

[Home](#)

IT'S THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN

Wednesday, 09 March 2011 | Jeanne-Vida Douglas

A+ A-  

Although the mining boom sustained the Australian economy through the global financial crisis, another sector hardly missed a beat during the economic gyrations – that's the software market.

The global market for software is almost \$US400 billion, research company Datamonitor says, and it should increase to \$427 billion by 2013. But although the overall market raced ahead in 2010, Australia's stake fell from more than \$2 billion in 2009 to \$1.7 billion in 2010.

Nonetheless, a string of high-profile global announcements, including Accel Partners' \$60 million investment in Atlassian, and the Nasdaq OMX Group's purchase of financial monitoring group SMARTS, has focused global investors' attention on the technical capabilities and creativity of antipodean developers.

"What businesses need to realise is that the internet will be their primary form of communication with customers, partners and employees and not just an ancillary form of communication," Brad Howarth, IT industry commentator and co-author of a new book covering developments in the technology sector *A Faster Future*, says. "The next generation of technology will be all about streamlining your processes and transactions, sorting through the vast amount of data generated on the internet for the bits that are relevant to you."

The following seven tech talents each stake a claim for the global technology spend.

Aconex

File sharing for multimillion dollar projects:

Founded in 2000 by Rob Phillpot

and Leigh Jasper, Aconex is a web-based application for sharing drawings and documents in the building and construction industry. Within three years of starting, Aconex had a strong list of domestic customers, including Grocon, Brookfield Multiplex, Hansen Yuncken and Probuild and began to expand internationally, opening offices in Dubai, Hong Kong and Singapore, doubling in size every year for five years. In 2008, the company secured a \$107.5 million funding deal with US-based investor Francisco Partners and began an expansion into the North and South American markets, including working on a \$3.2 billion Panama Canal expansion program.

Aconex is a web-based software-as-a-service collaboration platform that enables architects, engineers, contractors and suppliers to collaborate and manage project information using one secure central system. The software is being used by 250,000 individuals, in 35,000 organisations to manage diagrams and documents in 12,000 projects worth \$US260 billion in 70 countries.



Making sense from millions of social networking messages:

Founded in January 2009 by Nick Holmes à Court, BuzzNumbers is a web-based software-as-a-service company that listens in to what's being said about brands and issues across a range of online, traditional and social media. After a year working on customer trials and technology development, Holmes à Court managed to attract the attention of angel investor and serial entrepreneur Andy Gent, who's spent the past

10 years founding and building successful software companies. In January 2010, Gent became chief executive of the company and focused on further product development, growth and market development in the consulting and recruitment industries.

Delivered as a web software service BuzzNumbers is an analytical and reporting tool that combs social media, blogs, news, forums, wikis, video sites and focuses on websites where people discuss issues and topics. The BuzzNumbers software then converts this data into consumer insights, sales leads and market research.

The service tracks more than 50 million online conversations a day across the US, Britain, Australia and Asia, and is being used by 150 global and Australian brands for insights and service they can't get elsewhere.

The x-factor in BuzzNumbers is that it allows companies and organisations to sift through the millions of bits of customer-generated information swirling around the web into specific responses to their brand, competitors, product or industry.

iWebGate

Offline security, online access to data:

Founded in 2004 by Charlie Gargett, Tim Gooch and Andrew Sutherland, iWebGate is software that provides organisations access to a sophisticated security network that sits between their local network and existing firewall technology. The software provides the functionality of highly complex security networks offering intrusion detection and prevention, user authentication and the ability to securely share data with remote users and customers. It can be downloaded and installed on PCs or servers in a stand-alone or virtualised environment in less than 20 minutes. The upside of the software is that it provides a level of security as though your network was not connected to the internet – although it is.

It can be installed on a stand-alone server or PC, can be provided as a hosted security service solution or can be integrated into other software-as-a-service offerings.

iWebGate Platform is being used to deliver secure services to at least 330 firms and 180,000 individual users and can be used by service companies to roll out secure reporting services.

