

# PROTECTING IT - GROWING GLOBALLY



// Regular winners – Andy and Diane Prow

**An IT security services company can show how vulnerable a customer's websites, networks and IT systems are to potential attack. Using 'penetration testing', they (safely) attack the customer's systems and then give feedback.**

This company, Aura Software Security Ltd, won the Kapiti Coast's ELECTRA Business of the Year Award in 2010 and is continuing to grow. These awards are supported by **Nature Coast Enterprise** which promotes best practice in business leadership and management.

Aura employs 16 staff. The highly skilled and motivated team of certified Information Security experts, led by Andy Prow, has a head office in Otaki on the Kapiti Coast, offices in Wellington, and a sales & business development manager in Auckland servicing customers – not only in New Zealand but now also Sydney, London and this year, the USA.

Aura spends time with their customers identifying, assessing and helping them to mitigate software security risks. Businesses often have continuity planning as part of their risk mitigation planning for natural disasters – earthquakes, fire, serious power failure, pandemic out-breaks and so on. Aura helps the customers to also consider and plan against attacks from 'hacktivists', competitors, ex- employees or any number of potential 'bad-guys'.

Chris Ineson, an assessor to the Awards, says that Aura identified a niche and was working hard to grow its share.

"The company understands its market and as a result is changing its structure, its management, and is taking on the world," Chris says.

Andy, a software developer and IT consultant, started Aura Software Architects Ltd in 2001. Three years later Aura Software Ltd was formed, followed in 2006 by Aura Software Security Ltd. In 2009 Aura Redeye Security Ltd emerged.

Each stage and each new company was the result of its owners redefining its core business – from the small IT consulting practice grew the boutique software development arm, the most significant product being a secure online system for one of the world's largest software providers. The security aspect of Aura's business has evolved to become its core driver. Four years ago it represented 10 percent of turnover – in 2010 it represented 99 percent.

Andy says: "IT is global and the business behind it knows no boundaries. This means the technology behind Aura is global and enables us to reach and service international as well as local customers."

We keep abreast of market developments and the competition. We know what is going on, where the cutting edge is, know who the market leaders are: we identify niche opportunities and how to enter them (and survive), often against bigger and better resourced competitors.

## **Strategic partnering**

Aura has made a business decision to focus on businesses that align where it is

strategically heading, and so generates its own 'critical mass'. Strategic partners include Xero, and Endace (Auckland-based) who sell a high-end computer network device globally.

A research and development grant through FoRST (now Ministry of Science and Innovation) enabled the company to develop the Aura RedEye product. Aura has now partnered with Endace to provide the ability for their RedEye product to sit on the Endace system, providing Endace with a market differentiator against their competitors.

"The type of business we want to evolve into is New Zealand-based, international, specialising in a high value niche market. Aura's RedEye product is an example of this. We feel it has the potential to grow in markets like Australia, USA, parts of Asia and Europe.

Aura has learnt the hard way that protecting intellectual property rights against bigger and better resourced competitors through international patents is extremely costly, time consuming and distracting.

Their advice is: "Run fast and stay ahead, lead the space, understand and pick the battles that need to be won, and grow".