Victor Devia

Opendat

“ I saw an opportunity to create innovative technology that helps mining companies mitigate security risks and save money. ”

COUNTRY	Chile
INDUSTRY	Technology
EMPLOYEES	20
YEAR SELECTED	2012
WEBSITE	www.opendat.cl

COMPANY SNAPSHOT

As the world watched the Chilean government rescue 33 heroic miners who were trapped in a copper mine for 69 days, it caught a glimpse into the importance of mining in Chile. The industry represents roughly 20% of the Chilean GDP (US$40 billion), and nobody knows its significance better than Victor Devia, a serial entrepreneur from Antofagasta, the heart of the Chilean mining industry. Victor's most recent company, OpenDat, develops software that helps large mines mitigate security risks and cut costs by efficiently managing the day-to-day activities of its employees. Mines of this scale have up to 7,000 employees and operate 24 hours a day, never halting production. Located in the middle of the desert, hours from a main city and their sources of electricity, water, food, etc., these mines are small-cities themselves with very high costs of operation and large potential safety risks. Serving a niche that is untapped by major software companies, OpenDat works with BHP Billiton, the largest mining company in the world, and 7 of the 10 largest mines in Chile.

Victor has been an entrepreneur in the mining industry for 24 years. In 1988 he earned a degree in Civil Engineering from the Universidad Catolica del Norte, the most prominent university north of Santiago. An early entrepreneur, Victor took out a loan for US$1,000 to fund his first company, Softnor. The company built custom software solutions for mining clients in the days before giant multinationals like SAP dominated the global software market. Softnor was profitable, but Victor received a sharp blow in 1994, when his co-founder died unexpectedly. The loss impacted the young entrepreneur, but he pushed forward, finding a new partner, Luis Emilio, and founding OpenDat in 1994. Like Softnor, the company sold IT services to mines. However, global competition and fluctuations in the commodities market prompted the partners to re-focus on building a stickier product that solved a problem in an unexplored niche. In 2005, they re-defined themselves and launched "SGCAS," a software platform for employee management.

SGCAS, which was re-named UMBRAL in 2012, helps companies serve four goals: 1) storing important background documents for new employees, like medical reports and skills tests, 2) controlling employee access to facilities and vehicles based on security clearances, 3) ensuring that employees receive their daily meals, and 4) ensuring that employees enter appropriate dorms at night. Functionally, SGCAS starts with the swipe of a card. During onboarding, employees are issued an identification card which they swipe before entering buildings or receiving their meals. In an industry where safety and regulations dictate daily life, UMBRAL gives its clients control over data that was previously unmanageable. It allows its clients to take immediate actions on problematic behavior (such as restricting mine access to employees that have not reported for a scheduled medical exam), and make long-term strategic decisions that help them cut costs based on analysis of inefficiencies over time. At large mines, where thousands of employees work, eat, and sleep on the company premises, this data can save companies millions of dollars.