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The FBI's top techie is headed to the private sector

By Dan Primack

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Jerry Pender takes a job with investment firm Z Capital Partners, after more than a decade with the FBI.

Jerry Pender has spent the past three years as chief information officer and executive assistant director of the FBI, where he managed a \$1.2 billion budget and oversaw “all aspects” of the Bureau’s global information technology operations. Before that, the former U.S. Army captain was CIO of the FBI’s Criminal Justice Information Services division.

But Pender is now leaving public service, recently agreeing to join Z Capital Partners as a full-time operating partner. He will help the New York-based private equity firm identify new investment opportunities, with a particular emphasis on cybersecurity.

“I’ll be engaged a lot in the due diligence phase, looking at the strengths and weaknesses of the IT in the companies we’re looking at acquiring,” Pender explains. “What we don’t want is to acquire a company and then find out later that there was some big IT time-bomb underneath it the whole time that we didn’t catch. It’s also important to know if a company has the right IT team in place and, if not, help to put it there.”

Pender believes that because he’s spent his career on the “buy-side of tech,” his skills were more appropriate to a private equity firm than a Silicon Valley startup. Moreover, he says the days are long gone when non-tech companies could ignore hacking threats.

“I think any company that feels secure is naive,” Pender says. “If you aren’t worried about it then I don’t think you know what’s going on. The right approach is about more than just detecting a breach, because they are almost certainly going to happen. What’s key is making sure you’re on top of it to minimize the damage.”