Business / Technology

Local simulation pros rub elbows with national groups at conference

By **Marco Santana · Contact Reporter**
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I/ITSEC gives companies with Orlando presence a chance to show off, attract customers

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David King says the talent in Central Florida's simulation community helps keep the company he works for, Aegis Technologies Group, embedded in Orlando.

The fact that one of the world's largest simulation conferences has been located here for decades certainly helps as well.

The Interservice/Industry Training, Simulation & Education Conference, which brings thousands of simulation professionals to Central Florida, began Monday.

King said opening an office in Orlando has been beneficial for the company, which builds simulation systems for military aircraft.

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"We have so many talented engineers that we hire from this area," he said. "It's a simulation mecca of the country. It's a great place to hire."

The conference serves as a showroom for some of the industry's most technologically advanced companies, many with Orlando ties.

Dozens of companies brought their latest, including flight and driving simulators, along with the hardware and software that create them.

Adacel, which has had a presence in Central Florida for more than a decade, showed off voice-based technology that responds to commands. John Merwin, the company's senior director for speech recognition, said the tech allows people to direct an autopilot through speech commands.

The company attends I/ITSEC every year in an effort to expand its business.

"There is a good chance to meet with customers or find new ones who don't know what we have," he said.

That kind of networking has helped I/ITSEC traditionally draw well. Last year, more than 14,000 people registered for the event.

Andrew Maxon of Cybernet Systems Corp. said his company does hands-on security work for the systems that run modeling and simulation programs.

The company keeps a small office in Orlando and attends I/ITSEC every year.

"It's a chance to get seen by all of the other companies out there and to support them, too," he said. "It's the largest modeling and simulation event in the world. A lot of our end users come here, so we have to be here."

That's also the case for Aegis, which employs about 60 workers in Orlando. King said most of those are homegrown.

The company, headquartered in Huntsville, Ala., with three other U.S. locations, including Orlando, said that community helps the company when it determines which contracts to pursue.

"It's huge," he said, when asked how important the region's simulation community is when it comes to hiring, given his company's work in some remote locations. "We had to put people up in places like South Dakota, and there is no ecosystem there."

msantana@tribpub.com, 407-420-5256 or Twitter @marcosantana

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