



There is no royal road to anything. One thing at a time and all things in succession. That which grows fast withers as rapidly; and that which grows slowly endures.

~ Josiah Gilbert Holland (1819-1881) ~

Fonteva, Inc. Founder and CEO Jerry C. Huskins and His Sure-and-Steady Strategy

Perhaps Jerry Huskins had Josiah Gilbert Holland's words of wisdom in mind as he set out to build Fonteva, or maybe he knew instinctively how to take an idea, map out different scenarios, and follow the surest and steadiest path to success.

Incorporated in 2010 and headquartered in Arlington, Virginia, Fonteva, Inc. builds applications on the Salesforce.com platform, helping member-based organizations (such as industry associations, user groups and college alumni departments) grow and prosper. Fonteva itself has grown to 50+ employees, serving more than 90 customers, with projected 2015 revenue of \$10 million.

Along with co-founders Paul Lundy and Mac Anderson (president and chief technology officer, respectively), Huskins is standing on the edge of a new beginning. A firm believer in the concept of building a healthy company before seeking investors, Huskins nodded approvingly and smiled when shown a quote from Daymond John (*Inc.* magazine, "What Happened to Shark Tank's 10 Biggest Winners," May 2015): "I want my money to be used to fuel the car, not make it." Huskins always knew he wanted to first design and build the car and put in a healthy amount of gas, and only then ask for cash to fuel it for the long haul.

There is no royal road to anything. Indeed.

For Huskins, it has been a journey of a dozen years, and then some. He was educated as a CPA and employed early on by Ernst & Young. Huskins left E & Y and started a business-services consultancy leveraging his financial background. Along the way, he became razor-focused on Salesforce.com, a cloud-based CRM platform and, in 2003, became one of the first Salesforce-certified administrators east of the Mississippi (and among the first 50 in the U.S.). This was back when Salesforce was a company with just 150 U.S. employees; by comparison, Salesforce today employs 10,100 in the U.S.

Within a few years of starting his consulting firm and after several acquisitions, the company that is today known as Astadia grew to become one of the largest Salesforce partners. As the partnership and the Salesforce platform evolved, Huskins began to perceive a need for industry-specific applications built on the Salesforce.com platform. As he continued building his brain about software as a service (SAAS) and the cloud-based Salesforce environment, he began formulating his plan to further harness the technology and build vertical market applications on the Salesforce platform.

By 2009, Huskins was on the hunt for someone to help him build a software company. Using LinkedIn (this was a few years before LinkedIn became the revved-up recruiting engine it is today), he found and became reacquainted with Paul Lundy, who had co-founded a software company built around the eBay eco-system and whom Huskins had known during his consulting days. At Huskins' urging, Lundy became a certified Salesforce administrator, and together the two formed Fonteva and began offering Salesforce consulting services to nonprofits. Shortly thereafter, they decided to focus on building the first member-based application on the platform. They called it MemberNation and began targeting trade and professional associations.

Cash infusion from Huskins and other personal sacrifices.

Based in Atlanta, both men quickly realized that a relocation to the Washington, D.C. area would be necessary if they wanted to be geographically appealing to their target audience of associations. This would mean a sacrifice for both men, given that Atlanta had been home for more than 20 years. Huskins' daughter was just beginning her sophomore year in high school, and Lundy and his wife were active in Atlanta and also enjoyed spending most weekends at their lake house in northeast Georgia, two hours from Atlanta.

In those first few months in business, with Huskins investing his own cash to finance the operation, he and Lundy worked long hours and shared a one-bedroom apartment in Arlington (Huskins, able to sleep anywhere, took the sofa). Once they were confident that the company was on the right track, they graduated to a two-bedroom – with a view of the Washington Monument and the Potomac. Most weekends, Lundy headed to Georgia, where his wife remained.



Fonteva CEO Jerry Huskins, right, with President Paul Lundy, treating the team to Friday Happy Hour

First Anniversary, First Milestones

Nine months in, what would turn into an 18-month customer engagement with a large nonprofit was providing enough cash flow to push Fonteva forward. Five Fonteva consultants were now on-site full time at the client's location, building custom applications and delivering consulting services and end-user training, the cash flow from which helped propel Fonteva toward its first milestone: hiring its first full time developer who could focus exclusively on building MemberNation. Huskins once again turned to LinkedIn to identify and recruit a highly experienced Salesforce MVP named Mac Anderson. Anderson quickly proved himself to be a special talent and so impressed Huskins and Lundy that they agreed to make him a co-founder.

By the time Fonteva's second anniversary rolled around, they had attracted the attention of Tim Burke, who had been selling Association Management Software (AMS) for over 15 years. He had heard about Fonteva through his work with industry associations and recognized immediately that Fonteva's association management software product, MemberNation, was a winner. Once on board, Burke spent his first few months helping Anderson understand what functionality needed to be included in MemberNation to successfully compete for association business. Burke soon engaged Fonteva's very first customer, which the company continues to serve.

Years Three and Four

While president and marketing chief Lundy and sales director Burke were out acquiring new customers, and technology chief Anderson and his growing team were continuing to build new functionality into MemberNation, Huskins was using his natural-born instincts to identify, attract and nurture additional team members. He envisioned a larger workspace to suit their growing needs and committed to a 5-year lease. He built out a bright, open, and well-furnished environment – complete with lots of freebies, including coffee and other drinks, snacks, a smoothie bar, happy hours and team events.

Huskins' leadership and vision are constantly on display both in and out of the office. In the office, he meets frequently with his leadership team to ensure alignment around key initiatives and leads the monthly all-hands company meeting (now 50-plus employees). Out of the office, he travels extensively to establish and refine partner relationships; visit prospective customers; and meet with potential investment partners and board advisors, expressing to all his readiness to put Fonteva in high gear.

5-Year Anniversary

In its fifth full year of existence, Fonteva is by no means on easy street. The company's employees are still in the trenches. Some are heavily involved in business-development campaigns, while others are helping build functionality and adding enhancements to MemberNation. Still others provide implementation and support to existing customers. And soon the company will hire a full-time HR person who will be tasked with bringing in two to three new hires every 60 days.

Today, in everyone's apparent full-on rush to accomplish great things, Josiah Gilbert Holland's words of wisdom and Fonteva's example should strike a chord with start-ups. *Forbes* contributor on entrepreneurship and start-up advisor Alex Lawrence agrees with a steady-growth approach. On *Forbes.com* (July 23 2012), he posits: "There is something to be said for building a business on customer money versus investor money. However, there is an interesting option that comes out of businesses funded by customer revenue – investors love them! If you want to raise money down the road, having a business that is already succeeding is the best way I've ever seen to do so."

Josiah Gilbert Holland was a physician-teacher-editor-novelist-publisher who may have been referring to himself when he said, "That which grows slowly endures." He didn't seem to find his footing until late in his life, despite all his best efforts. Having dropped out of high school due to illness, he somehow managed to make it through medical school. When the practice of medicine didn't work out, he tried his hand at teaching. After a couple of years, he quit teaching and took an editorial position with a newspaper. But he persevered, despite the missteps, and ultimately found success as an author of nonfiction books, historical novels, literary novels, short stories, and poems. And when he collaborated with Charles Scribner to publish Scribner's Monthly, he also found success as a publisher.