



Thriving IT firm sells peace of mind

Yaletown-based Dyrand Systems succeeds with its virtual IT service proves a winner

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In April of 2001, Trent Dyrsmid saw his dot-com dream die. The former investment adviser and one-time race-car driver had sunk his entrepreneurial hopes into a concept called Global Motorsports International -- a website focusing on the automotive after-market that would allow manufacturers to forecast production runs.

"Companies like this exist now so the idea was a good one," said Dyrsmid, today CEO of Vancouver's Dyrand Systems. "But I was an inexperienced entrepreneur, I didn't have a management team, my timing sucked."

It was the depths of the dot-com bust and Dyrsmid couldn't raise all the funding he needed. So here he was, unemployed.

What was he going to do? Go back to his old career?

"I just loathed the whole idea, because that just felt like failure," said Dyrsmid. "On the other hand, having a company not succeed didn't feel like failure. It was just a tremendous let-down."

So Dyrsmid sold his house, his ski-boat, his race car, his camper and started another tech company, Dyrand Systems, with a partner, Ed Anderson.

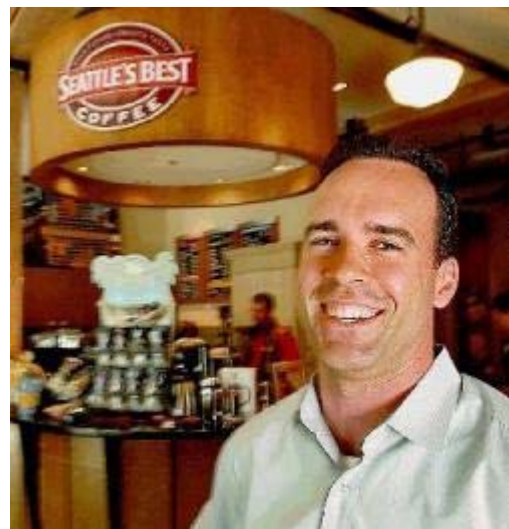
"I hocked everything I owned, except my RSPs," said Dyrsmid. "At one point, I had spent every penny I had and was six figures in debt."

Today, however, three-year-old, privately held Dyrand Systems -- whose clients include Orca Bay, H.Y. Louie, the Langley School District, the North Vancouver School District, the University of B.C. and Seattle's Best Coffee -- is a success in the growing information technology service sector.

And, with a single angel investor, Dyrand is expanding its reach to Seattle and further south.

The company offers consulting IT services and, its specialty, a virtual IT department for firms with 50 work stations or fewer. This service offers constant remote monitoring and steady fixes and updates to clients who want to keep their IT systems up and operating.

"We also have a consulting division, where we go in and do projects and we have some very large customers in that area," Dyrsmid said. "They have fully staffed IT departments, but they bring us in for specific expertise."



CREDIT: Peter Battistoni, Vancouver Sun
Trent Dyrsmid is CEO of Dyrand Systems, a Vancouver company that handles information technology for companies with 50 work stations or fewer, such as Seattle's Best Coffee.

While the company is now profitable, the early days were not easy, Dyrsmid says.

Dyrand began simply, as two men with two computers in an apartment making cold calls.

"There was nothing unique about what we did," said Dyrsmid.

"We'd find the work and then we had a technician who would do the job and we'd bill hours.

"So there was no recurring revenue stream. It was not a very good business model, but at least we were in business."

Then Dyrand found itself competing with a now-defunct Vancouver IT service firm for the business of a company called Retirement Concepts, still a Dyrand client.

"At the end of it, the consultant who had been hired to run the competition said, you know you guys are going to lose, because they have this 24/7 remote monitoring and remote management functionality and it's the same price as your guy showing up for half a day each week," said Dyrsmid.

Dyrand asked for a two-day extension, went out and bought the same software the other company was using and undercut the price.

"And we won the deal," said Dyrsmid. "The consultant said that you guys wanted this so bad I couldn't give it to them."

At that point, said Dyrsmid, the light went on.

"We thought, hey, this is a really good idea, because now we don't have to go back to zero at the beginning of every month, we can build this annuity for ourselves."

Since then, Yaletown-based Dyrand has acquired some 30 steady corporate customers for its IT services, and, said Dyrsmid, the firm has never lost a client.

"Principally, what we provide is peace of mind," said Dyrsmid. "I know that's not a technical thing, but in my talks with CEOs, to them they just want to know that they're not going to lose their information, that their computers are going to work when they want them and that their productivity is not going to be impaired by poorly functioning computer systems."

Dyrsmid said that one of the main challenges he faces these days is in finding the right people to work for his 10-employee company.

"It's incredibly difficult to attract the right talented people to come and join the team," said Dyrsmid. "That's my number one job, putting the right people on the bus. And it's tough."

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