

## Meet the Vice President

Contributed by  
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Ted Cheng was formerly president and CEO of Signal Hill, Calif.-based Vision Composites, Inc., a recognized industry leader in high-performance, low-cost, build-to-print space composite structure fabrication. Cheng, formerly with satellite-builder TRW in El Segundo, founded Vision in 1997 in response to a significant shift by major satellite manufacturers towards outsourcing of their production requirements in composite-based structures.

Under Cheng's leadership, Vision became noted for its fresh and innovative product solutions provided by an experienced staff with hands-on expertise in the major aerospace disciplines. The company's expertise translated into strong success and recognition in the industry.

Vision has merged with Alliance Spacesystems, Inc. to form Alliance Spacesystems, LLC as of July 1, 2006. The merger combined the companies' high-caliber engineering and manufacturing expertise to address challenging projects, providing aerospace customers with a single resource for the design and fabrication of composite space structures.

"The primary driving force for Vision Composites since its inception has been to provide customer value and satisfaction," said Cheng. "The success of our company is a testament to how well we have achieved those goals."

Cheng said the hallmark of a company can often be defined by how well it responds to adversity. "My proudest achievement ironically came from a job that did not initially go well for us. In this case, we had completed fabrication of schedule-critical hardware that was found to have a discrepancy prior to delivery."

The situation could have devolved into unproductive finger-pointing, he said, "but we recognized the difficult situation our customer was in and stepped up to the plate to take responsibility for the hardware and its ultimate successful replacement." Despite the near-term monetary loss, Cheng said, "we believe that we won a customer for the long run and at the same time demonstrated our commitment to customer value."

Vision's engineering team members, he said, "were customers once ourselves. That gives us a mindset that sees the product through our customer's eyes and their expectations for a supplier." As a result, he said, there is a strong appreciation for intangibles such as program management, open collaboration, timely communication, focused technical expertise, and other factors that enhance cost, schedule, and quality performance. "Integrity and honesty doesn't hurt in that mix either," Cheng added. "I believe these core values challenge our company to go the extra mile when other competitors may not."

Cheng sees the merger as a win-win for both customers and shareholders. "It will result in a powerful combination that can be effective and leveraged immediately in the marketplace," he said. "For shareholders, this will result in increased value from expanded sales growth and financial performance at a rate that Vision could not obtain on its own."

The merger "positions Vision to immediately respond to what we believe to be an increasing trend towards outsourcing of engineering requirements as well as manufacturing," said Cheng. "It will vertically integrate Vision's and ASI's engineering and manufacturing capabilities to offer a complete turn-key solution to customers and expansion potential into other product lines."

Cheng said he expects very positive responses about the merger from Vision's customers. "This adds an attractive alternative to the current aerospace vendor base which has gone through various levels of consolidation in recent years," Cheng said. "There are very few companies in the marketplace that can provide the capabilities that our merged company will offer, and probably no company that can be as agile and cost-effective in providing those capabilities."

Because of the complementary capabilities of Vision and ASI, Cheng says there is very little overlap that would result in redundant staff resources. "We hope to offer the potential for increased employee compensation and opportunities. There will also be exposure to an expanded product line, such as mechanisms and robotics, that will be interesting for our employees," said Cheng. "I am sure there will be an adjustment period for Vision employees to get used to a higher corporate structure, but the hope is that our shared commonality in values and culture will make the merger as seamless as possible."

Cheng has assumed the title of Vice President of Space Structures and ASI CEO René Fradet is now the CEO of the new company. Both companies' current facilities have been maintained. ASI's 14,000-square-foot facility near JPL houses engineering offices and manufacturing facilities geared to robotics and mechanisms manufacture. Cheng will manage work at the 29,000-square-foot former Vision facility in Signal Hill.

