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### Customised solutions secure TC Communications' reputation

16-08-2011 - Award-winning Gold partner TC Communications celebrates its 20th birthday this year, having just been appointed a distribution partner for IsatPhone Pro. We spoke to the Australian firm's chief executive Todd McDonell to find out the secrets of its success.

A series of ground-breaking solutions make TC Communications stand out from the crowd.

The latest is a new weather system to measure climate change for the Australian Bureau of Meteorology, which will involve about 300 BGAN terminals.

"The bureau wanted a SCADA (supervisory control and data acquisition) network with a back-up system and we were the only company able to offer it," said Todd.

#### Weather stations

He explained: "We have developed a primary system using BGAN together with a C-band secondary system.

"The data will be fed back to a super computer from 300 weather stations right across Australia - some of which are very remote.

"It's far cheaper to have some back-up technology than trying to get someone out there to fix something immediately it goes wrong.

#### Climate change

"It will ensure that all of the weather data is delivered without a hitch to enable the bureau to create an accurate picture of climate change."

The ability to come up with bespoke solutions has been central to TC Communications' success since it started from humble beginnings.

Todd has always been interested in technology and he spotted a gap in the market for specialist communications while he was enlisted in the Australian Navy.

#### Building radios

He explained: "My father was a lighting engineer and his interest in technology inspired mine. I was building radios single-handedly by the time I was eight.

"I joined the Australian Navy at 16 and trained in communications engineering, becoming responsible for the communications aboard the six-strong submarine fleet, along with two bases.

"By the time I left 10 years later, I was being asked for advice about communications by contacts in the commercial maritime industry.

#### War zones

"I thought there could be a market for specialised communications and I decided to found TC Communications - along with three other people."

The early years saw Todd and his colleagues regularly undertaking dangerous missions to deliver satcoms for aid agencies in war zones.

He said: "On one occasion, we were kicked out of the back of a US Hercules transport plane in Somalia - together with a 36-kilo Inmarsat A terminal - and the locals got very excited because they thought we had bottled water.

#### Call for help



Ground-breaking: Todd McDonell

"Fortunately, we managed to talk our way out of the situation. But it seems ironic now that we had a satellite terminal, but no power with which to run it to call for help.

"Today, I could just get an IsatPhone Pro out of my pocket and summon aid immediately."

Despite having a strong naval influence at its roots, at the outset TC Communications' was land-focused - and today, its largest market is in BGAN solutions, closely followed by aero.

#### **Training lab**

The firm's 30-strong team works from purpose-built high-tech offices, complete with a training lab and demonstration facility in Auburn near Sydney.

It was there that it developed a revolutionary live video surveillance system for aircraft several years ago, initially to help the Australian Customs Coastwatch Division patrol the country's borders.

Since then the 'Eye in the Sky' system - which uses Inmarsat aero services - has been used to fight bush fires, make drug busts and track down illegal fishing boats.

#### **Innovative solutions**

The company's expertise in coming up with innovative solutions has led to it winning several awards in Australia and its reputation has spread.

"We're now a leading player in SwiftBroadband solutions in South-East Asia and we are happy to work with other Inmarsat partners if they need help creating aero solutions for their own customers," said Todd.

He added: "We believe there's a really bright future ahead. We're delighted to have been appointed an IsatPhone Pro DP as we believe that the market was in need of an indigenous DP who understands the particular needs of users in our region.

"We are also looking forward to the launch of Global Xpress™, which will give us greater flexibility and allow us to satisfy the ever-growing demand for more bandwidth."

**TC Communications:** [www.tc.com.au](http://www.tc.com.au)

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