also a favorite, second only to something I know will save lives.

CEOCFO: *Is that a new area with you to develop products like the radio jammers you just mentioned or is that an ongoing part of the business?*

Ms. Cole: The jammer development has been ongoing since 2014. We consider the radio jammers as another specialized communications platform, another arrow in our quiver so to speak.

CEOCFO: *How do you decide what might be interesting or necessary to develop?*

Ms. Cole: Many of our ideas come from service people who are forward deployed into conflict zones. Because of products that we currently support, our staff is in communication with them on a regular basis. They will often tell us about some function they need or wish they had. As they express needs, we are able to come up with solutions that address their requirements.

CEOCFO: *What are you surprised we can do today with technology and what are you surprised that we still cannot?*

Ms. Cole: Every time I look at a smart phone, I marvel. The computing power that all of us carry around in our hands today is exponentially more than the computing power of huge mainframe computers that were prevalent when I entered

this industry back in the late 1970's. It truly amazes me. Another thing that amazes me is that some of technology we are working on now is just starting to enter the market - the ability to very selectively interrupt devices and jam a particular enemy's cell phone or one particular enemy's radio so that we can interrupt a conversation of a bad guy without interrupting our own "good guy's" conversation. Technology is just now evolving to cost effectively enable this type of function in a small, portable platform.

CEOCFO: *How do you continue the growth trajectory at Kerberos?*

Ms. Cole: Growth is always a fun challenge. We plan to continue profitable growth by staying in touch with our customers, understanding what they need and bringing solutions to them. It is basically knowing your customer and working hard.

CEOCFO: *Are you bidding on government contracts or are you in an areas outside that process?*

Ms. Cole: We bid / compete for a lot of government contracts.

CEOCFO: *How do you decide what to go after?*

Ms. Cole: That is always an interesting conversation internally in our team. We like to go after contracts if we already know the customer, if we think the customer knows us and likes us, and/or if we are sure we can deliver a good product at a good price.

CEOCFO: *What do you look for in your people over and above technical skills?*

Ms. Cole: The most important thing I look for is passion for doing a good job, of course skills to do the job. I also look for people with military or law enforcement experience. But, when I find people that have that "fire in the belly" to do something extremely well, I jump on them.

CEOCFO: *Can you tell right away?*

Ms. Cole: Yes, pretty much.

CEOCFO: *Why pay attention to Kerberos International?*

Ms. Cole: We are bringing products and processes to our service people and law enforcement communities that help them complete their missions to protect our country and save lives. We are going to continue to do that with outstanding quality and we are going to continue to deliver products that work under stress, in the field, when our customers need them. As a result, I believe we will to continue to grow and be a force in this industry.

