



BIRTH OF A COMPANY

New High-Tech Software Firm Born at OSU

If there's a poster child that represents how investment in OSU Engineering becomes economic impact, i5Logic, a software firm that was birthed and incubated in the Kelley Engineering Center, is surely it. And the child is growing up fast.

The company was founded in January, 2006 by CEO Matthew Johnen partnering with OSU computer science professors Margaret Burnett, Martin Erwig, and Greg Rothermel. In November of that year, Johnen hired the first employee. Six months later, the company had grown to six (not counting Johnen and the OSU professors). Three months after that, the workforce doubled to 12, four of whom are OSU engineering grads: Kevin Swartz, Nick Patron, Matt McLaughlin, and Eric Rehn.

Such rapid expansion forced the company to move out of their incubation space on campus and into offices across town. "We simply outgrew the quarters," Johnen says. "With twelve employees, we ran out of space there. We've been successful."

This is exactly the kind of success the College is building as it becomes an economic engine for Oregon. And i5Logic plans to keep growing. "We need more technical people, software engineers," says Johnen, who worked with start-ups in the Bay Area before relocating to Corvallis, in part because of the proximity to OSU.

At the heart of i5Logic's swift growth is a software tool called i5Audit, which helps people detect errors in formulas or values while they create spreadsheets. Unlike programs that issue annoying pop-up warnings, i5Audit works in the background, tracking input from the user before subtly highlighting areas that could be sources of potential errors.

"The system respects a user's attention," says Burnett. "It's not yammering at you. So you

can stay productive and make adjustments when you want."

The product exemplifies end-user software engineering, bringing the benefits of classical software engineering to end-users – people who are not trained programmers but do limited programming using software like Excel. The problem is that 90 percent of spreadsheets contain errors, which can spell major losses for businesses and individuals.

The three professors, part of the College's Information Usability Research Cluster, have been working on the technology for years, funded by NSF grants totaling some \$2 million. If i5Logic does well when they roll out final product in early 2008, the professors will share in the profits, as will OSU, receiving royalties and profit sharing.

OSU students and Oregon will also benefit as the company grows. "The OSU engineers we've hired have the training and skills to almost instantly be productive," Johnen says. "I wouldn't have moved here if it weren't for OSU and the College of Engineering."

Computer science professors Martin Erwig (far left) and Margaret Burnett discuss refinements to i5Logic's spreadsheet error correction tool with company CEO Matt Johnen.