

INNOVATORS

IN WATERLOO REGION



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SPRING 2014

in•no•vate [in-uh-veyt]

Verb | Origin: Latin *innovatus*, past participle of *innovare*, from *in-* + *novus*

to introduce something new;
make changes in anything established.

By definition, the concept of being an innovator or being innovative opens up a world of possibilities. Waterloo Region, and the people who live, work and play here understand this. From big business to family-owned, multi-national to hyper local, Waterloo Region is home to some truly innovative people and businesses. *Innovators of Waterloo Region* introduces you to these trail blazers.

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NETWORKS THAT WORK

"No matter the size of the company, everyone has the same network issues. While large companies have IT networking specialists on staff, small and mid-sized companies may have an IT person responsible for everything from ordering hardware to setting up and troubleshooting network issues. We provide solutions that are scalable to the size of the network," says David Yach, Chief Technology Officer, AUVIK NETWORKS INC.

Inspired by the Inuit word for the blocks of ice that are carved to build igloos, AUVIK NETWORKS INC. builds solutions to network issues.

Founders Yach, Marc Morin and Alex Hoff had built a computer network software solution when they worked at Sandvine, and Yach brought enterprise expertise from his years as Chief Technology Officer at BlackBerry. "We're poster children for University Avenue! Each of us completed our undergraduate degrees at the University of Waterloo in various disciplines, yet it was our MBAs through Wilfrid Laurier University that helped us define the market we wanted to target. The tech side of our brains found the problem to solve, and then the business side of our brains determined our ideal customers," concludes Yach.

Starting with the premise of managing a network is more complicated than it needs to be, AUVIK NETWORKS INC. sets out to make computers manage a network more efficiently. Adding a user to the network in a wired environment required hooking the right network wire to the right computer and adding or omitting certain connections controlled accessibility. With WIFI, people can be anywhere in the building, and a more sophisticated network was required. Small and mid-sized companies purchased network systems intended for large companies with on-staff network experts and often didn't have onsite network expertise.



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: TIM MARTIN, MARC MORIN, JACQUI MURPHY, GAVIN KERR & ALEX HOFF



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: ALEX HOFF, MARC MORIN & DAVID YACH

AUVIK NETWORKS INC. is about to launch a beta test and the product launch is anticipated for June, 2014. They currently have 23 (six are Laurier business graduates) employees as it takes much work and effort to make something look simple. The goal of the product is to tell the company within 10 minutes something they did not know about their network. The product scans the network, identifies vulnerabilities, pinpoints what is and is not being used, and suggests fixes. "One of the common problems we find is old workarounds. People are not sure why something is there, so they do not want to delete it in case it breaks something. We get the computer to understand what the network is set up to do and what it is actually doing. We can identify where the load is coming from, where the hotspots are and recommend efficiencies," says Yach.

Existing network software solutions have been plagued by the innovators' dilemma, where software evolves to meet the needs of the biggest clients who want more functionality. The rest of the clients are left with a product with more features than they use. The goal of AUVIK NETWORKS INC. is to provide a scalable network

solution. Companies will pay a monthly maintenance fee for the service, based on the size of the network. "Large purchases require multiple layers of management approval. By offering a monthly maintenance fee, smaller companies can give it a try without a significant cash outlay. We used our MBA brains to find the price-point sweet spot. Price cannot be so low that people doubt the effectiveness, or so high that people won't pay it," says Yach.

"Network management should not be hard and people should not have to settle for a product that is too complicated to meet their needs. By targeting the small to mid-sized company that may not have a dedicated IT network specialist, we can help companies have networks that work the way they are supposed to," concludes Yach.

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