

# OUTER ARC

Welcome to the Carbon Cup



As an ambitious 30-something entrepreneur, all Ben Randal wants is for his energy-saving applications to be used all over the globe.

And he's already got a slogan to sell them: 'Saving the World Just Became a Competition.'

The company Randal founded in Nottingham, OuterArc, is pioneering the development of a package of building power metering and software applications that encourage the integration of energy use measurement with social networking sites. Titled 'The Carbon Cup', one app encourages individuals and even entire work places to display their energy consumption on sites such as Facebook, effectively competing against each other to reduce energy use while winning points and kudos as rewards.

The idea behind the development is simple: people are more inclined to reduce their energy consumption when they can see how much energy they are using. Then, by putting their energy use on public display via popular sites such as Facebook or Twitter, energy reduction becomes integrated into their every day lives.

As Randal explained: "Our punchline is that OuterArc wants to make the world a more energy efficient place to live. We attempt to weave energy into people's every day lives so it becomes visible and engages us all. And really, that's the premise of everything we do - it has to work with people at a consumer level, whether you're an energy manager, a business or a utility."

## POINTS MEAN PRIZES FOR HOW YOU'RE DOING IN THE CARBON CUP.

Two concepts are key to the Carbon Cup's popularity: ease of use, and competition.

Regarding the first, Randal continued: "We know that if we give people applications which means they have to log on they don't do it. How many things do you have to log onto each day? It's annoying. And we don't want to add to that annoyance. So we started thinking about other ways of engaging people. We thought, 'where do people usually go?' Well, we're the younger generation, so this doesn't cover everyone, but younger people use social networking, 200m people use Facebook, 40m people on the planet now use LinkedIn. Facebook is a channel and our notion is 'why isn't that a way of seeing what your building is doing?'"



As for competition: "The very base of the premise is that you can collaborate, or compete, with your neighbours in things like your meter reading, or energy bills. At its simplest, you can put in your meter readings and you will get points for that. You get points for saving and points for saying what you are doing to save energy."

And points mean?

"Points mean prizes for how you're doing in the Carbon Cup. The incentive is firstly people will get points and virtual badges in areas like Facebook. Where we want to take it further is talking to utilities and vendors sponsoring these competitions and provide prizes such as iPods. There are loads of ways to incentivise this."

Revenue generation will stem from the purchase of OuterArc's energy metering packages; customers will be able buy basic metering systems but pay more to upgrade to more sophisticated packages.

It may be obvious now that Randal is a garrulous speaker and bubbling with enthusiasm. It's hardly a surprise to learn that he once had his ambitions set on the tough competitive arena of professional tennis.

But after university and working in software development, he set up OuterArc in 2006 and moved into BioCity the following year, focusing on energy software. The company now employs nine people and has "bootstrapped" itself most of the way with its own cash. EMDA awarded the

company a £170,000 grant in 2008.

Today, the Carbon Cup is one of OuterArc's suite of energy measurement and efficiency applications.

But while Randal's belief in the Carbon Cup is infectious, does he think it's got the right stuff for mass acceptance?

"My answer is a brazen yes," he replies. "My head says that if it doesn't become world-wide, my hedge is that there are utilities showing interest world-wide right now and saying, 'we would like to buy a solution like yours which we want to give to our customers.' That's the hedge. The utopian dream is that we can get something like a Facebook; if not we've still got a card to play that will generate revenue."

Image: Ben Randal  
(Markie Photography/Nottingham Science City)