

## Entrepreneur revives ProofSpace

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Nearly a decade ago, Paul Doyle set out to raise millions to fund digital encryption startup ProofSpace.

Among Doyle's challenges back then was to explain to prospective investors the importance of not allowing electronically transmitted information to be manipulated or tampered with at a later time.

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**Paul Doyle**

*(Courtesy)*

"We were ahead of the market and then the market corrected," said Doyle, 42, who grew up in Roseland and Beverly.

After raising approximately \$3 million in venture capital, ProofSpace nearly imploded during the technology crash in late 2000. Doyle was forced to lay off his staff, and put a fork into the company's original business model. But he remained committed to his belief that corporations would be willing to pay a premium for the ability to track the authenticity of digital information over time.

"We worked very hard to better understand the market need and the timing of its formation," he said.

In 2006, Doyle reacquired the company's assets. Earlier this year he raised money from inside investors, and he recently opened up an office at the TechNexus facility at 200 S. Wacker. ProofSpace is currently marketing data security products to broker-dealers and health care companies, and Doyle forecasts that the company will generate more than \$1 million in revenue in 2008.

A footnote: ProofSpace was spun off from Chicago-based Eolas Development Corp. in 1999. Eolas, which was founded by Paul's brother Mike Doyle, was awarded \$521 million in a lawsuit against Microsoft in 2003. Eolas was credited with inventing an application to embed images within Internet browsers, a process later used by Microsoft's Internet Explorer. After Microsoft successfully appealed the ruling, the two sides agreed to settle for an undisclosed amount in September.

### Online social networking for CEOs

After selling Online Access Magazine in 1996, Northbrook-based media entrepreneur and venture capital investor Bob Jordan has helped connect C-level executives with short-term employment opportunities.

Jordan, a general partner at the Nomad Venture Fund, for the last ten years has published information and employment opportunities at [www.interimceo.com](http://www.interimceo.com) (and simultaneously at [www.interimcfo.com](http://www.interimcfo.com)). In September, Jordan revamped the site to allow members to network online and share pictures, videos and other graphical data that convey their professional qualifications. This information is freely available to companies recruiting their services.

"I finally figured out that there was a better use for these domain names," said Jordan, 47, who also sits on the board of Chicago-based HighBeam Research. "It reminds me of when we started Online Access. I thought we had a good product, but it still came as a bit of a shock that people really liked it, and sent checks with subscriptions in the beginning."

InterimCEO to date has attracted more than 100 members. Jordan said he will keep the service in beta mode until it crosses the 500-member threshold. Membership for qualified applicants (i.e. those with senior management experience) is free. Jordan said InterimCEO will make money by charging for premium services and through sponsorships.

The site uses online social networking technology developed by Palo Alto-based Ning Inc. Ning was co-founded in 2004 by Netscape pioneer and University of Illinois graduate Mark Andreessen and earlier this year raised \$44 million in venture capital.

### **TiE Midwest debuts mentorship program**

TiE Midwest, which hosts bi-monthly networking and educational sessions for entrepreneurs and venture capital investors, has selected three local startups to participate in its inaugural mentorship program.

Online parking-reservation service ParkWhiz, standardized testing training company PrepMe, and data storage provider RevStore will each participate in the six-month mentorship program. The companies' founders will be paired with entrepreneurs and investors who have previously succeeded in the venture game.

"Over the last six or seven years, angel investments in the region have gone up continually, and there is a significant amount of accelerator activity," said Tom Churchwell, president-elect of TiE Midwest and managing partner of early-stage venture firm Arch Development Partners. "But once you get to the end of the angel funding round, it is tough to cross that gap to where a venture firm feels comfortable. We can help them bridge that gap."

Years ago, Churchwell pioneered the series of Monday Morning Meetings now run by the Illinois Technology Development Alliance that invites entrepreneurs to present their plans publicly to investors and service providers.

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