

THE IMPACT AWARDS 09 – BUSINESS IMPACT AWARD

Winner - The University of Manchester, Transitive

Background

Transitive was established as a spin-out company in 2000 by Alasdair Rawsthorne from the School of Computer Science at the University of Manchester. Transitive has developed unique "cross-platform virtualisation" software that allows any software application to run on any processor and operating system, breaking these hardware/software dependency issues for the first time.

Knowledge transfer

The technology was created in the University's Department of Computer Science. In 1998 the researchers filed patents on key components of the technology. Assistance was provided in relation to legal agreements and early stage marketing research and market segmentation analysis by the University's technology transfer office (Vuman and then Manchester Innovation – both forerunners to UMIP).

They then started to explore the options for commercialisation. Finding the right markets to go into was a problem. There was no established market for the technology and it lent itself to a number of different and diverse sectors of industry. Choosing the right market was critical as was finding investment. After rejecting unsuitable investors, £1.8m was raised from Pond Venture Partners and £0.2m from Manchester Technology Fund (an exclusive University of Manchester challenge fund).

Transitive's software, called QuickTransit®, is now the most widely used virtualisation solution in the world, and has been adopted by Sun Microsystems, IBM, Intel, Hewlett Packard, Fujitsu Siemens, and many others, while every Apple Macintosh sold since January 2006 includes a copy. Today Transitive's products are installed on over 20m computers world-wide. This success resulted in the acquisition of Transitive by IBM in November 2008.

Impact

Economic benefits extend to computer manufacturers, end-users, and companies operating data centres. For example, Intel has gained approximately \$1Bn of incremental sales of CPU chips to Apple and Apple is able to manufacture more attractive computers, which are selling significantly better than their predecessors, more than 50% to new Macintosh users.

In addition, the University of Manchester has benefited from the recognition of Alasdair's successful entrepreneurialism.