



## **Dr Alex C. Y. Wong, CEO & Co-Founder of RedBite, on the IoT Revolution and the vital importance of maintaining a sense of humour: St John's Innovation Centre Tenant Spotlight**



St John's Innovation Centre, the regional Centre of excellence supporting high growth businesses, had the pleasure of interviewing Dr Alex C. Y. Wong, CEO & Co-Founder of RedBite, on the IoT revolution and the vital importance of maintaining a sense of humour.

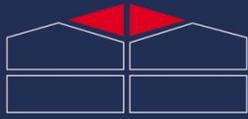
RedBite Solutions is a Cambridge based software solutions company that turns any object into a Smart Object. RedBite's unique software coupled with RFID and other technologies allows objects to connect directly to the cloud.

### **What is unique about your business?**

RedBite is an Internet of Things (IoT) software solutions company that was a spin-out from the University of Cambridge's Auto-ID Lab. As a result we have many years' worth of experience in our field of creating Smart Objects, tracking assets and deploying RFID based solutions. Our products are very versatile and have been deployed in various industries including the aviation, postal and facilities management industries to track all kinds of assets and vehicles. Additionally, we are also working on deploying our software to track assets on highways. Our software is unique in that it provides an online Smart profile page for every item that is tracked, similar to those that people have on social media. We can then track these items using a broad array of Auto-ID technologies and use the cloud to eliminate the need for any onsite middleware, thus reducing the complexity of asset deployments.

### **How do you see your industry developing in the next 5 years?**

Over the past decade, the [IoT](#) revolution has increasingly been discussed. However, it is only in more recent years that it has begun to gain widespread traction, with an emerging importance placed on achieving Smart Cities and empowering Smart Objects. There are various reports estimating how much the IoT market and global impact per year will be over the next 5-10 years, something that is rather hard to predict. However, all estimates point to a figure of around the \$10 trillion per year mark. That is a very difficult figure to ignore and something that we are working towards being a part of.



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

I grew up in Borneo, did my A-Levels in Singapore and subsequently my Engineering Undergraduate Degree and PhD at the University of Cambridge. The diversity of this experience definitely helps me to think outside the box (or rather as though there is no box!). I was also fortunate enough to be involved in the RFID revolution back in 2001, which gave me the opportunity to discuss and pursue grand ideas with lots of smart people both at MIT and Cambridge. All of this has unquestionably helped to shape the vision for RedBite and the interesting work that we do today.

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

I've forgotten what one of those is! If you like the work that you do, it forms part of your life – so I am not a great believer in a clear division between the two. We shouldn't go from Dr Jekyll to Mr Hyde when the clock ticks a minute past 5 as that's just leading a double life, which frankly would probably be more stressful. What's more is that a lot of great business ideas come when you least expect it and they shouldn't be completely blocked out just because "life" has taken over.

Vice versa is also true and, at RedBite, we provide a lot of flexibility in personal life when it comes to work and that comes with a lot of trust amongst the team. We form great personal friendships at the office, which cannot be attributed to 'just work'. I think that the best work/life balance is when there is no need to balance between the two.

## **What characteristics do you see as important for success?**

I remember watching a cheesy, American movie with the tagline "Never give up, never surrender". I think it sums up the entrepreneurial spirit that's required to create something out of nothing. Patience, determination and knowledge are all important characteristics for achieving success but it is vital to also have a sense of humour to prevent insanity from creeping in!

Being self-assured is another necessity as there will come a time (probably very frequently) that one must admit they lack the required skills and that they cannot do everything alone and seek help from those around them. That's another essential – surround yourself with people that you trust implicitly.

## **Who inspires you and why?**

When I was young, I was inspired by Lord Baden Powell's sense of adventure and his thoughts on how one could lead a fun and fulfilling life. I am equally inspired by Indiana Jones - though he's a fictional character, I like to think that he's somewhere out there always unearthing precious artifacts through his ingenious way of manoeuvring through impossible situations!

Having said that, I have met tonnes of inspiring people through the work that I do and believe that they are the real unsung heroes as their work impacts on the world we live in today but often goes unrecognised.



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



There are so many challenges that crop up in business that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to dealing with them. There are times when I am faced with challenges that I won't have anticipated or dealt with before – they're the best kind. When you're faced with a new challenge there is always something to learn – whether you appreciate that a few hours before a vital tender submission is due is another matter! Nevertheless, once the storm has passed I like to take stock and make sure I've recognised the things I would do differently next time. If there were no challenges in business, it would be difficult to believe we were putting enough effort into progressing.

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

Who you are shapes your motivations and values – look back at what you have experienced and use that as a guide for where you would like to go. There is no big leap in life; each thing we do is an incremental step (albeit some larger than others!) - so do not be disheartened by any setbacks.

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