

Source: Work from Home
Volume:
Date: October 2004
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INSIDE OUT **INSIDE PERSPECTIVE** FEATURE NEWS EXTRAS WHAT WORKS

i.lab

the companies
and their stories



BY ANN LUND

THE HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL Queensland Government technology incubator – i.lab – now plays host to a wide variety of high tech start-up companies, all with a completely different focus and all at varying levels of development.

We take a look at some of the companies – past and present – and their thoughts and feelings about business incubation.

ICOMMS

ICOMMS has only recently joined i.lab and is a team of software developers operating primarily in the wireless telecommunications sector. Its core business is in the development of software tools to manage radio communications infrastructure and associated radiation hazards. Since its establishment in 1999, ICOMMS is rapidly emerging as a key industry player and has developed some radical concepts in wireless communications management.

"Our focus on visually interactive software and enterprise wide database connectivity has sparked a great amount of interest in key areas of the global telecommunications industry," Mark Leckenby, ICOMMS CEO said.

"The technology identifies radiation hazard zones around mobile phone towers.

"It's a mandatory occupational health and safety requirement for many telecommunications carriers worldwide due to the damaging effects of radio frequency (RF) radiation on human tissue."

ICOMMS is also developing an online solution to the management of RF hazards and infrastructure management.

Recently radPro won the *Innovation in Telecommunications* award – in the coveted industry awards.

Mr Leckenby said, "ICOMMS approached i.lab initially due to the range of support services, professional offices and access to a skilled advisory panel. Although ICOMMS are reasonably well on track from a technology development point of view, commercialisation and getting access to capital were good reasons to join i.lab. Another key reason was providing a dynamic atmosphere for the staff, especially given the infancy of the company. In the short amount of time we've been at i.lab we have attended a range of events from CEO lunches to Business Development Programs. At i.lab you feel like you're part of a larger organisation and there is plenty of support available, including access to other companies that are at similar levels of commercialisation."

CHARMHEALTH

CharmHealth is another software development team newly arrived at i.lab – led by Janine Garrett – a past clinical Oncology pharmacist and Director of Pharmacy at the Gold Coast Hospital, and now a qualified software developer (MIT).

The company has developed an Oncology Information Management System that is highly specialised and offers a range of

features to support the multi-disciplinary team involved in the care of patients with cancer.

"From the physician involved with the diagnosis, initiation, review and prescription of protocols, through to the pharmacists' requirements for preparation, manufacture and supervision of the chemotherapy, all the way to the strict requirements for coding, staging, and data management, CHARM is capable of bringing together *all* aspects of care," Ms Garrett said.

CHARM has now been successfully deployed at five sites in three states and is currently negotiating with six further sites in Queensland, NSW and Victoria. Ms Garrett originally worked from home developing and testing CHARM until she moved onto the first test site in Brisbane to implement it. Last November, she employed an additional developer to help in deployment at the next site, and was very quickly looking at an increasing staff base. Janine said, "Having now consolidated the functionality of this highly sophisticated system by successfully deploying it in several very different healthcare environments, we felt that we were now a highly viable business. The company needed the support of a business development and mentorship program like that being offered by i.lab. In addition, i.lab will initially provide us with a dedicated business premises, as our new clients' requirements for fast response and multi-skilled support mandated a team approach and increased staff numbers.

[INSIDE PERSPECTIVE]

"The incubation scheme offers many exciting opportunities for us, particularly networking opportunities, the ability to benefit from the experience and guidance of mentors who have created and managed successful companies, and we are hoping that the assistance we will receive will enable us to become a significant player in the highly competitive health information technology market.

"So much of our time has been spent in just getting the product to the market, and with the potential to triple our customer base in the very near future, we needed to be in an environment that fosters innovative business development strategies and be in contact with people who can assist us in meeting with key industry and government organisations."

GENETRAKS

Genetraks is in its second year of occupancy – just this year it secured a \$1.1 million Research and Development Start-Up grant from the Federal Government to develop its unique diagnostic testing system for the equine industry.

