

## Calgary dot-com touched by success

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With all the gloom and doom surrounding the death and disappearance of many dot-com startups, you have to wonder if there are any Web success stories out there. Look carefully and you'll find Touch Tone Data, a Calgary success story, that reminds us not to write off the Web in this gloomy time.

In contrast to various other dot-com startups, Touch Tone intensely focuses on delivering exactly what their customers want and doesn't over-hype itself.

The reward is happy customers, a dominant market share in their niche and a comfortable profit. These achievements make Touch Tone Data the envy of many other wobbly dot-com startups.

"Touch Tone's Web-based software makes the process of conducting an H<sub>2</sub>S search for proposed new wells a very simple operation," says Keith Jones, the team leader for geological well operations and petrophysics at Conoco Canada Ltd.

"Prior to the development of this software, it often took hours or days of research time to acquire and compile the necessary information.

"Now with the Web-based system, the search time is only five minutes. Within half an hour, a full evaluation can be completed for most wells."

Don Newsome, the marketing vice-president of Touch Tone, says "we focus on the drilling and completion functions of the oil and gas industry. By providing access to the Touch Tone software through the Web, our clients receive additional features that we could not have provided without the Web."

The Web-based Touch Tone information system enables oil and gas companies to comply with Alberta Energy and Utilities Board (AEUB) regulations concerning the potential release of H<sub>2</sub>S, a deadly gas that is present in fluids produced from some natural gas wells.

In the interests of public safety, the AEUB requires all well licence applications to include an estimate of potential releases of H2S in the event of an accident.

Touch Tone started in business by offering an easy-to-use reporting service that utilized only the keys of the ordinary touch-tone telephone to request site-specific reports. The hard-copy reports were delivered automatically to a fax machine at the client's office. The company was named after this original product.

The widespread availability of the Web made it possible for Touch Tone to go beyond paper faxes to delivering tailored Excel spreadsheets, which can be refined easily by the customer.

Calculating these H2S estimates is no small matter because of the large number of data points involved in the calculation. That's where Touch Tone comes in. Based on the proposed well location, the Touch Tone software identifies neighbouring wells in a database of western Canadian wells and uses the H2S data from these producing wells to calculate an H2S release estimate for the proposed new well in accordance with the published AEUB regulations.

"The Touch Tone information system allows access to site-specific H2S information vital to the formulation and approval of risk reducing drilling and production plans including emergency response plans," says Paul C. Jackson, who is a self-employed business development consultant. He makes extensive use of the Touch Tone information system on behalf of his clients.

Touch Tone boasts a client list of more than 200 firms that reads like a who's who of the Canadian energy patch.

To Gary Jipp, vice-president of operations and software architect at Touch Tone, the Web offers ease of control over the development and operation of software because all components reside on servers in their offices. Clients do not have to install or configure anything.

The success of Touch Tone illustrates the need for innovation, value and a razor-sharp business focus. The current shakeout of dot-com startups is just weeding out marginal ideas and mediocre management teams.

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