



## The Origins of NI

*This article has been updated from the version I wrote in 2001. Some of the ideas in this article originally appeared in National Instruments' (NI) internal newsletter in the 80's around the company's 10-year anniversary. I did quite a bit of research to find the article, then made changes to it and got it up to date for the internal newsletter's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition. I decided the article was best written from the perspective of our founder, Dr. James Truchard (or simply "Dr. T") so I wrote it and got him to approve it before it was published.*

It's no secret that one of the most successful companies in the country started with some guys in a garage in the mid-70's. While the employees who have been around since near the beginning (and there are quite a few!) may realize National Instruments started that way, too, the newer employees may need a refresher on the origins of NI.

Jeff Kodosky, Bill Nowlin, and I were working together in the Applied Research Laboratories at UT Austin doing research for the Navy. We loved what we were doing but man was the technology we were using slow. We got to thinking that we could probably come up with something faster.

The first hurdle we had to get over in my garage in 1976 was coming up with a name for our new company. Just about everything we came up with was either already in use (Texas Instruments), contained words that might get us sued by UT (Longhorn Instruments), or just sounded weird (Texas Digital). Finally, we agreed we had to look to a future bigger than Texas and just call ourselves National Instruments.

Once we had a name, we got a loan. We took to the phones and made cold call after cold call until we got Kelly Air Force Base to take us seriously enough to give us a contract. Our first order of business with our newfound wealth was to hire someone to do all our office work, Kim Harrison-Hosen, who is still with us today! In 1978 we rented our first office. By 1980, we were all finally able to quit our day jobs. By 1983 we had outgrown our original office and moved twice!

From that point on we've had more products and more successes, but one thing has stayed the same – I have loved coming to work every single day because I'm surrounded by smart, hard-working, fun-loving people! I never could have imagined our beautiful office and grounds and all the great people I would get to meet because of what Jeff, Bill, and I started in my garage in the 70's. I'm so proud of the culture and community we've built here at NI and I can't wait to see where the next 25 years take us!

-Dr. T

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