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## **Andrew Yates, CEO, Artesian Solutions**

**Andrew Yates, CEO of [Artesian Solutions](http://Artesian Solutions), explains why he started businesses in consecutive economic slowdowns, why starting up is easier the second time and why bringing in an HR department means it's time to move on.**

**Explain your business so my mum would understand it.**



We make the web more useful for business people by using clever automated search and surveillance technology to find information about your customers prospects and competitors which helps you sell more.

By matching your sales triggers (the things which when reported or written about constitute a sales opportunity for your company) to your customers business challenges you can get highly relevant and timely sales intelligence whenever you need it.

### **Why did you start a business in the first place?**

Artesian is my second early stage business – the first was conceived in 2001 in times not dissimilar to today's difficult economy so I must be a sucker for punishment.

I have worked in large corporations and have come to realise my energy is best employed in early stage ventures which are demanding and fulfilling in equal measure.

There is really nothing better than creating something unique and new from a standing start. I think my sweet spot is zero to £20m - once it's time to bring in an HR department it's time for me to move on!

### **What surprised you most about starting up?**

How lonely it can be – your friends and colleagues wish you well but once you press the button you are on your own and can expect no favours. The key is surrounding yourself with like-minded talented people who share your vision, drive and ambition.

We are blessed to have four or five A players in our current business which is unusual for a early stage company which is usually dominated by its founders.

### **Was there anything you would do differently now?**

Without straying into the debate about the economy and politics, very little. It's definitely easier the second time because you have a road map and some idea what happens next. There also seem to be more people around wanting to help.

### **What was your strategy at launch, and have you stuck to it?**

Our strategy was to build technology which had a practical use for business people and to capitalise on the way people use the web socially.

With a few twists and turns mostly driven by customer demand we have stuck to the course. I believe strategy crystallizes over time as you work out what you have and how best to deliver customer value.

Our most recent epiphany was to focus energy on the sales function of a business – even in the worst of times people need to keep selling..

### **What's been your biggest hurdle or stumbling block so far?**

The time it takes to create and invent – product development done the right way costs money and there is little funding available in the current climate.

We decided to 'bootstrap' a phrase you will hear more and more – the result is a viable company in its own right with diverse revenue streams.

### **...And your luckiest moment?**

Getting sponsorship from old customers who believed in us – that said you make your own luck to a high degree

### **Where are you now with the business?**

After working with a half a dozen large blue chip organisations to prove the concept of what we are doing - we are now deploying our service which is easy to enable and use to the [Salesforce.com](http://Salesforce.com) customer community.

We smashed the seven figure revenue milestone at the start of the year and progress continues to be positive.

By embedding sales intelligence directly into a CRM system we can personalise delivery for every user with no manual intervention required.

Anything captured in the CRM gets automatically tracked which makes our access to the community of business people we can help much easier.

### **What does the future have in store?**

The future looks bright for any early stage company who can weather the storm of 09 – we are well set to succeed with the solid foundations required to scale in 2010 and beyond.

At the risk of sounding like a cliché we have to keep working hard to make our customers successful and manage our cash flows to survive. We expect no help from any institution in the process other than

customers paying for value.

**What's your best piece of advice for someone who's about to launch?**

Think about your business model and your funding requirements – is what you are doing unique, useful and who would buy it? What is it worth as a business problem?

Remember that sweat equity counts for nothing relative to your enterprise value no matter how much time and effort you have invested.

My advice would be to bootstrap if you can and remain master of your own destiny. Surround yourself with great people who are like minded and who you can trust.

That doesn't mean you have to get on all the time – conflict sometimes works well to get to the place you need to be and to keep it real. Oh and finally get yourself some great sales intelligence.