

Company wins prestigious software award

By Dene Mackenzie

University of Otago-based technology company 1000Minds has won a prestigious Consensus Software Award in Australia.

Co-inventor and university economics lecturer Professor Paul Hansen was delighted to hear that 1000Minds had won the award at a gala event in Sydney on Tuesday night.

"Everyone involved with 1000Minds has worked very hard over recent years at refining our systems and methodologies and at establishing a national and international client base of users of the software."

1000Minds was advanced decision-support software to help users, including businesses, government organisations and individuals, make decisions

involving setting priorities, ranking or choosing between competing individuals or alternatives, Prof Hansen said.

The software had thousands of possible applications across a wide range of industries and sectors such as setting priorities for patient treatment and managing waiting lists, appraising investments, short-listing job applicants, strategic planning, choosing real estate, marketing research and new product design.

1000Minds started in the mid-1990s within the School of Business' economics department, looking at fields of multiple criteria decision analysis and health economics.

"Initially, I was trying to find a valid and practical means of prioritising patients for access to elective surgery," he said.

In 2002, Prof Hansen teamed up with researcher Franz Ombler to invent the powerful algorithms at the heart of 1000Minds.

Mr Ombler said the pair developed the discoveries into a system to produce an overall ranking of alternatives.

The ranking could then be used to either rank the alternatives or chose among them. A record of decision making was retained to ensure greater transparency and opportunities for ongoing refinements to the decision process, he said.

The company was working with The Street and the university to create a 3D interactive gaming-based product to help students choose their courses. 1000Minds is supported by Upstart Business Incubator, New Zealand Trade and Enterprise and the Foundation for

Research, Science and Technology.

School of Business dean George Benwell said he was thrilled the company had been acknowledged at the awards because it highlighted how the school could successfully work with researchers in getting their product to a point where it was commercially viable.

"Part of my vision for the school is to be more connected with industry. The collaboration with 1000Minds is a perfect example of how the school assists with research that results in commercial outcomes that contribute to the economy."

• The Microsoft and IBM-sponsored awards — now in their eighth year — are independently-judged in Australia and New Zealand for innovative and groundbreaking software developments.