



By Tim McLaughlin, Journal Staff

In the early 1990s, Mike Rowan was making about \$5 an hour testing power devices on an assembly line.

“I stuck a 15-watt light bulb in the back of an uninterruptible power supply device. After that, I would turn it over and put a few screws in the bottom,” Rowan recalled.

That mundane job, however, sparked Rowan’s interest in electronics and engineering. He didn’t have any formal education in information technology, but he learned by doing. He has helped start and build several companies, including a dial-up Internet service provider called NetSense.



“Back then, there was no book on how to build an ISP,” Rowan said. “It was almost like rocket science. That’s what it felt like anyway, but now it would be so easy.”

Today, Rowan is chief technology officer at [RatePoint Inc.](#), whose products help companies collect customer feedback, market themselves via email and manage their online reputations.

Rowan grew up in a beach neighborhood in Narragansett, R.I. His family owned small restaurants, where he had no choice but to work hard.

Back then, he was a hard worker, but he lacked focus. After high school, he joined the U.S. Army.

“That was the game changer for me. It set me straight in a few different ways. It got me more focused,” he said.

After the Army, he worked in a warehouse and then on the assembly line for American Power, where he managed about 50 people in the manufacturing group and then wedged his way into the engineering department.

His entrepreneurial side then emerged. After NetSense and before helping start RatePoint, Rowan was a key member of the engineering group at GeoTrust Inc.,

which worked with Adobe Systems to secure and authenticate PDF documents.

In 2006, VeriSign Inc. bought GeoTrust for \$125 million in cash.

Outside of work, Rowan and his wife launched Project Holiday. The charity collects holiday and seasonal items from retailers, such as Halloween candy, and distributes those products to needy children.

Mike Rowan

TITLE: Co-founder and chief technology officer
COMPANY: RatePoint
AGE: 39
EDUCATION
RESIDENCE: Wakefield, R.I.
FAVORITE VACATION SPOT: Puerto Rico
UNUSUAL TALENT: Break dancing
FAVORITE MOVIES: Totally open, all types
MUSICAL ARTIST I RELAX TO: The Cranberries
MUSICAL ARTIST I GET FIRED UP TO: Limp Bizkit
MOTTO TO LIVE BY: Work smart