

Da Vinci name says a lot about software developer's ambitions

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The notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci reveal the insights of one of the most versatile and original intellects of all time. That a small Christchurch software company has named itself after the Renaissance genius indicates the extent of its ambitions.

Da Vinci Communications Ltd develops the test applications telecommunication giants such as Nokia, Motorola and Ericsson use to design and improve their products.

The software tools Da Vinci offers are the browsers and editors necessary to deal with Tree and Tabular Combined Notation (TTCN), a programming language used to test telecommunication, broadcasting, and information technology.

Manufacturers use TTCN to simulate how their products will perform such functions as operate as part of large networks (i.e. ISDN and GSM) or interface with the equipment of other manufacturers.

The European Telecommunications Standards Institute initiated TTCN in the early 1990s. New generations of TTCN have since been developed and its influence is likely to increase as telecommunication standards become uniform throughout the world.

Da Vinci sales and support manager Kathrin Kiefer says TTCN defines the representation of the test suites in tabular format, Da Vinci browsers and editors support this format so people can readily access and work with it.

According to Kiefer, the Christchurch company has been successful for several reasons. These include the quality and flexibility of its editor, its free browser, and its alliances with partner companies.

“Our editor combines a user friendly interface with powerful features and uniform handling across many different platforms. We also offer plugins that enable the editor to interface with third party TTCN products such as compilers and syntax checkers.

“We have employed a marketing strategy similar to that of Adobe with its Acrobat Reader. We give away our browser free so potential clients become familiar with it and purchase our editor.

Those who want our browser can download it from our website.

“Also, we have entered into alliances with three European telecommunication companies including French company Acacia, which sells our editor along with their test systems to provide a complete testing package,” says Kiefer.

Both Kiefer and Da Vinci's head of development, Thomas Wernitz, are originally from Germany. While they could easily work for a European telecommunication company, they wanted the challenge of running their own business in their adopted country.

With the Internet they can live in New Zealand and keep up with the latest developments in European industry.

Indeed, they have been so successful that Wernitz was asked to take part in the development of the third edition of TTCN, along with engineers from some of the world's largest telecommunication companies.

Launched this month in Europe, TTCN-3 provides a test standard that will be used to develop such new products as third generation mobile phones, Bluetooth™, and general packet radio service (GPRS) text messaging.

“TTCN-3 is more flexible than previous versions and will be used to test mobile Internet technology. Because I have been involved in the development of TTCN-3, we are very well placed to provide editing tools that will make use of it and help our existing customers migrate to the new standard,” Wernitz says.

While Da Vinci is now focused on providing test tools to the European market, its location in New Zealand means it is ideally placed to tackle Asian markets as well.

“We believe TTCN-3 will become the standard in Asia. We see lots of potential for test tools in Asia as third generation mobile phone technology becomes established. We are now working with TradeNZ to find a partner with whom we could enter the Chinese market,” Kiefer says.

Currently Da Vinci's primarily markets its editing and browsing tools. In future, however, the company expects to also supply services and help companies' design and carry out their own test suites.

www.davinci-communications.com