

## Q&A with Robb Cheek, COO of UVify, Inc bringing to market their Draco R Drone with Artificial Intelligence for Government, University and Corporate Research to go along with their award winning Draco Racing Drone and OOri, the fastest micro production drone in the world



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

**CEOCFO: *Mr. Cheek, would you tell us the concept behind UVify?***

**Mr. Cheek:** The company name is a portmanteau for Unmanned Vehicles Unified. The company was founded initially to develop autonomous drones, so that is where we started. We took an interest in racing drones because we thought that would be a good way to develop robust hardware and related technologies, much

like F1 racing. It was a way for us to build the toughest, the most robust drone hardware on the market. The result of this was our first commercially available product, Draco which won Best Robot and Best Drone, among many other awards, at CES 2017. Draco is capable of analog or digital video transmission and remains the fastest production racing drone in the world. The second product that we launched is OOri, and that won multiple awards at CES 2018, including Best Drone. OOri is also the fastest micro production drone in the world. In addition to Draco, from our efforts in developing racing drone technologies we developed Draco R, a research platform for deep learning (AI) research. Presently our customers for Draco R include government agencies, corporate research groups, and universities.

**CEOCFO: *What is the challenge in making a better, faster drone?***

**Mr. Cheek:** The toughest challenge is mass production. Looking at the string of robot and drone company startup failures (it is clear that the highest hurdle is manufacturing. This is an entirely different game than engineering prototyping. When looking at high-performance drones, there are many who claim they made a drone that is the fastest in the world, but that is a one-off event—an anomaly. Metaphorically speaking, it would be akin to building a car in your garage and claiming it to be the fastest in the world. The real question is whether that performance can be replicated via manufacturing, a question UVify answers with Draco and OOri, which are both mass produced. So, in short, for UVify developing and manufacturing products that meet such stringent specifications is the toughest challenge.

**CEOCFO: *What is the state of the drone industry today?***

**Mr. Cheek:** The industry is evolving. As it is a fairly young industry, we have had a lot of companies that got shook out over the past few years. DJI is still the biggest player in the consumer space and they do photography and some industrial drones, but the industry is changing. When you think about how robotics/drones are evolving a good benchmark is to look at how computers evolved, drones are evolving much the same way. We have micro drones, swarm drones, racing drones, and a rapidly emerging area is the personal transport drone—or flying car, like what was on the Jetsons. Much like computers where they used to be defined as devices that took up a room, to taking up a desk, lap, pocket, and wrist—

and of course everything that has computer tech built in (homes, cars, etc.), the definition of what a drone is also changing.

**CEOCFO: *How do you decide which way you need to evolve in such a vast market?***

**Mr. Cheek:** We listen to the market and study it very carefully. We focus on developing the best core technology and then iterate based on feedback because we are involved with many R&D groups. From the responses we get and based on what we know, we decide where to apply the technology for a product.

**CEOCFO: *One thing I see on your website is that you can empower people to do whatever they can imagine with a drone, to maneuver in ways previously thought impossible. Would you give us an example?***

**Mr. Cheek:** Many people like racing drones. When I show our tech to people and we talk about you can go backpacking in the mountains and enjoy nature from an entirely new level by donning your goggles and sending your Draco HD to experience places in ways that were only possible in your imagination. With UVify technology you experience reality which is beyond what's possible with other manufactured drones or by passively watching a video. By being in the actual environment but expanding the borders of your sensory capabilities you see reality in a way that it not virtual but beyond the normal range of real. It is very much a lifestyle enhancer in this manner, it is an out-of-body experience.

**CEOCFO: *What about security regarding drones?***

**Mr. Cheek:** This is a hot topic now. For the states, there is a lobby group and a lot of talk on the Hill about this. Regulations are, of course, a concern to UVify and as a company we remain committed to complying with regulations and promoting the safe use of drone technology. That said, as drones are a critical component in Industry 4.0 and overall economic growth, we believe regulations will not have a significant impact on UVify or the broader industry.

**“As a drone/robot startup, we have overcome the single biggest obstacle faced by startup drone/robot companies—successful mass production and product launches. These achievements, coupled with our two consecutive year wins at CES, the ability to develop and launch best-in-class products, and our commitment to replicating this success on a larger scale, is what’s different from last year. We’ve proven time and again that our team is extremely capable with the launch of five products in two years. That speaks volumes about our team’s capabilities.”- Robb Cheek**

**CEOCFO: *You have offices worldwide; are there different parts of the world where there is more interest in drones?***

**Mr. Cheek:** Yes, there are. The US is, of course, the strongest market in terms of sheer sales and volume. In other countries there is tremendous interest as well. For drone racing, we are seeing global interest and growth, which we believe is due to the accessibility of the sport.

**CEOCFO: *How do you reach out to customers?***

**Mr. Cheek:** We build great products that win awards and are recognized around the world for their quality. We participate in different events but are particularly interested in CES as we believe it is the ultimate battleground to prove one's capability in the consumer tech space.

In addition, Team UVify, our racing team, which has some of the world's best pilots competes in events and is engaged in media outreach through videos and shows. This year, Team UVify will compete in DR1 Season Two, which has many major corporate sponsors such as DHL and Mountain Dew, among others. The races will be held across Europe and be broadcast on some of the biggest sports networks as well as OTT media in November and December this year.

**CEOCFO: *How does the consumer side lead to the enterprise side or are they separate?***

**Mr. Cheek:** On the consumer side, in terms of price point and technology there is a wider band, simply because you can make products where enterprise tends to be very specific in terms of use-case and demands certain performance specifications to accomplish the enterprise project requirement. I think that is the major differentiator between the two areas.

**CEOCFO: *How is business?***

**Mr. Cheek:** Business is better than good and is growing at a remarkable pace.

**CEOCFO: *Why have you chosen South Korea for manufacturing?***

**Mr. Cheek:** We started in South Korea as the founders were from here. Our R&D center remains in South Korea as well as some of our manufacturing, but our HQ is in San Francisco. We learned that factories in South Korea are geared for

very rapid prototyping as many of them work with large consumer electronics companies. For UVify, that translates to speed for development and manufacturing, as well as very high quality. This is why we plan to continue manufacturing in South Korea. Having said that, we do have a manufacturing line in Shenzhen China as well for large volume manufacturing of some products.

**CEOCFO: *What surprised you as UVify has grown and evolved as a company?***

**Mr. Cheek:** It is surprising how few hours there are in a day and how much there is to do. Although we know our products are best-in-class, it is always a nice surprise when you work like mad and win awards at tradeshow and accolades from the press and peers.

**CEOCFO: *What is the plan for the next year or so for UVify?***

**Mr. Cheek:** We will be unveiling one or two new products over the year and we will announce another new product at CES 2019. We will also be expanding our workforce and our company. We will grow sales and business lines independently and via strategic alliances. We will also review proposals from investors for our series B should we elect to raise more funding.

**CEOCFO: *When you are talking to potential investors, what do they need to hear and what do you talk about today that is different from last year?***

**Mr. Cheek:** As a drone/robot startup, we have overcome the single biggest obstacle faced by startup drone/robot companies—successful mass production and product launches. These achievements, coupled with our two consecutive year wins at CES, the ability to develop and launch best-in-class products, and our commitment to replicating this success on a larger scale, is what's different from last year. We've proven time and again that our team is extremely capable with the launch of five products in two years. That speaks volumes about our team's capabilities.

**CEOCFO: *Why pay attention to UVify?***

**Mr. Cheek:** We win, and we crush the limits of what people believe technology can do. That is why we consistently win.

