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30 Under 30

David Brown, NetLabs

St. Louis Business Journal - July 15, 2005 by [Lene Johansen](#)

In the three years since Scottish-born David Brown settled in St. Louis with his wife, Meg, he has become entrenched in St. Louis' business and civic communities through his leadership of **NetLabs** and involvement with local charities.

Brown, 28, earned a bachelor's degree in information systems engineering from Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, in 1998. He was worked for Oracle in London, Chicago and Washington, D.C., before he and his wife decided to move to St. Louis, her hometown.

"The entrepreneurial climate here is good," Brown said. "There are plenty of support systems. It would not be the same if I had done this in Chicago or D.C."

Brown wanted to start his own company and pursued a joint MBA/master of information management at Washington University. He worked part time as a consultant for NetLabs, a local network consulting company, in 2004.

Brown's father-in-law, St. Louis businessman Paul McKee Jr., asked Brown to help him review NetLabs as a possible investment in the spring of 2004. The two agreed the company held potential and acquired parts of the firm for \$2 million from founder David Sandel last year.

Since then Brown has been responsible for growing the company from five employees to 14, and restructuring the business into two separate organizations: consulting organization Fusiva and data storage firm Datotel.

"He encourages participation and debate in order to build a consensus," said Gina Hoagland, president of Collaborative Strategies. Hoagland consults with NetLabs on organization development.

Brown was involved with the Boy Scouts while in Scotland and knew he wanted to be involved with a youth development project in St. Louis. He is on the United Way of Greater St. Louis' GenNext and allocation committees, and also joined the board of South Side Day Nursery.

"David asks the right questions, looks at the whole picture, and works with the staff and the board to find the best options for us," said South Side's chief executive, Marlene Levine.

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