

## Aethon: Small Team Doing Something Big

**University of Pittsburgh graduate George Lucas, 26, has real spirit. Entrepreneurial spirit, that is. Lucas opted to stay in Pittsburgh after graduating in 2004 and immediately found work with a small startup web development company. In 2005, he began working at Aethon, another startup that is now the nation's leader in robotic delivery solutions for hospitals.**

For Lucas, size is the most appealing part of working for an early-stage company. "There's some risk in working for a smaller company," he says, "but I know for a fact that that there's an even greater potential for reward. And here my actions and decisions have a greater impact on the company as a whole." Lucas is one of about 70 employees at Aethon, which was founded in 2001.

### ***TUG—The Automated Robot Courier System***

Aethon's principle technology is the TUG®—an automated robot courier system. TUG robots can deliver meals, medications, supplies and equipment to nursing staff throughout a hospital. One TUG can haul up to 500 pounds and transport a wide variety of hospital carts. Hospital workers simply load or attach a delivery cart to the TUG, select the destination and push "go." TUGs remember the layout of a facility and navigate to their destinations with no human intervention.



George Lucas, Aethon

TUG enables hospitals to improve staff efficiency and satisfaction, decrease equipment rentals and improve regulatory compliance, leading to a better overall patient experience and return on investment. Currently, more than 100 hospitals throughout the United States employ customized Aethon solutions, allowing them to reallocate human staff to focus on the patient instead of tracking and retrieving supplies and equipment. The company currently holds the enviable position of being the only company in the world with this innovative technology.

### ***Ben Franklin Investment Propels Aethon Forward***

Aethon credits the start of its forward momentum to the assistance of Ben Franklin Technology Partners, which invested \$800,000 in early-stage assistance. Beyond their own investment, BFTP's involvement in a company often gives outside venture capital firms the confidence to invest. Recently, Aethon raised \$6.6 million in investment funding for further development of TUG and its systems. To date, Aethon has raised a total of \$40 million in venture capital since BFTP's initial investment.

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—George Lucas, Software Engineer, Aethon

### ***A Chance to Grow and Evolve***

As Lucas's professional experience grew, his role evolved. Today he is a software engineer, working hands-on with the robots themselves, including navigation and communication.

"The constant inflow of new responsibilities has developed my innovative and creative sides to new levels," he says. "It's a good feeling to know you are a part of a small team of engineers doing something big, something nobody else has ever attempted."

Working for an entrepreneurial company has also given Lucas an insight into business principles that he might not have gained by working with a larger, less personal company.

"Spending numerous hours at many different hospitals around the country, I see firsthand the impact our products have on our customers," he says. "A company needs to listen to what the consumers are saying in order to grow, evolve and be successful. Aethon is listening."

### ***Efficiency and Cost-Savings Through Automation***

Aethon recently revamped TUG's entire elevator communication system, making it faster and easier for TUGs to travel unaided through hospitals to their delivery destination. Lucas aided in this project, including improving the cameras that TUGs use in navigating busy hospital hallways, rooms and elevators.

Aethon is currently placing heavy emphasis on its MedEx "chain of custody" technology that allows a hospital pharmacy to know the real-time location and status of medications throughout the facility. MedEx automatically creates an electronic chain-of-custody receipt (person, location, date/time) indicating when an item is placed in and removed from the TUG. The system improves regulatory compliance and solves one of the most prevalent and frustrating operational problems in hospitals today—missing medications.

With a strong foothold in this niche industry, Aethon's outlook is rosy. In addition to the lucrative healthcare market, Aethon is planning to apply its core technology in other industries in the future.

But for Lucas, success has a more personal note. "I love the freedom to innovate. My projects change daily and I like that variety. And because Aethon is still a young company, new ideas are always welcome here."