

**Award Winner of Tech Company of the Year, Mindgrub Strives to be the Pioneer of Information Transfer through Creative and Technical Expertise in Mobile Application Development, Web Development and Social Media**

**Business Services  
Technology Innovation**

**Mindgrub**  
640 Frederick Road  
Baltimore, MD 21228  
410-0988-2444  
www.mindgrub.com



**Todd Marks  
CEO**

**BIO:** Todd Marks is the teacher-turned-technologist founder of Mindgrub Technologies, the first Innovation Technology Agency of its kind. Based in Baltimore, Mindgrub, a mobile, social and web applications consultancy, works with companies and organizations in a variety of industries to bring their brand to mobile while offering creative and technical services, a proprietary white-label location-based services, augmented reality, and mobile gaming framework.

Marks maintains status as Chief-Everything-Officer for the company. He leads information architects, user experience specialists, creative interface designers and top-notch developers to solve business and consumer

challenges in rapid information transfer. Marks founded Mindgrub in 2002 to focus on the creation of web applications that enable instant information travel and has developed enterprise systems for a wide range of clients such as DELL, Yamaha, Adobe, Motorola, ORACLE, A&E, The Economist and Discovery Communications; Federal Agencies such as the FBI, NSA, VOA and the US Navy; and several education organizations such as MSDE, Wrox Press and O'Reilly Media.

Marks has been featured in several technical journals and mainstream media outlets, such as the Baltimore Business Journal, The Baltimore Sun, CNN and Newsweek. He speaks regularly at conferences, and has made recent appearances at NABShow, SXSW, TEDxBaltimore, SALT and the Government Video Show. He and Mindgrub have won numerous awards for their technology solutions and creative services support including CRTC's Tech Company of the Year a Gold Addy for Best Mobile App, Smart CEO's Top 100 Companies and Best Innovator awards, and the BBJ's Biz Buzz Award for Best Mobile App. Marks has also written and contributed to a number of books including Flash Magic, New Masters of Flash and Web Design in a Nutshell. He teaches Instructional Technology at the University of Maryland (UMBC) and sits on the advisory boards for Loyola University's MBA program and the Greater Baltimore Technology Council (gb.tc).

**About Mindgrub:**

A new breed of agency, Mindgrub Technologies fuses creative and technical expertise in Mobile Application

Development, Web Development and Social Media. We are visionaries and workhorses, dreamers and doers. We find and implement technology solutions for enterprises with technologies such as iPhone/iPad, Android and Drupal, that strive to be pioneers in information transfer. Serving both domestic and international clients, Mindgrub is headquartered in Baltimore, Maryland with offices in Boston, Washington, DC, Philadelphia, PA and New York, NY.

**Interview conducted by:  
Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor  
CEOCFO Magazine**

**CEOCFO:** Mr. Marks, would you tell us about Mindgrub Technologies?

**Mr. Marks:** Mindgrub is a consultancy that produces mobile, social and web applications.

**CEOCFO:** What is a concept that sets Mindgrub apart?

**Mr. Marks:** We operate similar to a traditional agency that might produce radio, print and TV. We are not too unlike a digital agency that might dabble in brochure websites, ad campaigns and interactive media. We produce hardcore engineering things—mobile apps, mobile games, highly interactive web applications and social media integration.

**CEOCFO:** What is the key to being innovative in this field?

**Mr. Marks:** You need to know where the next paradigm shifts are going to happen, where the disruption is and what is going to be technologically innovative in the marketplace. Then you can start doing some early R&D

and product testing while people are at the early adoption phase and you are poised to capitalize on that market when it hits the early majority. We are constantly in our Mindgrub labs group doing R&D with writing software that we think it going to capitalize on the next hardware paradigm shift. When it happens we are there ready to provide that service to our clients and blow it out.

**CEOCFO:** How does Mindgrub assess the value of new ideas?

**Mr. Marks:** I started as an educator and I have always been attuned to what the end needs of a user are in terms of learning information as well as how to teach and distribute that information. Because I am hyperfocused and attuned to how people learn and teach, I have been able to watch shifts in hardware and software to know how those changes are going to facilitate teaching and learning. Therefore, we are able to make some predictions on which of those different changes are going to be the most valuable to that teaching and learning experience.

**CEOCFO:** Did you expect that your teaching background would be so helpful?

**Mr. Marks:** I had no idea that it would be helpful, whatsoever. I was a teacher and thrilled with learning. During the time I was teaching in the late 90s, when the Internet took off, it was obvious that the Internet was going to be a great platform for teaching and learning. Therefore, I quit my day job, waited tables at night and started my first company in my basement.

**CEOCFO:** Is there a common thread amongst Mindgrub's clients?

**Mr. Marks:** We are really cross-industry. We end up working with CEOs of well-funded startups and the software we write for them is largely their product that they then push to market. We work with the chief marketing officers of large organizations because they want brand awareness or want to sell direct consumer products. Therefore, they leverage the technology we product as

part of a marketing campaign. We also work with CTOs and CIOs that are looking for us to provide an application that might be a utility app for a salesperson or for an end user or support team. We work with big decision makers because they are the ones who have authority over the budget to do more innovative things. It is cross-industry: education, government, Fortune 500 and philanthropic organizations.

