

Energy & Environment | Wildnote



Kristen Hazard, founder and CEO of the Wildnote app, center, works with her team primarily out of the SLO HotHouse, through the Cal Poly Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

Her software for PG&E helped launch her own operation

By Chris Officer
Staff Writer

After her software helped a San Francisco utility colossus run more efficiently, the Cal Poly San Luis Obispo graduate returned back to her hometown on the Central Coast, this time to launch an app that helps the important, but often archaic environmental data collection space.

CEO Kristen Hazard, who developed an environmental reporting app for Pacific Gas and Electric to manage the Topaz Solar Farm, a 550 megawatt photovoltaic power station in San Luis Obispo, is now knee-deep in her own startup, Wildnote. The company is pitching a mobile data collection and reporting platform software app she says is the "best in-class app for environmental conservation." Its aim is to help researchers collecting, managing, analyzing and reporting data get more organized.

Hazard said Wildnote breaks down into four components.

"The first is like a Survey Monkey for environmental compliance," she said. "Every project is different, and we create a completely flexible survey form designer."

Users then sync the survey form onto their mobile device via its cloud-based

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WILDNOTE

No. of employees: 10

Innovators: Founder, CEO

Kristen Hazard

Headquarters:

San Luis Obispo

Technology: Cloud-based, Software-as-a-Service app for environmental data collection

Website:

www.wildnoteapp.com

platform. Once back online, information can be placed back to the web app where data, photos, drop-pin points, all can be reviewed and managed.

The final component, Hazard said, was the exporting of the collected and managed data onto a PDF, which packages everything up for a presentation with more efficacy.

The Wildnote app essentially takes en-

vironmental researchers' notepads, pens, pencils, tape recorders and tosses them in the trash. Instead, it consolidates their data collecting tools in one simple app. The problem however, Hazard said, is convincing old-school environmental researchers to make the transition to technology.

"It's been a much bigger transition than we anticipated making the change from paper to digital," she said. "A couple of reasons for that I think is a lot of people are still going to use their notepad and cameras, because that's how they've always done it. That's where we come in. We can help that transition. We help them through the process."

Another aspect Wildnote said it is doing is listening to its customers. As a startup, Hazard admits that its app isn't 100 percent complete. She said the company relies on customer critique and "when really big customers ask to add a feature, we do it."

And despite being an early-stage startup, Wildnote has some high-profile clients. PG&E still uses the software, along with multinational engineering firm Aecom.

"We are still very much a startup," Hazard said. "We're up to 20 paying custom-

ers and 500 surveys submitted a week."

According to Wildnote's website, app prices are dictated by the number of licenses and upgraded features used, which can range anywhere from \$50 a month for small businesses with minimal data collection needs, to large-scale operations which can run close to \$50,000 annually for up to 100 licenses. Wildnote also just introduced a pay-as-you-play plan, where users pay by how much they use the system, and not by how many users they have.

Wildnote recently finished an angel round investment of \$250,000, Hazard said, adding she has also invested quite a bit of her own capital into the startup, as well.

Operating out of the SLO HotHouse and Cal Poly Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Wildnote currently has of 10 employees, finding talent wherever it can.

"We even had two recent hires we found through Craigslist," Hazard said. "Which I was super surprised with."

But Hazard, 49, said the company utilizes online and video conferencing, so most of the time work is done remotely.

"One of our company values is freedom," she said. "We love working at home."