



Where With All



“Community Futures provided us with an operating loan that we used to fund day to day operations. But the value of Community Futures to us is much larger than that. Not only do they have a lot of support services that we can and have drawn on, but the Community Futures loan provided a ‘confidence’ foundation that has successfully leveraged private investment.”

RFind Asset Tracking Solution Finds Global Interest

“Imagine a car coming off assembly line. For whatever reason, windshield wipers weren’t there when it was built, so it gets put in a parking lot with 3,000 cars that look exactly the same,” Says Sharon Barnes, CEO of RFind Systems, Inc. “Then the wiper shows up and someone says, ‘go put that on car number 12.’ How do you not spend all day looking for that car? That’s where we come in. We help manufacturers track assets to improve their efficiency and their bottom line.”

The car analogy is appropriate for a company whose solid footing came the day it signed a global framework agreement with Volvo. That day also provided a story that will go down in RFind Systems, Inc.’s corporate lore. On their way to their first meeting with Volvo, Sharon and RFind’s director of business development got lost in Gothenburg, Sweden, and ended up late.

“Funny,” says Sharon, “a company with its entire focus on locating things couldn’t find itself.”

Still, finding your way around a foreign city doesn’t compare to the challenge entrepreneurs face finding their way around the business obstacles they encounter on the path to landing that first big customer. “Every entrepreneur wakes up every morning and for half-a-second believes the business isn’t going to make it,” explains Sharon. “But if we allow that fear to take root, the business won’t survive.”

What makes the difference between business success and failure?

Sharon says, for RFind Systems, Inc., it’s a solid business plan, the development of a one-of-a-kind technology solution, and relentlessly working with customers to be pragmatic and flexible; customizing to their unique needs.

Sharon indicates business can be opportunistic, as she notes the business started as a dare. “I wanted to prove to a potential business partner (now her husband) who wanted to start a company that his idea wasn’t feasible. So I wrote a business plan around the technology idea as the final project in my MBA program. I sent the business plan out to several people for review. Someone sent a cheque.”

In the years that have followed, Sharon has honed her 'elevator pitch' defining the RFind technology.

"Knowing where stuff is is the most critical thing a manufacturer can do to reduce non-value added costs that can often be as high as the cost of raw materials. RFind Systems, Inc. has a patent-pending (U.S., Europe, Japan, Canada) technology that involves hockey-puck-sized tags that are placed on company assets and talk to each other to communicate data required for locating. The solution overcomes GPS limitations while being much cheaper than today's common wireless LAN RFID solutions."

Said another way for non-techies, RFind Systems, Inc. has a unique solution that solves a real-world logistics challenge and can reduce business costs for virtually every manufacturer on earth.

Today, RFind Systems, Inc. continues to successfully find new customers. The number of employees has expanded to 13 as the company has grown its customer base to include a major aluminum manufacturer in the U.S., two large auto manufacturers, a telecom company in Canada, and a major grocery chain in Europe.

Sharon adds that a successful business applies and learns from every life experience, good and bad.

"I had a business that failed. I worked for a company that failed. I worked in a business that had phenomenal success. I've been divorced. I have a child. You bring all of that to bear on your business as you go through life and realize you can survive all sorts of experiences. Business takes endurance and that's the key."

Sharon says that, on a personal note, she's had to overcome a health issue that ultimately had the benefit of ensuring the intellectual property in her brain was translated to company files, a fear of public speaking, and the inherent challenge of maintaining life balance.

"Find a way to still live your life outside your company, because when you are happy, you bring that joy into the company," Sharon says. "You can do more in the company because your stress level is down."

RFind Systems, Inc.'s motto is "Answering the Question Where?"

For RFind Systems, Inc., the 'where' is obvious: onward and upward.

"Our company is passionate about seeing what can be done and what's possible, and has sheer, blind determination to make it happen."

Growing communities one idea at a time.

