

Donde Speeds Sales Tax Compliance

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March 1, 2009



By [Alexandra DeFelice](#)

Anton Donde grew PayUSA to a \$15 million payroll processing and tax filling business with 200 employees, acquiring three other payroll companies along the way and selling it after taking it public.

Now he is looking to educate accountants and resellers about the importance of sales tax compliance, and how his most recent company, SpeedTax, could help.

On the accountant side, the Web-based software vendor primarily is serving as an outsourcing partner that will do the work for its accounting customers' clients.

On the reseller front, SpeedTax rolled out a channel program in January targeting top technology consultants and resellers of a handful of key ERP systems that SpeedTax currently integrates with, including Microsoft Dynamics GP, Sage MAS 90/200 and Accpac and QuickBooks Enterprise, Pro and Premier. One of the first of the half a dozen VARs to sign on was Laguna Hills, Calif.-based Blytheco, No. 12 on Accounting Technology's Top 100 VARs list last year, with \$20 million in revenue.

What first interested you in accounting?

Nothing. I found it one of the most boring things imaginable. When I was 16, I had an idea that I wanted to be an entrepreneur and control my own destiny. I felt becoming a CPA was the best academic skills for me to have to run my own business. My first job was with what's now Accenture, then a division of Arthur Andersen, working in the IT consulting division. I designed a financial currency exchange system for a big bank in South Africa. That exposed me to high-volume transactional business, which has been the theme I've been in ever since.

Why did you leave South Africa?

To come to America with a suitcase of clothes and \$2,000 in my pocket. I had to work and learn the business culture as a management consultant for Price Waterhouse. I started a company called Daton in 1985 that was a play off my name and my wife's name. I ran that until 1994, then put it on the Nasdaq and changed the name to PayUSA [because] we'd outgrown Daton and were very focused on payroll. I sold it because I was burned out.

What inspired you to start SpeedTax?

I called several friends who had known about PayUSA and I asked for ideas similar to what I've done before. A friend doing SOX work was doing an audit on a public company and said he couldn't certify the client's books because the sales tax was such a mess. Payroll was a highly

mature competitive industry - with about 90-plus percent saturation; sales tax from a marketing opportunity point of view was far superior. Our whole industry is going to grow at a phenomenal rate over the next five to 10 years as people realize the need to outsource sales tax.

Explain your relationship with resellers.

We've had to choose which ERP systems we're integrating with in terms of priorities, so we looked for the best ERPs with established channels and are going to the best VARs under the assumption that they are the trendsetters. We're big believers that they're keen to the benefit of getting recurring revenue from now to forever more and if and when they want to sell their business it adds tremendous value. We want to develop our channel and revenue model deeper over the next three to six months (to ensure) there are no bugs in the code, the system is up all the time and there is adequate response time.

Share the most important lesson learned in all your businesses?

Always deal with everyone at a professional level. Make sure the team I've got on board is the best team I can get and I'm doing everything I can to help them maximize their full potential and, (in turn), help SpeedTax. When I was at PayUSA, every year we mandated teamwork training. I sat next to an employee who just joined a week before. He was a driver delivering payroll by hand. I had met him briefly to welcome him, but I had no real interaction with him. We had to turn to the person next to us and tell them why their job is important to the success of our job. I told him his job was absolutely critical to the success of the business. He was the guy the clients saw and if he did not deliver the payrolls timely our company would collapse and my job would be worthless. It's a great example of how everybody needs everybody else in this world.