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Rocket Fuel Inc. Adds MIT Internet Pioneer to Executive Staff
Mark Torrance appointed as the company's Chief Technology Officer

REDWOOD SHORES, CA, April 15, 2010 – [Rocket Fuel Inc.](#) today announced the appointment of Mark Torrance as the company's Chief Technology Officer. Torrance studied Artificial Intelligence at Stanford and MIT, where in 1994 he left his PhD and academic career behind to blaze a trail of entrepreneurship on the newly-emerging World Wide Web.

"I started StockMaster.com as a hobby, then traffic quickly grew and we became the largest stock quote site on the planet," says Torrance, whose startup was one of the first and largest customers of the DoubleClick ad network. "Eventually MIT told me to get my own servers, and I realized I had accidentally become CEO of a successful business."

"As a publisher and advertiser in the 1990s, I felt that the nascent industry of online display advertising really lacked the tools and technologies to leverage what should have been natural efficiencies in this new medium," says Torrance. "Oddly things haven't changed that much in the last ten years. Publishers still fret over monetization options, and media buyers still optimize campaigns largely manually, although exchanges now make this easier. The technology team at Rocket Fuel is building exactly the kind of rocket science for automated campaign management and optimization that I missed as an advertiser, and exactly the technology that I'm personally very excited about given my background in AI and Robotics, and the opportunities I see to boost the effectiveness of online advertising with these technologies."

It's good news and bad news for Rocket Fuel's CEO George John, who says, "Mark and I spent many all-nighters hacking code together at Stanford, fueled by Domino's pizzas and Cokes, and pretty quickly I realized he was a lot smarter than me. As CEO you're always trying to hire great people such that you become the dumbest person in the office, and Mark's addition marks a bittersweet success in this regard."

John and Torrance both studied under Nils Nilsson, a Professor Emeritus of Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence at Stanford, who is also an investor in Rocket Fuel. His ground-breaking work in the 1960s drove seminal research in autonomous robotics, computer vision, machine learning, planning, and heuristic search.

"If you've ever gotten driving directions from your car's navigation system or an online map, you've used technology developed by Nils," says John. "We used to think of that as artificial intelligence, then when it became commonplace everybody started thinking it was quite natural for a computer to tell you how to get somewhere."

For his part, Nilsson is happy that the two former students have re-united, but he has other ideas about what they should be doing. "The trouble with all these startups is that today's AI technology really works, and Stanford alumni like Larry and Sergey or George and Mark get distracted by running successful businesses, which lures some of the brightest AI researchers away from solving the great problem of developing human-level artificial intelligence," said Nils Nilsson.

Torrance's addition will accelerate the company's core technology development around predictive modeling and optimization for real-time bidding. Torrance will join Abhinav Gupta, vice president of engineering and co-founder of Rocket Fuel, as the engineering leadership team.

"Abhinav and Mark are excellent technologists and leaders with complementary backgrounds and styles," says John. "I look forward to a great ride with the two of them driving our respective efforts in systems and sciences."

About Rocket Fuel Inc.

Rocket Fuel Inc. is the company bringing rocket science to online display advertising. The company provides turnkey media and campaign management to deliver better results faster for major agencies and brand advertisers like Infiniti and Lord & Taylor. Unlike self-serve platforms that burden media teams with learning new tools and executing complex campaigns manually, they make it easier – not harder – for advertisers to efficiently find and buy their target audiences. And unlike ad networks whose value-add is in a cobbled collection of sites or audiences, Rocket Fuel's data-driven advertising technology builds a custom campaign-specific audience model and automatically tunes campaigns to an advertiser's key metrics – whether their objectives are brand-oriented or performance driven. If you can measure it, Rocket Fuel can optimize it. The Silicon Valley-based company was founded by veterans from Yahoo!, DoubleClick, Epiphany and salesforce.com. For more information visit www.rocketfuelinc.com.

Contacts:

Brian Ferrario
Rocket Fuel Inc.
bferrario@rocketfuelinc.com
650.595.1300, x305

Mandy Kakavas
Horn Group Inc. for Rocket Fuel Inc.
mandy@horngroup.com
415.905.4015

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