


June 29, 2000

Ten Fast Facts

 By BRAD BROBERG	<h3>Ansys Technology</h3> <p>WHO: A privately held software development company founded by five people in 1999.</p> <p>WHAT: Specializes in enabling hand-held computers to read PDF files.</p> <p>WHERE: Bellevue.</p>
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Fast Fact #1: Ansys Technology was named the Northwest's "Most Promising Startup" this spring.

Comment: Ansys was one of 17 companies selected from 125 applicants to present its business plan at an Early Stage Investment Forum in Seattle. More than 250 accredited investors and venture capitalists attended the forum. Following the presentations, investors were given \$1 million in bogus "venture bucks" to give their favorite companies. Ansys pocketed the most venture bucks.

Fast Fact #2: Ansys subsequently conducted a round of honest-to-goodness fund-raising.

Comment: The company's performance at the investment forum "made raising money like falling off a log," says Warren Schirtzinger, vice president of marketing. Ansys raised \$5 million during a Regulation D private placement. "We literally had more investors than we knew what to do with," says Schirtzinger.



Pictured from left are Warren Schirtzinger, vice president-marketing; Michael Patrick, vice president-technology; Marc Kaser, vice president-operations; and Norman Levy, president and CEO.

Fast Fact #3: Ansys is the brainchild of a former Boeing employee and the owner of a construction company.

Comment: As a manufacturing planner at Boeing, Michael Patrick frequently distributed electronic documents among various company computers. As the owner of a construction company, Rex Cruse dreamed of a timely way to distribute documents to construction sites.

Together, they realized that equipping hand-held computers to read PDF files was the answer to Cruse's dilemma -- and a golden business opportunity. Patrick and Cruse attracted a pair of investors and recruited Norm Levy, an experienced high-tech consultant, as president. Patrick is vice president of technology and Cruse is director of sales.

Fast Fact #4: PDF -- short for Portable Document Format -- is the worldwide standard for sharing documents between computers.

Comment: Adobe Systems developed PDF to guarantee "document fidelity," says Schirtzinger. It ensures that any computer equipped with Acrobat Reader can open and read a document exactly as it was prepared without jumbled columns, mangled typefaces or distorted graphics. The trouble is, Acrobat Reader does not work on hand-held computers.

Fast Fact #5: Ansy developed software -- dubbed Primer -- to allow hand-held computers to view, navigate and print PDF files.

Comment: Patrick is considered the "architect" of Primer, says Schirtzinger, developing bits and pieces of the patent-pending software even before Ansy officially became a company. Programmers eventually were hired to finish the job.

Fast Fact #6: Primer is currently the only hand-held PDF solution on the market.

Comment: Given the projected growth of hand-held computers, Schirtzinger expects rivals to eventually emerge. "It's not like they're going to call us and tell us, but we always keep our eyes open," says Schirtzinger.

Fast Fact #7: Ansy downloads an average of 500 copies of Primer a day.

Comment: The software is licensed to groups and businesses. Licensees pay a fee based on the number of users. Health-care organizations and financial-services firms are Ansy's top customers, says Schirtzinger. He couldn't say exactly how many Primer licensees are out there, but says there are 17,000 individual users. "Our current installed base is very much a barrier to competition," says Schirtzinger. "As people get used to using our software, it makes it harder and harder for [competitors] to dislodge us."

Fast Fact #8: Ansy has a strategic alliance with Microsoft.

Comment: The software behemoth bundles Primer on its Pocket PC Expansion Pack, a CD that provides additional features for the company's Pocket PC operating system. Ansy also has alliances with three smaller companies and more are in the works. Schirtzinger says Ansy has not considered whether its ultimate future lies with an IPO or acquisition.

Fast Fact #9: Primer runs on 60 different types of hand-held devices.

Comments: That's peanuts compared to what's coming down the road, says Schirtzinger. In the next few years, "you'll see hundreds of different hand-held devices," he says. Not only will hand-held computers outsell desktops, but new Internet appliances -- stripped down computers built to provide Internet access only -- also will require Primer. What's more, Primer open up the entire world of books to hand-helds since all commercial printers use PDF, says Schirtzinger.

Fast Fact #10: Ansy has spent "zero" on advertising.

Comment: It is, however, aggressively marketing Primer through a public relations campaign and at trade shows. Adobe, creator of PDF, has even made room for Primer in its own trade-show booths. "They like that we're helping to take their standard to the hand-held space," says Schirtzinger.

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