

ORLANDO BUSINESS JOURNAL

CEOs OF THE YEAR

Chris Baeten

CEO, Knight Federal Solutions Inc.

It's not an easy task for someone younger than 40 to lead a tech-focused defense contracting firm to fast growth — but it's all in a day's work for Chris Baeten.

Baeten is CEO of Orlando-based Knight Federal Solutions Inc., a 5-year-old provider of simulation and training, cybersecurity, IT, finance and intelligence analysis solutions to the defense and intelligence sectors. Headquartered in Central Florida Research Park, the firm has grown to nearly 85 employees — 12 locally — and revenue of \$8.9 million in 2018, with a trajectory that has it reaching nearly \$12 million this year.

Knight Federal works with a number of notable government customers and major prime contractors on mission critical projects, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Defense Intelligence Agency, the U.S. Army and Air Force, and other intelligence agencies. The firm's major industry partners include Falls Church, Virginia-based Northrop Grumman Corp. (NYSE: NOC); BAE Systems Plc.; Falls Church-based General Dynamics Corp. (NYSE: GD); Chantilly, Virginia-based Engility Corp.; and Bethesda, Maryland-based Lockheed Martin Corp. (NYSE: LMT).

Much of the firm's success can be credited to Baeten's management style: He empowers employees to behave as entrepreneurs by identifying the role they eventually want to assume and creating a path for them to achieve that goal. This allows workers to reach leadership positions in the company much sooner than they may in other organizations. And as a younger CEO, he is willing and open to form partnerships and alliances with other companies and partners, and sees the value and relevance of experience.

His biggest business goal for the next year is to exceed the 100-employee mark.



Age: 38



Email: cbaeten@knightfederal.com



Facebook: <http://bizj.us/1pvhbl>



LinkedIn: <http://bizj.us/1pvhbn>



Twitter: @KnightFederal



Community involvement: Board member and donor to Fairways for Warriors, and annual event sponsor; Kickoff for Kids donor; IOA 5k participant; mentor for UCF students; coaches his son's youth soccer team at the Avalon Park YMCA