

Publish and be DAMed

Belfast based software company Aetopia has just been selected by a major British newspaper group to provide their Digital Asset Management (DAM) software, proving that local home-grown technology can compete with the best in the world.

The innovative company, founded by Aidan McGrath and Mark Gowdy in 2005, was chosen for the six-figure contract in a tight competition against a large venture-capital backed US company. The success is the latest of many in the company's short history.

In 2006 Aetopia won the Northern Ireland stage of the Intertradelreland Seedcorn competition, which led to seed funding from a private investor, the former Managing Partner of Accenture Ireland, Andrew Hunter. In 2010, Deloitte Fast 50 ranked the company as one of the fastest growing technology companies in Ireland.

Aetopia specialises in building DAM solutions for clients primarily in the publishing, photographic and archiving sectors. Its main strength is its cornerstone software product, MediaCore - a scalable DAM system developed in Java and WebObjects and deployed on the Amazon Cloud.

MediaCore is a secure repository for the storage, distribution, indexing, retrieval, syndication, licensing and sale of digital assets - multiple formats of rich digital media such as images, PDFs, text, movies and audio files.

The company, which has a strong board including Andrew Hunter and Chairman Mark McCusker, CEO of TextHelp, is based in Queen's



University's ECIT Institute in the Northern Ireland Science Park. Aidan McGrath says: "We chose this location because we want to be close to leading research in image and video technologies, in particular, advances in content based image retrieval."

Aetopia has been continuously developing the software suite since its inception, and in 2010 it embarked on a major research and development project with the help of Invest NI to redevelop the entire technology platform.

The company has also benefited from a range of other Invest NI services including marketing support and design consultancy.

"Invest NI's support in these areas has made a huge difference to establishing Aetopia's presence and brand in industry specific exhibitions in Ireland and the UK," says Aidan McGrath.

Current customers include large publishing companies and major photographic agencies such as Independent News & Media, *The Racing Post*, Incisive Media, Harrison Photography, Press Eye, Belfast City Council, PRONI, and the *Belfast Telegraph*.

"Our technology suite includes several modules for specific functions so that the software can be tailored for different types of customer. These include photo sales, image workflow and distribution, online video and archives," explains Aidan McGrath. "Individually these modules deliver measurable benefits to media organisations but when combined as a multi-function package, it presents a very strong proposition."

Recently Aetopia has agreed a partnership with Ten Alps, one of the UK's largest factual TV and communication companies to provide MediaCore as their white-label video platform for its clients.

Says Aidan McGrath: "We are planning to capitalise in 2011 on our recent contract success by assertively marketing into the British Isles and Europe. We will also be seeking to form strategic alliances with large partners, such as Ten Alps, throughout the rest of Europe."

» Pictured receiving the Deloitte Fast 50 award are: Aidan McGrath (CEO), Mark McCusker (Chairman) and Mark Gowdy (CTO) of Aetopia