



In the News

Red Herring: Top Ten Entrepreneurs 2001

August 13 - TAKING ENTERPRISE SOFTWARE TO NEW HEIGHTS -- For Vani Kola, building supply-chain startup Nth Orbit is very much like her climb to the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro this summer: a lot of fun, but also pretty damn serious. She trained to scale that famous mountain during a five-month "retirement" from her first startup, a B2B software company called RightWorks. Ms. Kola sold a majority stake in the four-year-old company in March 2000 to Internet Capital Group at a valuation of \$1.25 billion. Although Ms. Kola enjoyed being with her husband and two daughters and devoting time to mountain climbing, she grew restless as she began to think about streamlining manufacturing supply chains. "I didn't really plan on coming back; it just happened," Ms. Kola says of entrepreneurship. "It sucks your soul into it and takes everything you've got."

In March 2001, she founded Nth Orbit, a supply-chain collaboration software company in San Jose, California. The company raised \$7 million in venture funding from Sequoia Capital and individual investors -- all of whom were early backers of RightWorks. The company is developing software to help business partners exchange orders for supplies and finished products in real time. Several of the company's 14 employees are Ms. Kola's former RightWorks colleagues.

While some entrepreneurs might be daunted by the complexities of creating supply-chain software that is always up-to-date, Ms. Kola is drawn to them. The 37-year-old native of Hyderabad, India, has spent most of her career developing enterprise software for manufacturers. Improving companies' supply chains is a ripe opportunity, she says. "This is where the most creativity comes out, because there are no answers, just chaos," says Ms. Kola. If successful, Nth Orbit will bring order to the manufacturing universe.

--Julie Landry