



# From voice response to global response

by **JAMIE HUNTER**

Tom Rand lies awake at night worrying about our planet's death by overheating. He has been doing this for quite some time.

Rand is also a hypocrite. The Toronto-based entrepreneur and environmentalist is fully aware of this.

"I think everybody is a hypocrite who is worried about climate change and that's inevitable simply because we live in a particular kind of economic paradigm, an energy paradigm," he says. "It is not possible to live outside of that paradigm."

However, it is possible to contribute to making a change for the better and Rand has devoted the last three years of his life to doing just that.

## The tech boom

In 1991, Rand founded the Toronto-based interactive voice-response software company, Voice Courier Inc. He achieved massive financial success with this venture, the company grossed somewhere in range of over \$12 million per year. He oversaw its expansion to 150 employees in three countries. In 2004, he started Voice Courier Mobile Inc., branching out into SMS-text software. But at some point, while he was at the helm of two successful software firms, Rand realized that he had reached his vocational plateau, his "what next?" moment. That's when he said TTYL to his software empire.

"I was given the opportunity to change because I had sold one company, and aside from the economic freedoms, I found a great deal of psychological freedoms," Rand says. "I found I could re-think who I was and what was important – and it turned out to be more important than the financial freedoms. I was able to engage in a career that really mattered to me outside of sheer monetary gain."

This time his career was tinted an environmental shade of green. In 2005, Rand started VCi Green Funds, a private equity fund that invests capital in technologies geared towards reducing emissions.

"I've been engaged in a debate about climate change since I was a kid," he says. "The family dinner was filled with discussions about what was coming. What became apparent to me, as I became an adult – especially more recently – was that the public did not have the scientific literacy to understand what was coming. It's an enormously frightening prospect and we're totally ill prepared for it. This is really just my way of jumping into that battle."