

ENTREVESTOR: Making strides with Stepscan

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Charlottetown firm sells first analysis system to UPEI

A day after its Atlantic Innovation Fund financing officially expired, **Vitrak Systems Inc.** of Charlottetown closed its first sale.

The company in 2011 won a two-year, \$1.4-million loan from the Atlantic Canada Opportunity Agency's innovation fund, which it used to commercialize its Stepscan footprint analysis technology. The company has now produced a commercial product and sold one to the University of Prince Edward Island for its new Concussion Screening and Return to Play Evaluation Program. And Vitrak has about 10 potential customers that have asked for quotes.

"People are requesting quotes now, but we have quite a long sales cycle," said Crystal Lavallee, CEO of the company, adding that researchers need to get quotes, then seek funding, then order the product. She's encouraged by the interest.

The Stepscan Pad is a pressure-sensitive tile, measuring four square feet, that's placed on the floor to analyze the gait and footprint of anyone who walks on it. The tiles — on which Vitrak has received two patents — can be connected and arranged in lines or as squares of up to 400 square feet.

The company is now taking orders for its product for the medical and scientific markets, and has several applications in this space. For example, William Montelpare, the Margaret and Wallace McCain Chair in Human Development and Health at UPEI, plans to use the pad to assess whether someone has suffered a concussion. People suffering from brain trauma will sway when standing still, and the Stepscan can measure the swaying motion and determine immediately whether they are concussed and should seek treatment.

Lavallee is now shopping the completed Stepscan at trade shows around the continent. She attended the Gait and Clinical Movement Analysis Society meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio, in May, and next month will travel to the American Society of Biomechanics annual meeting in Omaha, Neb. She attended the biomechanics meeting last year with a basis prototype, and is looking forward to demonstrating a full product this year.

Having secured regulatory approval in Canada and the U.S., Vitrak is now targeting the physiotherapy market, which can use Stepscan to assess the walking motion of patients. There are 90,000 physio clinics in the United States alone and they generate total annual revenue of about \$30 billion. The company is working on a model where it would lend the tiles to clinics, which would then pay a monthly subscription to use the software to analyze the readings.

Lavallee is also raising about \$1.5 million, and has commitments of \$265,000 from existing investors. The company had previously raised \$850,000 from angels on P.E.I. She plans to use that money for business development, marketing and to develop Stepscan products for two additional market segments — security and military training.

In the security segment, Stepscan can be placed at the entrance to a secure area to measure not just who enters a room with a swipe card but how many people enter with them. Lavallee added that Stepscan can tell, for example, if someone weighing 165 pounds leaves the room weighing 190 pounds, which would prompt inquiries about what they were carrying when they left.

The application for the military training segment includes tracking personnel movement in an enclosed space, and measuring a soldier's stance and shifting weight when absorbing the kickback from a rifle.

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