



ST JOHN'S INNOVATION CENTRE

## **St John's Innovation Centre Tenant Spotlight: 10 minutes with... Steven Tyson from Cambrionix Ltd**

Join us for 10 minutes with SJIC tenant Steven Tyson, Founder and Director of Cambrionix Ltd, leaders in mobile technology charging and connectivity. Steven discusses the importance of listening to customers, 'blue-sky' projects and trusting staff.

### **How does your business benefit from an Innovation Centre location?**

SJIC has been tremendously useful to us as we have grown. We have used all the facilities extensively and we have met a lot of like-minded people at networking events and in the corridor! A lot of the wider business services we have needed have been provided by other tenants in the building. Although we have grown out of our start up phase we still feel there are real benefits of being in SJIC.

### **If you could offer an entrepreneur one piece of business advice, what would it be?**

Get help where you can, you may think you can do everything all at once but you'll die unless you get some help! Sounds dramatic, but hey, you don't want to die do you?

Do the math and if you can afford it, hire the right people. A great MD is the sensible place to start and will help you to focus your efforts onto things that affect the financials rather than getting bogged-down in technical details, which aren't necessarily important.

### **How do you and your team stay on top of industry trends?**

We listen to our customers and allow them to drive us in particular directions. Our customers have a much wider industry reach than us alone. Listen to your customers!

That said, there are projects, which we have developed which are 'blue-sky'. It is necessary to do this to test the water with ideas that are maybe a little further ahead than where technology is at the moment.

### **How has your life experience contributed to where you are today?**

I have spent pretty much all of my life in technical employment at varying levels – from repairing CRT TV's, VHS players and radios to designing Bluetooth and WiFi peripherals and development kits. Prior to my working life I studied electronics and communications at a (now defunct) Wray Castle College in the Lake District (Ambleside).

The studies had a Naval slant to them and a large part of the curriculum involved RF Transmission and reception and operation and maintenance of radio and radar equipment found on ship and shore stations, we even had to learn Morse code and wear a radio officer's uniform! This gave me a good grounding in electronics.

A keen interest in electronics and 'how things work' has contributed massively to where I am today.



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### **How do you deal with challenges in business?**

As a team. Involve your key staff and don't be afraid of challenges, they happen every day!

### **How do you maintain a work/life balance?**

In the early days of starting a company there is very little life/work balance, just work with a small sprinkling of life thrown in now and again. Even then, the work is pretty much all consuming with constant communication via phone and email regardless of whether you are in the pub or the bath! As I got help with the company (staff!) the life/work balance started to shift and I realised that trying to do everything is simply not possible and would eventually kill me.

I now maintain a life/work balance by simply trusting our staff to do the right thing and not getting involved with every detail. This comes from hiring the right people and trusting them.

### **What does your average workday consist of?**

Right now, it consists of helping out across the company where necessary and making good, relevant industry contacts. Oh, and completing questionnaires like this one!

### **How do you distinguish yourself from your competitors?**

Firstly, we try extremely hard to offer the best customer service we possibly can. Without our customers we wouldn't have a company, if we neglect them there will always be a competitor waiting to take our place. We don't tolerate complacency within Cambrionix and always strive to better ourselves and our customers with products which are relevant to the market.

### **Have you ever turned down an opportunity/a client?**

Yes. In the early days of our company we had a number of meetings with a particular client and decided that the relationship would not work. It was a difficult decision to make but we realised that although the client looked great on paper, we would have to have given up too many opportunities due to the exclusivity requirement they demanded. The decision not to engage with this client was 100% correct and if this decision were to have gone the other way we wouldn't be in the strong financial position we are now.

As a word of advice for any entrepreneur, evaluate every potential client (or partner) and how they will affect future business with 'other' clients (or partners). How will this potential client affect relationships with existing clients and could they affect the ability to gain more clients ie. conflict of interest, exclusivity agreements, client 1 hates client 2 etc!

### **What are your thoughts on crowd funding?**

Crowd Funding via the likes of Kickstarter and Indiegogo etc are great ways of testing the water with a new product with minimal outlay. If your product gets good exposure and hits its funding target then you will be equipped with the cash to move your product forward with minimal risks and guaranteed customers (backers).



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If you don't hit your funding target, you only lose what you would have lost in the first place had you not used crowd funding i.e. prototyping costs and a promo video.

While crowd funding can be a great way of getting publicity for your product it is not always the best choice. You need to be prepared to tell the world about your revolutionary new product and accept the risks that a competing company could take your spec sheet, improve upon it and release a product better than yours before the funding target deadline has even been reached! If confidentiality and a 'stealth-mode' of operation are required then crowd funding is not for you. Also, don't forget to take into account worst-case scenarios and fees.

### **How much importance do you place on social media?**

We use social media quite extensively although it's difficult to measure its success. We feel that it's vitally important to maintain a social media presence and it is something which customers expect. I, for one, would find it extremely strange to discover that a company had no social media presence at all i.e. Socially Inept!

Social media is a great way of interacting with your customers; it shows you are confident enough to allow people to share their thoughts about your products or services in a public place. One reason you would avoid social media would be if you are worried about customer feedback. If you are worried about feedback then you should rethink your company values!

### **What social media platforms do you utilise for the business?**

We utilise Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Google+ at the moment and with varying degrees of success. Using social media helps to increase the reach of your brand and a social presence is expected from all companies regardless of what they do. Finding a company with little or no social media presence would, for me, ring many alarm bells.

If you are confident in your own brand, which we are, then there is no reason for us not to engage our customers online and in public.

### **What would you say to aspiring entrepreneurs who are trying to figure out their motivations and values?**

Do something you enjoy and are sure you can still enjoy when you have to do it for 14hrs a day...7 days a week. If you enjoy it that's all the motivation you need to carry on doing it. Also, make sure that what you are doing can earn you some money somehow, this is an even bigger motivation. And above all else, make sure that whatever you do you do to the best of your abilities. Be proud of what you do, if you aren't then don't bother doing it.

Don't try to do everything yourself, get help where you can. Employ a good Managing Director as soon as possible. You may think you can be a Managing Director but the reality is that you can't – you're most likely an engineer/scientist, not a manager. You wouldn't hire a masseuse to fix a space shuttle. Concentrate on what you do best!

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