

Small Business

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Speaking the world's language

Media Vision talks the talk with its conference system

BY JOSH CAIN

San Francisco Business Times

Fardad Zabetian knows the value of clear communication. Growing up in Iran, he witnessed a decade-long war between his Farsi-speaking homeland and Arabic Iraq, a conflict that kept Zabetian's father, an Iranian general, away from home for months at a time.

Convinced that a breakdown in dialogue caused the war of his youth, Zabetian now spends his time overcoming language barriers through technology. Founded in 2002, his company Media Vision USA uses technology to provide language interpretation, as well as wireless conferencing and voting. Media Vision's products aren't flashy, but its conferencing systems, manufactured by a Chinese company, have helped government and business leaders conduct meetings and conferences on some of the world's biggest stages.

"It's a good feeling to see when the (United Nations) is using our products, and all of these presidents and diplomats are using our microphones," Zabetian said.

These portable "multi-functional wireless delegate units" allow users to communicate with a room full of people with a push of a button. Media Vision's units are connected through an infrared frequency resistant to radio and cell phone interference.

As one of the only U.S. wireless conferencing providers — most of Zabetian's competitors like Bosch are based in Europe — Media Vision has landed big contracts with the United Nations Headquarters, the White House and dozens of local government bodies. The company manages a network of over 200 resellers out of its offices in New York, Washington, D.C., Toronto and its Oakland headquarters. Media Vision will also be expanding its operations to Europe, opening up offices in Geneva, Switzerland, and Paris.

The company has seen a near 270 percent increase in revenue from \$1.7 million in 2010 to \$6.3 million in 2012. Zabetian projected that Media Vision's revenue would shoot up again in 2013 to \$10 million.

Zabetian credits a difficult slate of contracts in October 2010 for putting the company in a position to grow. Media Vision secured contracts to provide conferencing equipment to four separate events across the country and in Mexico in that same month, "in cities all within four-hour flights of each other," Zabetian said.

The challenge of managing four different customers at once forced the company to adapt its business model.

"That was our bootcamp. We succeeded even though we had to stretch our resources," Zabetian said.

It was then that Media Vision evolved from a model



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based around projects to a system utilizing the hundreds of resellers licensed through the company. Media Vision now provides those resellers with training, support and consulting on big projects.

Annabelle Gazzo, Media Vision's marketing manager and Zabetian's wife, said that period in the company's history was challenging, but the growth that resulted from it was worth it. Because of the increased revenue, the company could jump from just six employees in 2010, including Zabetian and Gazzo, to 16 today.

"You feel like you're part of a real company now," Gazzo said.

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SNAPSHOT:

Media Vision USA

What it does: Provides wireless conferencing solutions and interpretation systems.

Founder: Fardad Zabetian.

2010 revenue: \$1.7 million.

2011 revenue: \$1.9 million.

2012 revenue: \$6.3 million.

Three-year growth: 270 percent.

Employees: 16.

Website: mediavisionusa.com

*The original published article contained several errors; this reprinted version has been corrected for accuracy.

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