

FAST PRIVATE 2010

A10 Networks helps control flood of mobile apps

BY NATHAN DONATO-WEINSTEIN

Six years ago, when Lee Chen was deciding what sort of networking company to build, he set off to discover where other firms failed.

So Chen talked to his biggest potential customers. Their complaints, he found, were remarkably similar.

“They said customer service for most networking technology was not good. I was shocked when I first heard that,” Chen said.

Fast forward, and Chen’s San Jose-based A10 Networks Inc. has carved out an enviable position for itself in networking, riding a reputation based on innovation and quality service.

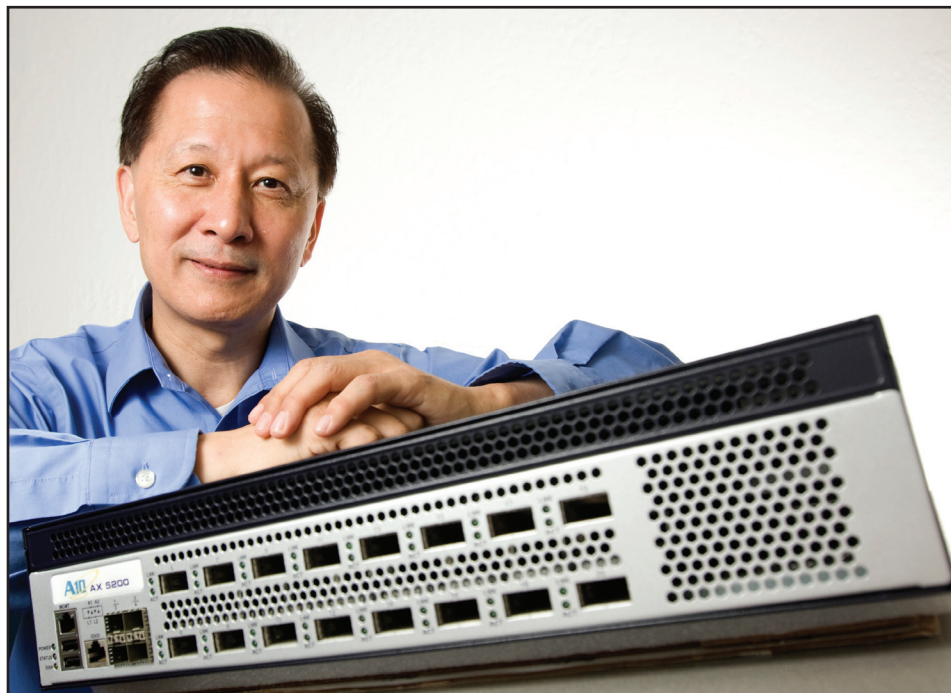
The 199-person company makes hardware and software that help companies quickly deliver applications, manage bandwidth and operate securely. The three markets have paid off big time for A10, which shows 667.53 percent growth from 2007 to 2009, to \$17.4 million. The firm, which now has nine offices in Europe, Asia and Brazil, became profitable this year.

A10’s first product, in 2005, simplified how enterprises managed network security and gained quick kudos on the trade-show circuit.

“It was almost like a branding exercise,” said Chen, who co-founded Foundry Networks Inc., which was later acquired by Brocade Communications Systems Inc.

When A10 launched products targeting application delivery and bandwidth management two years later, the market was primed to take notice. Customers now run the gamut from Microsoft Corp. and The Huffington Post to China Mobile and Shasta County.

In some ways, the company’s products benefit from being late to the party, said Peter Stokes, A10’s vice president of North American sales.



VICKI THOMPSON

SECOND ACT: Lee Chen started A10 Networks after Foundry Networks, a company he co-founded, which was acquired by Brocade Communications Systems Inc.

“A lot of companies got into this market in the late-1990s,” Stokes said. “You certainly didn’t have YouTube or Facebook a short 10 years ago. Apps are so much more demanding now.”

That means A10 engineers could focus development efforts from the ground up on today’s video- and data-intensive tasks, Stokes said. The result, according to the company, is up to twice the performance at half the cost of competitors.

But Chen said customers also want something that doesn’t show up in spec sheets: personal attention.

For instance, when hackers targeted a major client, A10’s engineers came up with a customized solution within 10 days. Chen said other networking companies would have spent at least that long to approve the

project.

“We can stop a lot of the ongoing activity to focus on the customer,” he said. “With small companies, one difference you see is we are agile, very nimble.”

A10 Networks Inc.

+667.53%

Headquarters: San Jose

CEO: Lee Chen

2007 revenue: \$2.3 million

2008 revenue: \$3.8 million

2009 revenue: \$17.4 million

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