



● You don't need much grey hair to be an old man in a young industry. A masters degree in electrical engineering at Stanford University in the early 1990s, a stint with Sun Microsystems on the first virtual computers and starting and then selling his web applications company to Google makes Anthony Glenning a seasoned entrepreneur in the internet business.

As an investment director focusing on cloud computing applications, Glenning has returned to Australia to help investment firm Starfish Ventures identify the next wave of web-based technology.

"The concept of utility computing and cloud computing has been around a lot longer than a lot of people realise," Glenning says. "Sun Microsystems were real pioneers in this respect. One of the key features of the technology they were developing in the 1990s was that the network was the computer. They had a very strong vision way before it was popular."

During his time at Sun Microsystems, Glenning began working on what was then referred to as a Java workstation, an early stage web-based computer that let the user draw on data and software located in remote servers. He saw the potential of the then little known area of web applications, in which both the software and data is on the internet.

"When I was working in Sun, I got a real passion for web applications, so when I left in 1998 I founded Tonic Systems to provide a web-based presentation application, like PowerPoint, except that the software and data is located online, not on the end-user's computer," Glenning explains.

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He founded Tonic Systems in 1999 and survived the dotcom implosion, developing the company and building a user base until 2007, when he sold it to Google. The software was integrated into Google's online corporate software – Google Docs.

"I had been living in Australia since 2002 but then I went back to California to work in the Googleplex in Mountain View to help to transfer the technology developed in Tonic Systems into Google Docs," Glenning says. "I've really worked through the whole evolution of cloud computing since the first network computer project I worked on at Sun, but it wasn't until 2007 that I heard the term 'cloud computing'."

Glenning says the proliferation of mobile computing devices and broadband internet access in the past two years has helped the industry develop to the point where applications that once seemed futuristic are now being widely adopted.

He's keen to use what he's learned over the past decade to make it easier for the next generation of Australian internet entrepreneurs to get financial backing to develop their ideas locally.

"One of the reasons I left Australia was that the opportunities to work with rapidly evolving technology industry just didn't exist at the time," Glenning says. "Now that I'm back, I'm keen to ensure that the opportunities which weren't there in the 1990s for internet technology are available to the current generation of software developers because the opportunities in terms of cloud computing are vast." **BRW**

Interview: Jeanne-Vida Douglas

Tony Glenning

Starfish Ventures

Position	Investment director
Milestones	1990s: Masters degree in electrical engineering
	1992: Hired by Sun Microsystems
	1999: Founds Tonic Systems
	2007: Sells Tonic Systems to Google
	2010: Joins Starfish Ventures

LIFECYCLE: MENTORING

Successful entrepreneur promotes internet opportunities