

storey house, the company has come a long way from humble beginnings in 2003.

"I scribbled the idea down on the side of a newspaper on a Sunday afternoon, went off and bought colouring pens, looked at my drawings and thought 'this thing has legs'", Kieran said.

Turning those legs into a product meant working closely with Dr Andy Barr from Marturion, a Lisburn company which develops high-tech medical devices.

"The fit with Marturion works perfectly but it wasn't a straightforward process. I wanted it to do certain things, I knew where I wanted the product to go but I didn't know how we'd get there."

"But after working on it for some time I remember getting a call from Andy to say he had cracked the technology."

With the technology worked out, it was on with getting the product out in the market. An initial trade mission with Invest NI to Boston was the first contact with the US and since then the country has become the biggest potential market for Lightstep's products. But as word has spread, interest in the technology has emerged throughout the world and throughout many different industries.

For instance, it's currently in discussion with one of the largest coal producers in India which, with 3,000 kilometres of underground tunnels, is another huge potential customer.

"It's not just a product for buildings," said Andrea. "We're looking at mines, aircraft, airports, trains, and ships."

While initially publicity shy, Lightstep has now embraced all forms of marketing, in particular e-marketing through the likes of Twitter and Facebook.

"We had an international launch on October 1 2009 and since then the coverage has been astounding," said Andrea. "It's been a really effective way to get the Lightstep name out to a global audience plus it's a great way for shareholders to hear what's going on with the company. We can see increased traffic to our website and general enquiries through this medium."

Kieran starts most of his enthusiastic stories with "we, the team, here at Lightstep..."

It's easy to see the levels of enthusiasm in all of the team and why this has become such a huge success in a relatively short period of time. The culture and the spirit which has grown in the company is best described as 'the best available... plus one!'

While there is no direct competition, industry leaders in the field of emergency alert systems are obviously cottoning on to the huge gap in the market Lightstep is filling. To protect their copyright, Lightstep has nine patents against the technology and Kieran reckons they have a 24-month development advantage.

"This company has gotten so big, so quickly," he said. "It's amazing how quickly a simple idea became potentially Northern Ireland's biggest company."

