



Rapita Systems flies high

Five YABA members have joined together with the Viking Fund to invest in real-time systems company Rapita Systems Ltd.



Right, Dr Guillem Bernat, CEO of Rapita Systems, with Andrew Gurnell, Business Promoter at Science City York

Rapita was founded in 2004 to commercialise research being carried out by the University of York's Real Time Systems Research Group. The company currently has two product lines. The first of these is RapiTime, a tool aimed at the automotive, avionics and telecomms sectors, to increase the reliability of software systems used in cars, planes and other embedded systems. In particular, the tool is aimed at computing the worst-case execution time of software that runs on these devices and enables engineers to determine that these systems perform their tasks on time. Effectively this enables companies using the tool to engineer timing

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Dr Guillem Bemat, CEO, Rapita Systems Ltd

correctness into systems, saving time and effort in identifying and trouble-shooting timing bugs at a later date.

"Take, for example, airbag systems in a car," says CEO Dr Guillem Bernat. "When sensors detect a collision they must fire the airbag exactly at a given time. If it is done too late, the driver may hit the wheel before the airbag is fully inflated." Its second product, VirtualTime, is a simulator for real-time systems and is aimed

mainly at the telecommunications market. It allows engineers to detect performance problems of large telecommunication systems early on in the design process.

Rapita Systems has four founders, including Dr Guillem Bernat who is now in the role of CEO. All of the founder members of the company previously worked for the Computer Science Department at the University.

Viking Support

The company approached YABA early last year presenting at a business opportunity meeting in February 2005, initially seeking funding to enable it to move to a level where it would attract venture capitalist finance. "However, following discussions with angels and with the Viking Fund it became clear that we may be able to raise more finance than we had initially anticipated," says Guillem. "We now have enough investment to expand internationally and support our sales effort, particularly in setting up reseller agreements, which has been our plan from the outset."

In fact, Rapita are well on the way to success, particularly with its RapiTime product. It was initially developed through a European funded research project that included industrial

partners Volkswagen Audi, which is currently using the product in pilot studies. Guillem however, is cautious in his optimism.

"The automotive industry is notoriously slow to adopt new tools as standard, so we're in it for the long term," he says.

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Andrew Burton, Managing Director, Viking Fund

Angel Interest

Giles Bloomer is one of the five angel investors and says that he was attracted to Rapita as an investment opportunity because, "The academic track record of its founders is extremely impressive. Added to that is the fact that the company has already started to secure its first orders with products that will make a real cost and time saving to its customers."

This is echoed by Andrew Burton, Managing Director of the Viking Fund who says, "We were impressed, more than anything, by the eminent quality of the team behind what are clearly great products. It was also obvious that the team had done a lot of groundwork and had some strong working relationships in the sectors they are targeting."