



ST JOHN'S INNOVATION CENTRE

'Surround yourself with people better than yourself,' says Philip Mashinchi, CEO of Cambridge Software: St John's Innovation Centre Tenant Spotlight.



St John's Innovation Centre, a dynamic and supportive incubation environment in the Cambridge region, had the pleasure of interviewing Philip Mashinchi, Managing Director of Cambridge Software Limited on remaining focused on your vision and surrounding yourself with people better than yourself. Cambridge Software is a skilled team of software development specialists producing cutting-edge software products and working with companies to develop applications that improve efficiency and increase profitability.

What is unique about your business?

The reason Cambridge Software started was simply due to a need at our sister company BrightVisions Limited. They supply devices, design IT infrastructures and provide support to businesses across a variety of business sectors. Based on our relationships with our clients we were regularly asked for custom software solutions which were out of our area of expertise. We did what most companies like us do and pointed our customers to third parties that offered software development services. Although we were not directly involved, it was easy to see the disjoint between the customers' needs and the solutions delivered. It was this simple fact that drove us to start Cambridge Software. I believe what makes us different is our Vision to create solutions that, irrespective of the complexity and intelligence that is applied behind the scenes, are totally focus on the customer requirements and are simple in appearance and usability.

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

This is simple. Remain focused on your vision and surround yourself with people better than yourself. The other thing I would say is be prepared to say No to opportunities that take you away from your core activities. Was that more than one piece of advice? My interest in software development started while at college due to my ability to avoid work if I could help it! My favorite subject at college was mathematics. So much so that all my A levels subjects were math related. In those days, showing my age now, computers were not readily available and we used to spend hours graphing quadratic equations which used up valuable time away from socialising. To make my life easier I gained access to one of the colleges few BBC Model B computers and using Basic created my first simple application that produced and printed my graphs for me - on a dot matrix printer I must add!. My future path was quite clear from there on and my first job was as a junior support technician and developer writing and supporting software for the security printing industry.



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

Without going into any details my early years were somewhat different from the norm and could have been better. However, as I grew up, I was fortunate enough to cross paths with some amazingly successful people that were willing to give up their time and resources to help me. When I say successful, I am not referring to financial success but success in life. These experiences have led me to appreciate everything I have and enjoy every minute of my every day and irrespectively of the challenges that come my way. Without planning for it my character and approach to life is reflected in both my companies.

How much importance do you place on mentoring?

I place mentoring very high on my list. Passing on knowledge, enthusiasm and experience is rewarding to both parties. Mentoring was and still is very important to me personally. For example, when I was approached to merge my business with another similar sized company one of my customers gave me invaluable advice and guidance that stopped me from making a very big mistake. My wife has also been a mentor to me since I started my first business. I look for new mentors every day because there is always something new to learn. To have success, what is needed is lots of hard work, integrity, perseverance and a few mentors along the way.

How do you distinguish yourself from your competitors?



I don't. My focus has always been on ourselves and how we could become better. This is probably the reason why we are unique in the way we operate and have great relationships with our customers, suppliers and competitors.

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

It is a part of our culture to continuously learn and we do this by giving our team the freedom and resources to experiment by trying new technologies. The industry that we are in moves ridiculously fast but the team around me have confidence and respect in each other and this leads to some really exciting and innovative peer learning. Couple that with our desire to bring new technology into play for new projects and it sows the seeds for cultural excellence.

How does your business benefit from an Innovation Centre location?

We've been lucky enough to have 4 offices in SJIC, growing larger with each leap, so we've had a good opportunity to see the place from different angles, quite literally! Besides from the flexibility and great support, our location gives us the opportunity to work in an innovative dynamic environment that motivates our team to do their best. We've also taken part in a number of the monthly mingles which are really exciting - there really are some great companies working in this building and we're proud to be rubbing shoulders with them. The campus attitude of professional yet fun working is felt throughout the entire building.