Tomás Pollak

Prey

“ I saw an opportunity to offer affordable anti-theft software for digital devices to Chileans. ”

COUNTRY	Chile
INDUSTRY	Technology
YEAR SELECTED	2012
PARTNER	Carlos Yaconi
WEBSITE	www.preyproject.com

COMPANY SNAPSHOT

Ever misplaced a laptop or cell phone? Forget praying for its retrieval; try Prey-ing. Through its open-source, multi-platform software, Prey Project is helping people around the world track down and recover their lost or stolen computers, tablets and mobile phones. Given that the number of mobile phones in Latin America alone is expected to reach 1 billion worldwide by 2015, the opportunity for selling anti-theft software for all digital devices is considerable.

Since 2009, Prey has started to chip away at this market, releasing software across five major operating systems and securing over a million registered users in 170 countries-—all without having spent a dime on advertising. In its first year of business, Prey reached profitability thanks to its users' almost implausible recovery stories that have garnered significant attention in both traditional and social media.

Prey Project's co-founders Tomás Pollak and Carlos Yaconi are both Santiago, Chile natives with a shared lifelong love of programming and entrepreneurship. While a student in Journalism at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Tomás taught himself how to program and co-founded his first company, Aardvark, which built websites for companies lacking the necessary internal resources. Over the next three years Tomás went on to found three more ventures, including a real estate search engine and a platform for building e-commerce sites. Tomás continues to be invested in one of the two companies still operating. Carlos, who studied Computer Science and Information Technology at Universidad de Diego Portales and Universidad del Desarrollo, is also a serial entrepreneur. Prior to joining Prey he founded two companies of his own: Nectia (a custom software developer for large banks, insurance, and retail companies) and Bizware (a database services provider). He continues to be an investor in both.

It is only fitting then that these two entrepreneurs met while attending the 2009 Google I/O conference in Silicon Valley. They became fast friends and were soon discussing Tomas's latest work: code designed to help users recover their misplaced computers. Tomás found inspiration to write the code after losing his own computer to theft (on a first date no less!). With that helpless feeling in mind, Tomás released his software on his personal blog; within a week, stories of miraculously recovered devices were splashed all over Chilean news. By the time he met Carlos, Tomás had completed dozens of international press interviews and his code had been downloaded hundreds of thousands of times. Carlos, intrigued, offered to modify the code for use on the Android operating system. He enjoyed the project so much he quit his manager position at Nectia and convinced Tomás that it was time to launch Prey as a company. The duo moved into a small office space and by year-end had released Prey for most popular operating systems.