

SOFTWARE

Success by numbers

Vortex has developed a formula to predict a company's prosperity based on its identity, writes

KIRSTEN RODSGAARD-MATHIESEN

IMAGINE a world where everything fits — a world in which we all have the perfect job and where almost all problems are solvable thanks to a mathematical algorithm. Sounds too good to be true?

Not at Vortex, a Christchurch-based company which claims to have discovered "the secret of success" in the shape of innovative software that aligns networks of people and organisations for maximum performance and prosperity.

The owner and creator of Vortex, Branton Kenton-Dau, explains: "Simply it's about creating 'My world — the world made relevant to me' by mapping out for you your DNA — the beliefs that make you who you are. Once you have got your DNA, you can match with others to find the friends, jobs, partners, communities that resonate with who you are. The upshot: your life becomes more meaningful, fun and successful. It's that easy."

The software was launched last September at the Recruitment & Consulting Services Association Conference in Sydney. Australasian recruitment company WorkPac was one of the first clients to sign up.

WorkPac managing director Phil Smart says he was "extremely impressed" by the concept.

"WorkPac already utilises a number of psychometric tools, and we have seen first-hand the benefits from such processes. Vortex was viewed as an extension to our existing approach, and an additional mechanism to further improve the quality of our internal processes and outcomes," he says.

While the Australian launch went well, New Zealanders were less enthusiastic. Annoyed by the lack of interest on his home turf, and keen to get into the potentially lucrative US market, Kenton-Dau contacted start-up expert Nick Gerritsen, who was so excited by the software's potential that he decided to invest in the company.

He helped test the technology in the US in December 2005.

"We had tried to engage with the New Zealand market but nobody really understood the implications of this technology sufficiently. When I put the Vortex team in front of my American investment networks the reaction was phenomenal. They completely understood how this technology could give companies a distinct competitive edge," says Gerritsen.

One of the key people he contacted was Skype's former US business development manager, fellow Kiwi Pooj Preena. Preena was intrigued and agreed to spearhead Vortex's move into the US from his base in San Francisco.



Above: Raf Manji (left) and Branton Kenton-Dau. Below: Nick Gerritsen.

Photos by Kirsten Rodsgaard-Mathiesen



"The whole concept of relationships and social networking is quite hot right now. Everything else is incremental but this seemed like it was new," says Preena.

"It's hard to say that about anything, but it's unique enough that I haven't seen or heard of any other companies that are approaching relationships in this manner — the matrix manner."

For Kenton-Dau, the whole Vortex adventure began in 2001 when he read *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*, a management bestseller published in 1994 describing visionary companies and their success.

'ALMOST ALL PROBLEMS ARE SOLVABLE THANKS TO A MATHEMATICAL ALGORITHM.'

The book argued that companies with great staying power were driven by their purpose and values.

Kenton-Dau and his business partner,

Raf Manji, analysed the relationship between performance, perception and purpose in all S&P 500-listed US companies.

"We found that two-thirds of the S&P500 companies only delivered half their potential earnings to shareholders over the last eight years because their activities and business relationships were not aligned around their core DNA identity of purpose and values."

Vortex technology is based on the concept of a vortex, where the parts of a

system become more aligned in order to improve their performance.

"For example, when you pull the plug out of your bath, the water molecules align with each other to create the vortex spiral because it enables them to flow out faster," explains Gerritsen. "The system — in this case your bath — has improved its performance, and applied to an organisation, it means you can bring together people and systems that are more efficient."

Smart believes the technology's possibilities are almost endless. "Vortex can be applied to many situations — effectively anywhere where human relationships play a part. It has applications for Yahoo, Google, Governments, hospitals, clubs, churches, schools — any network where people need to be in alignment. This could be the fourth dimension of the internet: taking out/reducing friction and allowing information to flow more easily to people when they want it."

So far Vortex is generating income but not yet making a profit. However, Kenton-Dau is optimistic. A year from now he hopes Vortex will have established a licence structure and "will have a professional team to run it, not an amateur like me. I do it for love. I'm an entrepreneur, not a business guy, as I have very little management expertise." ■

Kirsten Rodsgaard-Mathiesen is a freelance writer based in Nelson.