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Aussies debut on world stage

By **BRAD HOWARTH**

START-UP Australian technology companies Zingee and Digislide will be hoping to emulate the success of Palm Pilot, Salesforce.com and VMware when they make their appearance on stage at the prestigious DEMO conference in Phoenix, Arizona, this week.

In its 15th year, DEMO hand-picks 70 start-up companies from around the world to present their technologies in front of an audience of venture investors, service providers and media representatives. Previous events launched technologies such as the Palm personal digital assistant, Sun's Java programming language, and the TiVo personal video recorder.

Sydney company Zingee will present a beta version of its technology for simple file sharing across the web. Adelaide-based Digislide will be demonstrating a prototype miniaturised digital projector

that is suitable for incorporation into hand-held devices such as mobile phones.

Digislide was invited to participate at DEMO after being nominated as one of the two best companies exhibiting at the ANZA Technology Network conference in Palo Alto, California, in November last year.

Speaking at the ANZA event last year, the executive producer of DEMO, Chris Shipley, said she was constantly impressed by the quality of Australian technology companies.

"What I've discovered is not just that there are very interesting Australian and New Zealand companies, but that these are very interesting companies generally," Ms Shipley said. "And that is really important to me, as someone who has been charged with going out into the world and finding the best companies. I look at probably 500 to 600 companies a

year, and just 70 are invited to come to a DEMO conference."

Digislide chief executive officer Luceille Outhred says her company has used the time since ANZA to take its concept of a miniature digital projector through to a working prototype. She says the unit that will be demonstrated at DEMO measures only 39.7 millimetres long and is 25 millimetres square, which she believes makes it the world's smallest digital projector. The device is capable of projecting an image at A3 dimensions on to a flat surface, enabling hand-held devices to display complex information such as maps or timetables.

Ms Outhred says one of the primary reasons for Digislide attending DEMO is to find manufacturing partners to license its technology into mobile phones, PDAs, notebook

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THE AGE

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Tech start-ups raise profile at US event

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computers and hand-held games.

Zingee marketing manager Michael Liubinskas says the event will help raise his company's profile and attract investors to fund its North American expansion.

Zingee's technology simplifies the process of sharing files by allowing users to create a personal web server on their PC. They can then invite others to collect files from their personal server. The company will distribute its technology free of charge, generating revenue from Google advertising that accompanies the web pages it generates.

Mr Liubinskas says the technology has generated strong interest in industries such as architecture and drafting and television post-production, where large files can make transmission by email difficult.



Michael Liubinskas

Last year four Australian companies attended DEMO, including interactive music tutoring system developer In The Chair, security scanning technology developer QRSciences, and document management company DPM.

But a favourable review from the assembled venture capitalists is not enough to guarantee long-term success. Adelaide company Foursticks launched its Net Prioritizer software at the 2004 conference, not long before it went into voluntary administration. But the software was so good, it was picked up and marketed internationally by network performance software company NetPriva.

In The Chair chief executive officer Mark Evans says his company's appearance at DEMO generated important US business media coverage and helped his company raise capital. "It gave us credibility with investors," he says.