MyCyberTwin

Reliable customer support using artificial intelligence:

Founded in 2005 by Liesl Capper and John Zakos, MyCyberTwin makes virtual people or conversational robots that can be used by companies for customer support or entertainment purposes. Developed using artificial intelligence techniques, the CyberTwins can handle complex interactions with high accuracy and personalisation and have outperformed human counterparts in a number of corporate rollouts. Using artificial intelligence, the CyberTwins "learn" as they go and can upgrade their communications according to the customers' responses.

About 40,000 businesses and individuals have created their own CyberTwins, including National Australia Bank, NASA and HP. What is novel about MyCyberTwin is its use of artificial intelligence to create a human-like response from a machine to humans.

Rubik Financial

Core banking system in the cloud:

Founded in November 2007 by Stephen Kunkler, Brent Jackson, Craig Coleman and Andrew Moffat, Rubik resells the Temenos core banking system – one of the world's biggest banking systems. But it has also developed or acquired technology that brings core banking into the age of cloud computing. Rubik's Generation 3 internet banking system provides financial institutions with a both the core banking technology as well as a series of flexible customer contact, payment and card facilities.

Rubik is one of the few software vendors to have developed a product that is specifically delivered through the cloud.

As a hosted solution, the banking system is fast to roll out and doesn't require advance capital expenditure on server farms and because it's a software as a service, technology upgrades are gradual.

As the service it provides is more flexible and less expensive than current alternatives, the company has set itself an aggressive growth path, aiming at servicing the technological needs of 75 per cent of all financial institutions across Australia and New Zealand. Rubik Financials' software is now used by 350 institutions and is used directly or indirectly by more than 1 million individuals.

The seL4 Microkernel

A home-grown operating system that's secure and simple:

Released in August 2009, the seL4 microkernel is a small and highly accurate operating system, which is the result of four years work within National Information and Communications Technology Australia lead by principal researcher Gerwin Klein along with 12 other researchers. Small systems such as the seL4 have inherently fewer defects than larger systems because of their size. Also it has limited functionality, which makes it more secure – the more functionality that a system has, the more opportunities there are for things to go wrong.

The seL4 microkernel is offered free of charge for academic and educational use and is attracting a lot of interest from the defence sector and for mining and medical applications.

Its predecessor, the OKL4 microkernel, was also created through NICTA and is installed in more than 1 billion mobile phones and devices around the world.

Vision 6

Customer contact in the cloud :

Founded in January 2001 by Evan Fortune and Mathew Myers, Vision 6 began in Myer's lounge room with a couple of computers and some help from university mates. It starting out producing promotional web-based video content that could be delivered via email. The company was formed based on this software with an investment of \$65,000 in seed capital from a handful of angel investors. After dabbling in a couple of different applications, Vision 6 began to focus specifically on an easy-to-use mechanism to create and distribute SMS text-messaging or email-based campaigns.

Vision 6 sells the software directly or it is sold as a service by more than 200 partner organisations that can integrate it into clients' emails and also offer campaign management and support. It is scalable for very large businesses as well as small to medium enterprises and boasts more than 12,000 users. Vision 6 has been responsible for more than 4 billion emails, SMS text messages and other electronic instances of communication.

The software consists of a web-based customer management system, with the option to distribute information through a variety of mechanisms. It is being expanded to include social media platforms.

BRW

Jeanne-Vida Douglas

BRW.com.au Editor Sydney

Jeanne-Vida Douglas is a multi-award winning business journalist with a decade's experience covering the information technology sector. Her online experience harks back before the internet to a news website on Videotext, and as a journalist she has covered the IT industry for more than a dozen titles, including The Australian Financial Review and MIS. She holds tertiary qualifications in linguistics and literature, economics and IT.



Stories by Jeanne-Vida Douglas

▶ [Off the menu](#)