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**Benchmark CEO featured in Biz San Diego magazine**

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*Gen X and Y Entrepreneurial DNA*

One's a rock star, one's the rock star's wife, one's a technologist and an aviator, one's a social marketer and one's got an environmental conscience. They have different makeups, but these twentysomethings and thirtysomethings have all chosen entrepreneurial paths.

**Story by Photos by Jon Hindman Kevin Lock**

Not every entrepreneur had a lemonade stand as a kid. Not every entrepreneur was the top candy salesperson in school fundraisers. Not every entrepreneur is willing to bootstrap their company to the point of near destitution to reach their dreams. In fact, entrepreneurs have such a wide range of appearances, personalities, special skills, educational backgrounds and management styles that it's often next to impossible to recognize who's an entrepreneur and who isn't.

Read on to get a snapshot into the lives of five entrepreneurs pursuing their dreams, doing what they love and posting a profit at the same time.

**Renegade Tech Aviator**

If you're going to have a hobby, don't make it an expensive one. But if it is a really expensive one, you'd better figure out how to support it.

Tyson McDowell chose one of the ex-pensive hobbies: flying planes. And the 25-year-old founder and CEO of Benchmark Revenue Management realized that to purchase his own planes and log lots of air time, he'd have to go into business for himself.

"Planes are very much why I started Benchmark, but not directly," says McDowell. "I always say that I went into business to fly airplanes, but I actually love to solve problems. I love being involved in complex transactions. When I'm doing business, I dream about business, and when I'm flying in airplanes I dream about business."

However, with inauspicious beginnings, McDowell's entrepreneurial dreams appeared a bit risky. Imagine this scenario: Four former co-workers decide they want



to go into business together with no real plan of action in place, no product or service and no clear direction of what the future would hold. That pretty much describes the infant stages of Benchmark in a nutshell.

“The original concept of Benchmark was—well, actually, there was no concept,” McDowell admits. “Instead, we all liked each other and wanted to work together. We even came up with a logo and a business card but had no idea what we were going to do.”

The year was 2002. And believe it or not, about three months into the business, while he and his partners had come up with product names like Date Magic and Gizmo, they still had nothing concrete in the pipeline. Then one day McDowell approached the other founders with an idea that would finally lay the framework for Benchmark’s current software offering.

McDowell, who never went to college and learned programming on his own—quite the “renegade pilot software guy,” as he calls himself—conceived the company’s RADE2 technology, which would ultimately take two years to create. During this time, he and the other founders bootstrapped the operation. His personal persistence to see the project through to the end equated to a load of credit card debt.

Things didn’t get much better once the RADE2 technology was seemingly ready for prime time.

According to McDowell, “The generic technology wasn’t selling. It was a black hole for venture capital. We were four guys in a 400-square-foot room, and everyone was out of money.”

That’s when they segued into tailoring the software for the health-care market. The reason: McDowell and his partners had done some due diligence and realized that “health care had highly reactive architecture with technology built out of necessity instead of out of ideal,” he says.

McDowell continues to explain that hospitals lose a massive amount of money each year due to various billing issues and denials. Some hospitals have a collection rate of less than 70%, which is unheard of in just about any other industry. Enter Benchmark, which designed its RADE2 technology to reverse-engineer the health-care billing process to ensure that hospitals start receiving more of the money they’re owed.

Benchmark’s first customer realized a 14% increase in cash collection and a 30% reduction in denial write-offs in just the first 90 days. After one year, the customer reported a revenue gain of \$20 million over the prior year.

Suddenly the Mission Valley–based company was really on to something big. It had a proven product, was starting to make money, hired more employees (10 are on staff currently), and it even had investor interest. In 2004, one of its industry partners, Navigant Consulting, provided \$1.7 million in non-equity seed financing and, more recently, Benchmark started a \$6 million VC round to fund its rapid expansion. In 2008, Benchmark’s revenue is projected at about \$1.2 million, and three years from now, revenue is expected to be more than \$15 million.

McDowell doesn't seem too concerned about losing shares of his company to VCs, and would start another venture down the road if push came to shove. But, he says, "I want to be there for 30 more years, if possible."

#### About Benchmark Revenue Management

- Benchmark Revenue Management is a fast-growing firm in the healthcare administration technology field. Benchmark delivers revolutionary revenue analysis, management, and monitoring tools which are inherently integrated for maximum effectiveness and efficiency. Benchmark has important partnerships with Navigant Consulting and their customers include several hospitals such as St Joseph's in New Jersey and in Atlanta. More information about Benchmark can be found at [www.benchmarkrevenue.com](http://www.benchmarkrevenue.com) .