

Project partners hook up online



TRADING ROOM

KATHERINE JIMENEZ

FOR nearly three hard years, Paul Hemmings worked from his bedroom to create a computerised system that would make life easier for the property industry.

Hemmings, who held a full-time IT job, recalls spending hours each night developing the software for the collaboration systems program.

The program allows all parties in a development project — architects, engineers, builders — to link up electronically. At the time (the mid-1990s) all handling for developments was done manually, through paperwork.

"In those days, people would do a bunch of plans, print them out and put them on a courier and send a roll of drawings to another office," says Hemmings.

But around 1996 he developed a working model for the collaboration system to streamline the process, and he hooked up with Tim Clare, who shared a similar vision. A few years earlier, they had discussed creating a model while working on the Sydney casino project.

From that, the software program emerged: ProjectCentre, which became the name of company founded by Hemmings and Clare about a year later.

The aim at first was just to use the internet to store, manage and maintain control over different versions of project-related documents and diagrams.

But that initial program quickly evolved and management subsequently developed it into a document and project management software system.

"We are probably one of the first companies in the world to provide the services," says Clare. "We certainly feel like we... invented what we do."

But the start was tough. The pair held many presentations where people walked out and they were told their program would never happen.

Not long after, it did happen — and in a big way.

The then thirtysomething-year-olds secured Baulderstone and Multiplex as



Paul Hemmings, left, Tim Clare and Kevin Davis on site at Eastwood in Sydney's northwest this week

AMOS AIKMAI

their first clients. "They took a chance and let us deliver a few projects for them and decided that we were providing good value," says Clare.

Today, ProjectCentre has \$60 billion-\$70bn worth of projects under management globally. Among its blue-chip clients are Westfield, Baulderstone, Multiplex, the federal government and Crown.

Indicative of the scale of their success, ProjectCentre has achieved revenue growth of 73 per cent over the past three years, ranking it as the 36th fastest-growing company in Australia, according to the 2009 BRW magazine Fast 100 list.

"It's really been in the past three years that the company has hit its straps," says Hemmings.

The partners remain heavily involved in the company, but they appointed a chief executive, Kevin Davis, last June to lead it through the next phase of growth.

To that end, earlier this year, ProjectCentre scored one of its biggest wins: a contract to provide the online collaboration and project management solution for the federal government's Building the Education Revolution program.

It involves about 3000 schools across NSW, Victoria, and Queensland.

A few months earlier, it was selected to

be the online project management solution for the federal government's Defence Infrastructure Panel.

One of the advantages management claims over its competitors is that its system provides live reporting on every key decision and transaction made during the construction of any project, big or small.

"Our ambitions are to continue that rate of growth and continue to get greater visibility across all of government," says Hemmings. "We are also starting to get a good introduction into the government in New Zealand."

Early next year, it plans a push into WA mining and energy.