Looking Back With Leonardo DRS Co-Founder David Gross

If the company David Gross was with in 1969 had not lost interest in the technology he was working on, he and his partner, Leonard Newman, might never have started Leonardo DRS in the first place. But the passive sonar they were developing "was a better way to find submarines," he says. And it was just what the U.S. Navy needed at the height of the Cold War. "The Navy had trouble finding Russian subs. Then all of a sudden we were lighting up screens. We started getting calls from admirals asking…what are you guys doing??"

Gross reflected on the company he and co-founder Newman began 50 years ago, from the technical wizardry, to the audacity behind the idea itself, and to the many sleepless nights that followed.

> **"If you have a passion for a great career, consider defense. There are many technology problems that need to be solved by our best and brightest. And after all, strong national security should be everyone's primary interest."**
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> David Gross
> Co-Founder, Diagnostic/Retrieval Systems

What gave you the confidence to leave a job with an established company to try something on your own?

Gross: "The Navy wanted our technology and we knew it. We had developed some pretty revolutionary stuff. We really had no choice if we wanted to continue our work."

After your initial success, why did you decide to sell shares of DRS on the stock exchange, then use the proceeds to buy other companies and grow through acquisition as well?

Gross: "We got the company started with a seed round of investment that raised a small amount of money. It was always our plan to use the proceeds from a stock sale to give the original investors some money back. Then we could use the rest to diversify our product line, which we knew we needed to do."

Was it a straight ride to the top or did you hit some bumps along the way?

Gross: "Larger competitors were trying to kill us, to put us out of business. In the end, we put them out of business. But for a while, I would wake up every night at three o'clock in the morning worrying about whether we would even survive."

But doesn't the best technology always win out in the long run?

Gross: "No. You can have great technology. But you have to have the right team to put it all together and dedicate the long hours to make the finished product something of value."

How did DRS get its name?

Gross: "Leonard Newman and I were sitting in a Bronx pizzeria wondering what we were going to call this thing. We are in the data retrieval business because we collected sounds. We were in the diagnostic business because we analyzed those sounds to find submarines. Our lawyer submitted the paperwork for incorporation with the name Diagnostic/Retrieval Systems on it. One door closed and another opened. We had a business and a name!"