

Kelowna Capital News

High-tech startup sales are ‘about to pop’



Gary Symons, president and CEO of Vericorder Technology Inc., shows off three prototype multi-media applications the Kelowna company is working on for the Mac iPhone.

Sean Connor/Capital News

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A Kelowna start-up caught a lot of attention at the International Broadcast Conference this fall and now its founders say they're on the brink of becoming the Okanagan's next tech success story.

Poddio, by VeriCorder, is a package of audio recording and editing software designed to help journalists spend more time in the field.

It has already secured a title as one of the 12 new technologies that caught the eye of top industry analysts at the International Broadcast Conference in Amsterdam last month.

The concept is simple: Allow journalists, and eventually the general public, to tell the story of the day, whatever it might be—all from the palm of their hand.

“I can train anyone to use this stuff in 10 minutes,” said founder Gary Symons. “Honestly, a five year old child could do this.”

Poddio runs a band of audio across an iPhone screen and allows the story’s creator to drop in pictures to run along with the sound—similar to what you might find in an evening newscast; but it can be applied to virtually any industry.

As VeriCorder’s products progress they plan to launch a software line for everyone from broadcasters to newspapers to Joe Average who wants to assemble a wedding video without an astronomical bill, and in time for the featured stars to watch themselves en route to their honeymoon.

Local CBC alumni David French and Gary Symons founded the company, which beat out 1,300 other tech companies for this honour.

“This thing is about to pop,” said Symons, in an interview at the offices they’re expanding in the Okanagan Research & Innovation Centre on St. Paul’s Street.

The company incorporated in April 2008 with a half-million dollar investment, added another half-million cash infusion and are currently raising another million as they snap up staff to deploy their product.

In fact, they spent the week hiring techies and salespeople capable of signing and setting up some of the world’s largest media companies.

With the news this week that Telus and Bell will begin offering the iPhone to their customers by year’s

end, Symons says one of the last hurdles in their way has fallen—they are capable of launching applications on other Smartphones, but the product was designed to run on the iPhone platform and they have had to struggle with selling companies intent on retaining their cellphone provider.

And while it may be bad news for some, Canwest's latest financial woes should prove another opportunity.

"I think it's really brutal what's happening in media right now, but frankly, it's a good think for us," said Symons, who worked in newspapers, radio and television before making the leap to high-tech product development.

As traditional television and newspaper mediums give way to more on-line content, the web is going to grow, requiring an endless stream of information and that's just fodder for their pitch.

Even if newspapers go to a digital tablet format, as many are suggesting, allowing journalists to spend more time in the field is only going to mean improvements to the type and quality of the content they can provide, Symons said.

And while they initially conceived of the idea as a means of solving a problem for journalists, they've found the industry is really just the tip of iceberg for what they might produce.

Eventually, they're hoping to launch products to see professors compile their own movie presentations for lectures or even realtors put together home-tours to run with their MLS-listings and all for a fee of roughly \$20 a month.

The company's success should prove a huge boost for the tech incubator who took them in, as well.

VeriCorder was the first company ORIC accepted when they opened their doors last year. Technology incubators offer start-up companies like VeriCorder guidance on everything from funding decisions to attracting investors, sourcing employees and

developing business strategy. “We would not be where we are today if it were not for ORIC,” said Symons.


Working alongside other tech startups they’ve seen other new companies send customers and investors their way and have had their engineers help find solutions for friends’ companies.

VeriCorder has close to 100 companies in the sales pipeline, with plans for new announcements coming before the end of the year.

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