

Interview:
**Chris
Gardner
and Ray
Trotta of
iValue**

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CHICAGO – *ePrairie* sat down with Chris Gardner and Ray Trotta of [iValue](#), a brand spanking new company designed to show major corporations how to get more bang for their buck. We talk a little consulting, a little software, a little financial management and a whole lot of new business in a bad economy.

ePrairie: Tell me about your company.

Chris Gardner: We're about half a dozen different professionals. We're technical professionals who are also very adept in finance (a double major background). We're people that are hard to find. It's a skill that's in demand for these IT projects and cost millions of dollars but need a lot of support.

eP: How old is the company?

CG: We're eight weeks old. We're relative babies. We think we're big babies.

eP: Why are you located in Chicago?

CG: Basically, what we're about is employing the principals of corporate finance to technology, which kind of reflects our location. Chicago's famous for the school that pioneered corporate finance and quantitative methods, but New York is very practical. That's where the economics show up in the public process.

eP: So what exactly does your company do?

Ray Trotta: Companies spend billions of dollars on technology, and we advise them on what value is created, how much they're getting back on their investment and ways to improve. Basically, we're about trying to help companies understand how much value or ROI they're getting from their technology investments.

Companies basically bought and used technology based on some function or some feature to sell products to customers over the Internet. What we've found is there's a maturity in the area; companies are thinking of these things as business assets that create value for investors. We get involved in measuring that value.

eP: Is it fair to say that you guys are consultants?

CG: We're more about methods. We have a mixture of software, consulting and publications. We're more of a hybrid organization, so we're not a traditional consulting firm. It's more about methods than anything else.

eP: What do you think distinguishes you from the other companies in your space?

CG: What we've got is a group of individuals that all have different skill sets. We bring them in based on the work that's required.

For example, we had a business case analysis that involved computer telephony integration. It's a technology that puts data on your screen at the same time you're having a phone call with a customer, and that analysis required some fairly sophisticated stuff, like workflow management and queuing theory. We know enough to help zero in, but we also need a person who is familiar with the specific package and its performance attributes.

RT: We're extremely deep in terms of our ability to deliver value.

eP: A lot of companies have been cutting their need for outside consultants and things like that. How do you hope to keep business?

RT: What's really interesting about the current economy is that a lot of companies are looking to us to get cost strategies because we can tell them what pieces of technology are [ultimately] necessary. We're applying finance to technology, and that helps cut costs.

CG: This is driven by shareholders. The dot-com debacle has put a lot of attention on the need to be more thoughtful. There's a much greater sensitivity to how much value can be destroyed if you don't approach these problems with discipline. We have a systematic means of trying to back shareholder value. That's a good description of what we're doing and why we're even here.



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