Entrepreneurship program catalyst for BC startup’s success

BRITISH COLUMBIA (January 31, 2012) - Six months out of BCIC’s entrepreneurship@UVic program, a business accelerator program supported by federal and provincial partners, a Victoria-based startup called YUPIQ is already finding success. Late last year, the company announced a partnership with prairieFyre Software, a global leader in delivering business communication solutions for enterprise telephony, call center and business process automation.

YUPIQ offers a suite of social media tools to help companies engage online customers and increase sales. Through integration with Facebook, Twitter and more, YUPIQ will work with prairieFyre to make it possible for contact centre agents to manage their company’s social media presence and respond to customers directly using social media.

“Supporting new graduates and young entrepreneurs in their endeavors is crucial to building a competitive business climate and jobs for the future,” said the Honourable Lynne Yelich, Minister of State for Western Economic Diversification. “Our Government is proud of the entrepreneurial ambitions of dynamic emerging companies like YUPIQ, who will undoubtedly make an important contribution to the economy of tomorrow.”

prairieFyre, with headquarters in Ottawa, Ont., has more than 7,000 customers in 60 countries worldwide. The company is already testing integration with YUPIQ in international markets including the UK, Australia and North America, increasing the young, innovative company’s credibility.

“YUPIQ is a perfect example of why our BC Jobs Plan has identified high-tech as one of our province’s eight key sectors we can nurture to support job creation by tapping into growing markets around the world,” said Moira Stilwell, Parliamentary Secretary for Industry, Research and Innovation. “In just a few months since finishing the entrepreneurship@UVic program, YUPIQ has doubled its staff from four to eight – with great potential for more jobs to come through this partnership with prairieFyre.”

YUPIQ’s entry into the worldwide communications software business is only the beginning. The startup recently finished working with Canadian recording artist Jann Arden to manage the online promotion of her new book ‘Falling Backwards.’ Given a goal of engaging her fan base to share the first chapter of her book through Facebook and Twitter, the campaign reached more than double its target on the first day and achieved 24 times higher than normal engagement for a community of Jann Arden’s size. YUPIQ’s success has opened the door to work with other internationally recognized performers from Canada and the United States.

“The entrepreneurship@UVic program has been instrumental in helping us get to where we are today,” said Will Fraser, Marketing Director at YUPIQ. “We are pleased to be the first example of success stemming from this program, none of which would have been possible without all the working parts from the leadership, training, office space and solid leadership provided by our advisors at the Alacrity Foundation.”

entrepreneurship@UVic, developed by the BC Innovation Council (BCIC) in partnership with the University of Victoria, premier investment group Wesley Clover and the Alacrity Foundation, with support from Western Economic Diversification Canada in 2009, offers engineering graduates
specialized entrepreneurship training, guidance and mentorship as they develop their own companies. YUPIQ is the first fully formed company to emerge from the two year program. Currently there are another two teams in various stages of the program.

For more information, visit: http://alacrityfoundation.com/canada/programs

entrepreneurship@UVic is now one of six entrepreneurship@ programs created by BCIC to launch and grow new, sustainable technology companies in BC. Other entrepreneurship@ programs are currently in operation at Accelerate Okanagan (AO), The Alacrity Foundation, SFU, UBC and Wavefront.

-30-

About Western Economic Diversification Canada
Western Economic Diversification Canada works with the provinces, industry associations and communities to promote the development and diversification of the western economy, coordinates federal economic activities in the West and advances the interests of western Canadians in national decision making. For more information about WD, please visit www.wd.gc.ca

About YUPIQ
YUPIQ provides a suite of tools to help companies find and engage their customer through social media. With a focus on honest brand advocacy, increasing sales through social media and tracking the results, YUPIQ is dedicated to helping companies achieve real business value from social media.

About BCIC
The BC Innovation Council develops entrepreneurial talent and commercializes technology. BCIC focuses on competitively positioning British Columbia in today’s global knowledge economy in order to provide significant employment opportunities and a high standard of living for British Columbians. BCIC is a Crown Agency of the Province of British Columbia. For more information visit www.bcic.ca or Twitter.

About the Alacrity Foundation
The Alacrity Foundation Graduate Entrepreneurship Training Programs have been designed to teach promising young engineering and business graduates how to build successful technology companies. The program is designed to provide the graduates with industry experience, by being assigned to projects that form an opportunity to work with a real technology product. The Foundation facilitates industry sponsors to bring known problems from the marketplace to the project teams, who then design products to solve these real-world business issues. If successful, the project team will have created an opportunity to start a commercial relationship with the industry sponsor. Together they will form a new technology company and in doing so, give the graduates an incredible head start to their entrepreneurial future.

About prairieFyre
prairieFyre Software Inc. is a Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner developing .NET-based telecommunications products including contact center, call accounting, and customer relationship management solutions. These products are built on Microsoft best practices for software design and Mitel and Microsoft’s portfolios of leading telephony platforms and technologies. prairieFyre brings integrity, innovative minds, and leading-edge technology to the development process and is committed
to delivering dynamic Internet-based software solutions to customers. For more information, visit www.prairiefyre.com.

Contacts:

Jaime Burke  
Regional Communications Manager  
Western Economic Diversification Canada  
Telephone: 604-666-1318

Lindsay Thom  
Media Manager  
BCIC  
Telephone: 604-602-5249