The company is developing diagnostic tests based on gene expression – which will save horse owners and the equine industry millions of dollars each year.

The first test to be marketed will target a particular neurological disease and will be launched in the United States early next year; a second test – which is capable of distinguishing between multiple causes of neurological disease – will be launched later in 2005. Other multi-diagnostic tests are also in development and include tests for respiratory and musculoskeletal disorders.

"Neurological conditions are a major problem in the equine industry in the United States and current diagnostic methodology is expensive, slow and risky for the horse," Genetraks CEO Dr Roslyn Brandon said.

"The potential market is huge; if we test a horse and find it is susceptible we can medicate or vaccinate. We can also use the test to screen imported horses or newborns.

"The atmosphere here at i.lab is conducive to innovation. It has enabled us to connect with the right people at the right time.

"i.lab has been fantastic in meeting the early developmental needs of Genetraks. The i.lab team is supportive, flexible and totally understanding of the needs of a new and

rapidly growing company. We can't praise them more highly," Dr Brandon said.

FUSION SPORT

Just two years ago Fusion Sport was two guys working from home and wondering how they would ever get their idea to become reality. After being admitted to i.lab in December, Markus Deutsch, the CEO, said they quickly became immersed in a community which was necessary for their dream to be realised. "We have met all the right people, had all of the necessary resources and were given a great deal of advice on how to actually take an idea and turn it into a successful business.

"From the stories we've heard about start-up technology businesses, it should have taken us at least three to four years to take Smartspeed from concept stage to market. Through our involvement with i.lab, and the Queensland business community, we are now making export sales only 18 months after the company was founded. This speed to market has been the critical factor in the success we have enjoyed thus far. Joining i.lab simply gave us the confidence and resources to pursue a dream that otherwise would have become too difficult."

Smartspeed is an electronic coaching tool that uses a system of remote wireless field unit to track athletes during training and competition. It provides real-time visual and audio feedback and gives coaches greater control over the training environment. Smartspeed can be used on all land surfaces including ice and snow.

"Since hitting the market last month, even we have been surprised with the reaction to Smartspeed. Now we face the exciting phase of growth and international market penetration, and the support we receive at i.lab and from our local manufacturers will be critical in realising the full potential of the business.

"Even if companies are not fortunate enough to enter an incubator environment such as i.lab, there is a lot of assistance available in the Queensland business community and through associations with Universities, government departments and the like. In today's business environment my best advice to people would be to keep asking, keep digging, and learn from those who have gone before you. This is vital if you

are to achieve success quickly and with reduced risk."

OMNIX

i.lab graduate company – Omnix Pty Ltd was one of the inaugural companies joining i.lab Incubator in 2001 and is one of the many success stories.

With a long relationship in and with the Australian transport industry, Omnix developed a specialist suite of software specifically for the industry, which tracks every process in the chain from an order being placed to final delivery.

"It's a truly paperless solution from start to finish," Johan Engelbrecht, Managing Director of Omnix said.

"It enables drivers to transfer this valuable data back to base from wherever they are in the field, whenever they want to."

Omnix's 'Smart Move' software is now being used throughout Australia and is being marketed overseas.

"Without a doubt i.lab raised our profile. It allowed us the freedom to concentrate on our business – which at the end of the day is the important thing."

By making the most of the opportunities offered during their tenancy – Omnix was able to show significant progress: second round investment was achieved, staff increased by 50% and sales rose by 35%. The company was also able to develop a strategic plan to support planned growth and export activities for 2004 and beyond – by forging an alliance with a multi-national player.

They now have representatives in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria.

"Being a member of i.lab was a thoroughly positive experience, and the networking events associated with it are incredibly valuable," Mr Engelbrecht said.

"Great friendships and collaboration with other members have been an added bonus.

"Without the support of i.lab, Omnix would still be an unknown entity in a suburban office." [WFH]

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