



Valiant USA

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Valiant USA Company Backgrounder

While Valiant USA was launched in January 2004, Valiant Technology's U.S. operations started in 1992. Valiant USA is a subsidiary of Valiant Technology Ltd. of London, England.

The Company's Founding

Valiant Technology Ltd. was founded in April 1985 by the late professor Tom Stonier and Dave Catlin, the Managing Director. In the early 1980's, New York native Stonier opened and headed the School of Science and Technology at the University of Bradford in England. Technology and education were a natural interest. Catlin, who worked as a freelance engineering designer, had become inspired by the work of Seymour Papert and the philosophy of Logo. He recalls:

As a freelancer, I became acutely aware of the importance of problem solving. I thought Papert's revolution of teaching people to think was an amazing idea.

Award Winning, Educationally Sound Products

Stonier established the educational credentials of the company and, though he passed away in 1999, his philosophy still underpins the whole company rationale. The combination of Stonier's vision and Catlin's design flair created a set of award-winning products. The first product was *Turtle*, a classic Logo-based device that looks like a turtle and provides a tool for students to investigate a particular field of knowledge. It is still remembered by many American teachers. The Valiant *Turtle* was included in the book, Best of British Design, published by the UK's Design Council.

Roamer, a robot with its own on-board Logo program, was launched in 1990. It is a testimony to its educational value that Valiant still sells the product nearly 15 years later. *Roamer* won the inaugural "BETT Award" as Best Primary Product in 1998 and also received a "Millennium Award." Valiant is currently developing a next-generation educational robot based on *Roamer*.

Valiant followed *Roamer* robot with the development of a hands-on design technology product called *Inventa*, which also won "Millennium" product status and the "Horner's Award" for the "most innovative design using plastic" – awarded by the British Plastics Federation.

In 2002, the company was awarded the prestigious “Queen’s Award for Innovation” in recognition of its track record in creative and useful educational product designs.

The Company’s Philosophy

Dave Catlin explains the company’s philosophy:

We wanted to bring good education together with good design. This means we start by defining the problem and then looking for a creative solution. You cannot limit the solution to a particular form or technology; this can lead to absurd situations. For example, some companies can design exotic, high-tech, often expensive solutions when perhaps a better solution could consist of a few cents of paper or plastic. They create software solutions because they see themselves as programmers. On the other hand, Valiant will use any kind of medium: book, software, bits of plastic or paper. What has to come first is the educational viability of your objectives and solutions. This has not always led to the greatest commercial success, but we have created a range of niche products that users in more than 27 countries have used to help millions of students excel.

The U.S. Market

In 1992, the company began evaluating the North American education market for sales and product opportunities. Nancy Kokat, formerly of Dimensions in Learning, became Valiant’s U.S. agent. During the succeeding years the company gained a strong grasp of the American approach to education. This was reflected in 2001, at the Michigan Technology Conference, when the LITE organization awarded Dave Catlin its “Firefly Award” for his outstanding contribution to technology education.

MathAmigo for Handheld Technologies

In 1998, Valiant started the research that would lead to *MathAmigo*. The decision came in response to the objectives of the State Systemic Initiatives. Catlin explains:

Our products have always been cross-curricular and very constructivist. While we still hold those beliefs, we felt teachers needed some practical help in preparing lessons. So we set up a study group to look at the problem. It was during that time that I had the inspiration to look at creating a math machine. We found some excellent research on the use of devices like TI’s, Little Professor, etc. This was done in the early 1980s at Southampton University in England. The work clearly showed the idea had potential to solve many of the problems we saw math teachers facing in schools. Our further studies and the NCET’s research on Integrated Learning Systems like Success Maker really showed that portable handheld technology was essential if we are to bring the full advantage of technology to the classroom.

After four years of research and development, Valiant created *MathAmigo*, a K-8 standards-based math software system. This included making a specific handheld device now called

Classic MathAmigo to run the software. Much of the practical testing was done at school sites in the United States. Then in 2003, the company became aware of PalmOne's efforts and launched a version for Palm OS devices, plus the AlphaSmart Dana. Valiant again expanded the software system in 2005 to be compatible with more operating systems and devices, including PCs, laptops, tablets, and handhelds that use the Windows and Windows Mobile platform.

Valiant USA, a Subsidiary of Valiant Technology Ltd.

At the start of 2004, the company reorganized its U.S. operation and started distributing its products under its new subsidiary, Valiant USA. Nancy Kokat still runs the day-to-day operations. After leaving GoKnow, Debbie DeSousa joined the operation to manage marketing development. As a result the company has established *MathAmigo* in a large number of school districts and partnered with AlphaSmart and Educational Resource Services for distribution. Valiant USA is working with several American universities including Rutgers University Center for Math and Science Education and Medgar Evers College plus the Education Technology Think Tank to assist schools in closing the achievement gap and improving educational outcomes for the most disadvantaged students. These partnerships are also helping to generate more enthusiasm for science and math, ensuring America's students are prepared for jobs in an increasingly digital and global environment. Recently, Valiant earned congressional recognition from U.S. Rep. Major Owens (D-NY) and a partnership award from the Education Technology Think Tank for its collaborative work to improve math teaching and learning.

For more information about Valiant Technology and its products, visit www.valiant-technology.com or www.mathamigo.com.

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