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Software maker expands offices and focus

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Primordial Inc., a maker of software that helps vehicles navigate off-road terrain, has tripled the size of its offices and plans an expansion into the consumer market.

The firm has moved into about 3,000 square feet of space at the Bandana Square building in St. Paul to accommodate its growing staff. Employees had previously been crammed into an 800-square-foot slice of Minnesota Wire & Cable Co.'s offices, also in St. Paul, said Primordial President and CEO Randy Milbert.

Since its founding in 2002, Primordial has largely targeted the military market, developing software that allows soldiers to plan routes through areas where there are no roads or data isn't available. The firm's software, Ground Guidance, takes into account factors such as elevation, lakes and ground cover to plan a path. Primordial has raised federal funds to help with research and development, and its software will head to Afghanistan in the next couple months to be used by soldiers driving ATVs.

Primordial is expecting to take its first big step into the consumer space next year. It's formed a partnership with Santa Clara, Calif.-based Magellan, which plans to launch a ruggedized GPS device aimed at outdoor enthusiasts in 2010. Milbert expects Primordial's software also can help cell phone firms offer consumers the option of finding routes in less-trafficked terrain. For now, about 80 percent of the firm's revenue comes from military contracts, while 20 percent comes from other areas. "We think we'll see that flip in the next few years," he said.

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