

Rouland's tech security firm growing fast
By Tonya Layman – Contributing Writer
Jun 17, 2011, 6:00am EDT
Updated May 21, 2014, 11:10am EDT

A passion for Internet security and the challenge of going into uncharted territory led Chris Rouland to found Endgame Systems, which provides cybersecurity solutions to the defense, civilian and national security communities.

Rouland, the company's CEO, sees Internet security offering endless options for innovation.

He previously was the chief technology officer and distinguished engineer of IBM Internet Security Systems after IBM Corp. purchased Internet Security Systems Inc. in 2006. Prior to the IBM acquisition, he was CTO of ISS, responsible for the overall technical direction of its product and services portfolio.

In a risky move, the former IBM executive walked away from his guaranteed compensation structure at IBM to undertake Internet security challenges.

"You almost could not ask for a worse time to start a company," he said. "You don't see a lot of three-year-old companies right now because no one was starting one in 2008. To leave a secure job at IBM was incredibly challenging. But coming out of that, now we are on the other side and as the economy starts picking up we find ourselves uniquely positioned to capture the market."

Endgame Systems provides cybersecurity solutions to the defense, civilian and national security community. The company's services and solutions support the collection, analysis and use of attack and security event data in cyberspace and help organizations protect their sensitive and critical information.

"Online crimes have an unlimited bounty of targets and there is essentially zero downside as there is very little chance these criminals will get caught," Rouland said.

But even though the need is prevalent, the company faced challenges during its first year in business.

Because Endgame's clients include government agencies, the company found itself facing a major cash-flow issue during the winter of 2009.

"The cash-flow challenge that came along with the federal budget stalemate in 2009 was an eye-opener for us. It provided the company with both a challenge as well as a unique opportunity to expand the business," he said.

After showing its technology to a few commercial companies, Endgame discovered its solution was in high demand so it created ipTrust, the industry's first cloud-based botnet and malware detection service, to help companies that need data on potential threats, Rouland said.

The new service helped the company to diversify its portfolio. Harnessing Web-scale technology, ipTrust distills hundreds of terabytes of security events into usable intelligence and information, helping companies quickly assess the security of their systems without depending on access to internal network traffic, or requiring any hardware or software installation. The program, which launched in October 2010, is used by major financial services firms and security software companies, Rouland said.

Also at that time, Endgame announced \$29 million in Series A funding from Bessemer Venture Partners, Columbia Capital, Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers and TechOperators, to fund both organic and inorganic growth.

The company is poised for growth, Rouland said, adding it started this year with about 40 employees and plans to end it with 100. In May, Endgame opened a Washington, D.C., office that will help it reach its projected annual revenue growth of 250 percent this year. It also predicts 100 percent growth in 2012.

"We are more than doubling our revenue yearly," Rouland said.

Rouland is the recipient of the Metro Atlanta Chamber's 2011 Business Person of the Year in the Early Stage Entrepreneur category, which is given to a business owner who has owned their business for at least one year and not more than three years and has achieved exceptional new business startup results in the past year.

Lance Weatherby worked with Rouland while serving as a startup catalyst at the Advanced Technology Development Center at Georgia Tech.

"He is uber-smart but also very down-to-earth. He is an approachable guy," Weatherby said. "He has been very successful as a member of an executive team of a very large company and he took that experience to become a successful entrepreneur in developing a company that is doing great. Plus, he really cares about the Atlanta business community."

MAC Selection Committee Member Christopher Hanks, who is also director of The University of Georgia Terry College of Business Entrepreneurship Program, said Rouland demonstrates the ability to transfer his enthusiasm for the business, build a team and manage that team to specific goals and objectives.

"I know only a few entrepreneurs that were able to achieve Chris' level of growth and success as an early-stage entrepreneur. He also overcame many obstacles, such as overcoming the challenges of cash flow when launching the business during a time when the federal government defense budget came to a grinding halt," Hanks said. "The business itself is compelling and is an ambitious undertaking. Yet in a short time, he was able to grow it to a substantial size. He seems to understand the key factors and extreme difficulty in managing an emerging growth business and the precarious challenges of being too small to be big, but too big to be small. We need more entrepreneurs like him."