

Profiles

Entrepreneur

Derek Spratt - President and CEO Intrinsyc



As I sit in his 10th floor office overlooking the heart of downtown Vancouver, I am talking with the president of Intrinsyc, Derek Spratt.

As we talk I become instantly infused with the passion and excitement that flows from Spratt as he speaks.

A veteran in the field of electronics and communications, with over 15 years of experience working for some of the biggest players in the industry, Spratt tells me he has always been on the look out for trends and opportunities. Then one day the Internet broke loose and changed his life forever.

Derek's eyes twinkle as he discusses the future of ubiquitous computing. He paints a bright future in which embedded, Internet enabled devices flourish all around us. Where devices are in constant communication and can work cooperatively to accomplish tasks. "We spent all this time developing these amazing technologies for the pc, now it's time to leverage what we've learned beyond the pc" says Spratt

Spratt's company possesses a wealth of software and hardware expertise when it comes to Internet enabled devices. They also assist clients in the development of Internet devices and other information appliances by using a combination of their licensable technologies and design services. By avoiding constantly reinventing the wheel, Intrinsyc offers companies the ability to leverage their knowledge and expertise and significantly reduce the time it takes to get their Internet enabled products to market.

Investment in Canada

When asked for his thoughts on how high tech investment is progressing in Canada, Spratt was quick to point out that things have come a long way, compared to five years ago. "In the past I believe there was a lot of fear and apprehension about investing in Canadian tech companies. Over the past few years however, I have seen a new openness emerging. Investors on both sides of the border have come to see serious potential for high tech Canadian companies", says Spratt. He comments that our success as high tech companies is not entirely dependent on money however, but rather our own self-perception. We have the talent, the ideas and the people to make it into the big leagues, but we need to believe we can.

Technology

Spratt tells me that the actual technologies being used in the solutions offered by Intrinsic are not in themselves that revolutionary, what is however, is they way in which they are using them. Spratt describes technologies and devices that have what he calls Autodiscovery. What this does is enable devices to announce their presence to a network of distributed devices, and then share information and skills to accomplish something more then they could do individually. Add to this the ability to program or interact with all these devices through something as easy to use as web browser, and you may begin to glimpse the vision that is racing inside Spratts head.

Another point of interest Spratt points out, is that the technologies and solutions provided by Intrinsic do not require companies to completely abandon their existing technologies and systems. "We allow companies to take the way they are currently doing things and enhance and add functionality to it, where it makes sense", says Spratt. The ability to equip legacy devices with new functionality can lead to significant cost savings and disruption.

The "Brain Drain"

Spratt's thoughts on the Brain Drain were also quite refreshing. When asked if Intrinsic suffers from this phenomenon, Spratt was proud to inform me that his company has had no difficulty recruiting and retaining the necessary talent. Spratt comments how he believes many people have a skewed perception about what working across the border is really like. "Yes it's true, your salary may be higher then what you would get paid in Canada, but I have had more then a few friends and colleagues inform me that you will have to work about 10 times harder for it, and that you are going to have spend a lot more money, due to the higher cost of living. " He tells me that he has crunched the numbers, and has concluded that it is still more cost effective to run his operations, right here in Vancouver then to head south.

As far a recruiting and retaining talent, Spratt points out that it is the Employers responsibility to make their companies attractive and worthwhile to employees. "We are seeing an new age of empowerment for employees", says Spratt. Employers who learn how to build challenging, fun, interesting companies should have no problem finding and keeping employees.

Words of Wisdom

When asked if he had any words of wisdom to pass along to Canadian entrepreneurs, Spratt spoke of how he is glad to see that the bubble has burst, with regards to the .COM craziness. He tells me how it drives him nuts when I run into people who think they are failures because they haven't flipped their company within a year for a few million. "Building a real business takes time, survival skills and patience", says Spratt. Companies who have had it too easy don't learn anything. If a company has the right vision, determination and expends the necessary time and effort, they will succeed. Chuckling as he informs me he is about to liberate a quote form Steve Jobs, Spratt says that companies need to learn to "Enjoy the Pain".

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