**CEOCFO:** How is Mindgrub transforming game development?

**Mr. Marks:** Gaming itself used to be exclusively for the console and later the desktop market. There was a huge paradigm shift to mobile. When it went to mobile, the toolset changed to create those mobile applications or games. The publisher also moved out of the equation; it enables you to self-publish through the iTunes and Google Play stores. There was a lot of disruption in creating games. As an innovation agency, we are able to

**"We received the Tech Company of the Year award."**

**- Todd Marks**

quickly learn about new technologies. We saw that there was disruption in the marketplace when gaming went to mobile. We are good at learning how to do things fast so we are able to learn these new tools to produce mobile games. The buyer also changed—instead of the big publishers that were making games for consoles, the buyer became the Fortune 500 organizations, education institutions and philanthropic organizations. The buyer changed, the toolset changed and the publication method changed. As an innovation agency, we are able to get in there and become one of the premiere B2B service providers of branded games. We also put out some of our own titles to keep building our portfolio and capabilities and ideally be a Rovio and make an Angry Birds of our own down the road. Right now, we are building branded games for our clients.

**CEOCFO:** Do clients typically understand the difference in Mindgrub's approach?

**Mr. Marks:** As a teacher, when I am

talking with clients I am constantly assessing the problems that they have, either in marketing, sales or customer support. As we are having this dialogue, they keep reiterating their problem set. Every time they introduce a problem, we are very quick to provide a solution to the point where they almost feel like they are stepping up to an oracle who can figure out how to solve all these difficult technological problems. Otherwise, those technological problems have been milling around for years and they have not been able to find a good service provider who can offer such well-crafted and architected solutions. Much of our work is through referrals and through the initial meet-and-greet solution sell. It is all incoming, we do not have any sales force and it is really our work product that speaks for ourselves and our ability to produce that work.

**CEOCFO:** What are the highlights of the awards Mindgrub has received?

**Mr. Marks:** We received a couple recent ones that are very nice. We received the Tech Company of the Year award by the Chesapeake

Regional Tech Council and that is the largest technical membership organization in the state of Maryland. They recognized a number of different categories: from rising star, innovator, to the top tech companies. They recognized the top newer tech companies in the state of Maryland that includes the DC, Northern Virginia area. It is a huge accolade to win that Top Tech Company award because it puts us out on top in the state of Maryland between Baltimore and DC. The Baltimore Business Journal did a feature on mobile application companies and we happened to win the number 1 place for top mobile agency in this region. Thirdly, the ADDY Awards put together a mobile category. We are an engineering group and try to position ourselves as an innovation agency, hence we should be applying for things like ADDY Awards but we also got a gold ADDY Award for one of the mobile applications that we developed. Along with pioneering the development of these engineering products, we seem

to be the pioneers in achieving new, innovative award categories.

**CEO CFO:** What is ahead for Mindgrub?

**Mr. Marks:** The next big hardware shift is going to be moving from smartphones to more embedded computing. It could be in your car dashboard or car display or it could be like Google Glass, where you are wearing a heads-up-display in front of your eyes. There will also be more utilization in speech recognition and working with companies like Nuance. We have still been limited to the screen; the next big change is when we stop using the screen and decouple it from the processor. So the screen could be your car dashboard, glasses, Google TV or mall kiosks and all of those are the presentation layer but the computing itself is maybe your smartphone which is mitigated to your pocket only at that point.

**CEO CFO:** Is your team complete?

**Mr. Marks:** We have been hiring constantly and have been doubling every year. In the last year, we have gone from 10 to 20 and now we are almost 50. If we keep it up, we will be another 50 this year, although we are trying to make sure that our growth is

sustainable. We will probably be another 20 to 30 in this next year. We have a very good internal recruiter that is making it happen. Eventually, we will need to exceed our capacity to keep hiring.

**CEO CFO:** What are the intangibles, beyond technical skills, that you look for in people?

**Mr. Marks:** We are a lifestyle, culture-based business. We skateboard between our offices and we all wear shorts and sandals. We have catered lunches and a game space with Ping Pong and foosball. We are really looking for employees that are going to be a part of the family. They are largely optimistic, entrepreneurial critical thinkers and creatives who ultimately fit in with our culture and lifestyle. We need to find both exceptionally bright and talented designers and developers but also ones that are a great culture fit who will be a part of our extended family.

**CEO CFO:** Why should the business and investment communities pay attention to Mindgrub?

**Mr. Marks:** We are a new-fangled type of agency that is working independently from the traditional business models, processes and

parent company organizations of the older agencies. We are very innovative in terms of the products we make and especially the way that we are almost industry creators. We speak at a number of upcoming events. We spoke at the National Association of Broadcasters conference in April and also at Interop in May. We are putting together an EdTech, one-day conference on innovations and education technology in New York in July along with a couple other gaming conferences in the summer and fall. Keep checking our website for all the places Mindgrub is exhibiting or speaking.

**CEO CFO:** As Mindgrub has developed, what has surprised you most?

**Mr. Marks:** That we, as a services company, get the hockey stick effect where instead of adding a fixed amount of resources every year, we have been doubling. The doubling makes our growth exponential at this point.



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