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25th ANNIVERSARY: 25 Companies to Watch - Defense

Company sees potential growth starting on a DIME

By [Chad Halcom](#)

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Sterling Heights-based **DRIVE Developments Inc.** is bidding on two pending major defense contracts that could grow the company to double its current revenue by sometime next year.

Founder and CEO Larry Osentoski said revenue at DRIVE (short for Diagnostics Research and Innovative Vehicle Engineering) has ranged between \$1.5 million and \$2.5 million a year since inception in July 2007. DRIVE provides vehicle prototype systems, engineering and design services, and electronics for military and commercial customers.

But the company is also awaiting word on two contract bids, Osentoski said — one to be announced within weeks and another later this year.

The company wants to supply its Diagnostic Information Management Environment or DIME component, a location and diagnostic tool much like OnStar for commercial vehicles, for the proposed Joint Light Tactical Vehicle under development through the **U.S. Army Tacom Life Cycle Management Command** in Warren. DRIVE also has a separate product offering to the **U.S. Army Special Operations Command**, but Osentoski declined to elaborate on that.

DIME is an embedded processing unit that attaches to a vehicle's electronic system and can store and transmit data, including its location and operating condition, to a remote user.

"Right now, the latest estimate is that one of the (pending) contracts is four



CEO Larry Osentoski sits on a prototype Amphibious Robot Kit vehicle containing DRIVE's Diagnostic Information Management Environment electronics system.

Photo credit: Dustin Walsh/Crain's Detroit Business

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DRIVE DEVELOPMENTS INC.

- **Location:** Sterling Heights
- **Local employees:** 6
- **Global employees:** 8
- **2009 revenue:** \$1.5 million
- **Founded:** 2007
- **CEO and founder:** Larry Osentoski

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years and between \$4 million and \$7 million in value," he said. "So obviously if we win both, or even just that one, it would be significant growth for us."

Why it's one to watch

Won legal control of its product; poised for growth-spurring defense contracts.

Drive Developments has eight employees as of early April, though it usually fluctuates between eight and 13 depending on its load of pending projects.

The company last fall completed and delivered its prototype Amphibious Robot Kit, a robotic vehicle that can move on land or in water, either by remote operation or with up to two occupants. The SOCOM command is also considering the ARK vehicle for possible operations like monitoring traffic along waterways, Osentoski said.

DRIVE developed and launched its core product, the DIME and DIME Data Management Center, after Osentoski was fired from Alexandria, Va.-based **MTS Technologies Inc.**

But he and the newly formed DRIVE won a competitive bid in 2007 to continue work on the same project he'd handled at MTS. MTS later accused him of fraud and misappropriating trade secrets, but an arbitration panel in March sided with DRIVE to the tune of \$6.9 million damages.

DRIVE was also one of three defense contractors to win a share of the \$430 million TARDEC Omnibus research funding contract last fall, but Osentoski said that work comes on a requisition basis as needed, and the company has yet to receive any requests. He hopes to do more business with TARDEC shortly.

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