

After tech firm quietly moved its headquarters to Plano, CEO sees opportunities for growth

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Omnigo Software quietly moved its headquarters to the Dallas area last year. And now it's looking for new opportunities amid the pandemic.

The firm is now based in Plano after shifting its hub from St. Louis, according to CEO Richard DeFrancisco. The company – which provides tech for markets that include police departments and schools – has about 150 workers with roughly 60 in North Texas, he said.

"I've been in Dallas for, off and on, over 40 years – so I've seen incredible growth," DeFrancisco said. "It's an incredibly dynamic city there. It's an aggressive business environment that's appealing to most companies."



CONTRIBUTED
Richard DeFrancisco, CEO, Omnigo

The draw for Omnigo? A strong local employee base, favorable tax conditions, affordable housing and strong education systems.

The company, which still has a sizable presence in St. Louis, has grown amid acquisitions – and its offerings are used by over 2,000 customers in 20 countries. It's broadly focused on what DeFrancisco calls the "safety" industry that, in addition to law enforcement and education, includes healthcare, gaming, hospitality and others.

Amid COVID-19, it has rolled out a new product called Sheldon, a touchless scanning device combining real-time fever detection and facial recognition. There's also CleanTraQ, which schedules and tracks a facility's sanitization procedures.

"We're in a bit of a unique position in that our solutions are really geared towards safety at a time when safety is probably the utmost concern," DeFrancisco said.

What has been your approach on acquisitions?

As we see opportunities in the portfolio to be able to bolster our leading position with incremental technologies, we do that. We are also looking for acquisitions to be able to take us into additional markets, which still align with the products that that we have – and it's something that we can build off of so that we don't just necessarily lose the momentum that we already have. So each one of the acquisitions was very carefully planned. And in many cases that allowed us to be able to leverage the existing functionality that we already have with our products and be able to just add to that.

What's the thinking amid the pressure of COVID-19?

We never stopped looking at potential acquisitions in a COVID environment. It's a very challenging time for a lot of companies. A lot of companies are trying to figure out their strategy. We have a very definitive strategy of those companies that we want to go after -- and we are always in conversations with organizations about potentially becoming part of the Omnigo family. So that really never ends for us. We will grow, not only by organic growth and building out new products internally, but also through that acquisition.

Are valuations better right now?

They seem to be maybe a little bit better but for the most part, there's still a tremendous amount of value. and I think that, like a lot of companies, we still feel bullish about where the economy is going. It's a challenging time right now but the U.S. economy is pretty hard to keep down. And when it springs back, it springs back dramatically. So we're planning for that spring back. We think when we come out of this downturn in the economy, in this challenging time, it's going to be a fantastic time from an economic perspective and from a growth perspective.

What's it like right now for your key law enforcement area?

For law enforcement right now, it is an incredibly tumultuous time. They are still looking for ways to run more effectively, to be more effective and to make sure that from an incident perspective that they're doing the right things. And so having the right systems in place is keenly important to them. They haven't stopped investing although some of the budgets have been cut. There's a lot of organizations to be honest, they're investing more in things like training and expanded modules like evidence management and things like that. And that's where we would step in.

Because of the depth and breadth of the number of modules that we have, it's pretty broad. There's a lot of different areas of our business that are very relevant to what's going on not only today, but kind of in the new paradigm of how we're going to move forward. It's going to a brave new world.

Can you talk about some of the concerns around facial recognition out there?

I have children in universities. I've had children in schools. I'm extraordinarily concerned about their safety. I would want some kind of tool in place to at least give me a better than average chance of being able to identify either someone that should not be there, or someone that from a temperature perspective, may have a chance of spreading COVID.

So, as a father, as a businessman and then just as a citizen, anything that we can put in place in these times that would stand up better than a 50-50 chance of helping do that, I think we need to do. What we're trying to do is that extra layer of safety as best we can with today's technology – and not violate rights at the same time. Clearly, it's always a customer choice.

What are you doing with COVID-19?

In my career, I've seen four turn-downs in the economy. We're looking at this as virtually the same – not from a conditions perspective because clearly this is the first time any of us have ever been through something like this, but in an economic downturn, you have to look towards value that you can provide to your customers.

We took a step back and we looked at overall our solution suite, and what we have -- and then we looked out at the market and said, Where can we best help our customers and apply these solutions to our customers, given all the challenges. And that really led us to Sheldon, the facial recognition and temperature checking kiosk, as well as CleanTraQ. Now, other things in these challenging times like guard tour are incredibly important to make sure that we maintain safety. Safety is at top of mind ... across the board.