

Executive Profile

Digital license plate entrepreneur got government buy-in

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In 2008, [Neville Boston](#) thought to himself: Why is everything on a car smart except for the license plate?

It led to him working to develop and get state approvals for a digital license plate, the Rplate.

Boston worked on the idea for nearly a decade before he got the first digital plates on the road. Much of that period was self-funded and with support from friends and family.

He founded Granite Bay-based ReviverMX Inc. to develop the digital plates, which are now being installed on cars at a growing number of dealerships in California.

In addition to looking cool, the Rplate solves problems both for the public and the Department of Motor Vehicles. For the consumer, it means they don't have to go to the DMV, and their annual tags get renewed automatically. For the department that handles vehicle registration in various states, it means they don't have to send out tags.

But Boston had skeptics.

"I can't tell you how many people told me, 'You will never get anyone at the DMV to let you do that,'" he said.

Boston agreed that he was "asking them to do something outside of their wheelhouse," but he also believes that "states and state employees don't get enough credit for being creative and innovative."

It turns out, employees at revenue, motor vehicle and law enforcement departments at various states saw the benefits of the digital plates pretty early on, Boston said.

"I realized that it is OK to work with the government. It is not scary. You have to be willing to work with them, and don't look at them as the enemy. Our approach to them was: 'How can we help you?'" he said.

The timing was fortuitous, Boston said, because in California, the DMV was looking for ways to get more connected with technology in 2008, about the time he approached the department. He founded the company the next year.

Unlike Uber, which offered its ride-hailing service and then waited to see how various jurisdictions would react, Boston went to the state first.

"The fact that we talked with the DMV before we started was helpful. It was the same with law enforcement," he said.

"I have to agree 100% that many tech entrepreneurs avoid working with government," said [Louis Stewart](#), the former chief innovation officer with Sacramento's Office of Innovation and Economic Development. During former Gov. [Arnold Schwarzenegger](#)'s second term, Stewart was appointed to executive positions at the state, including public affairs officer with the DMV and then as deputy director with the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development, also known as GO-Biz.

"Neville has had a whole lot of success working with government," Stewart said.

While Stewart was working for the city of Sacramento, some city fleet vehicles got Reviver Rplates.

Reviver's Rplate Pro includes a variety of geotracking, geofencing and mileage and speed metric features that can help commercial fleet operators track their vehicles.

Reviver is seeing its sales rise with car dealers for private owners, but Stewart said the potential for fleet managers and rental car companies to get data about their vehicles could also grow into a big piece of business. "It could be a game changer," he said.

The Rplate allows users to customize the plate, add messages and choose light on dark or dark on light. The plates also allow people to monitor their car even when it's parked, including motion detection and geolocation. Reviver is working on more advanced options like paying bridge tolls and parking tickets. The plates also have a feature that announces that the car is stolen.

Reviver had sold a total of 4,000 Rplates by the end of 2020. With dealerships installing the plates on new cars, Reviver doubled that number by spring this year. It was selling more than 2,000 Rplates a month earlier this year, but inventory shortages of cars have slowed sales. That has held sales of Rplates to between 1,000 and 1,500 a month.

Boston was born in Brooklyn, New York, to parents who immigrated from Guyana, the English-speaking former British colony in South America. Both his parents worked in the medical field. He grew up in Worcester, Massachusetts, and then the family moved to Bakersfield, where Boston finished elementary school, high school and started going to [Bakersfield College](#).

He started out studying medicine, which was the family line of business, but soon changed his interest to law. He started working in marketing for a law firm. When he graduated from University of California Berkeley, he had studied political science, government and marketing.

"A lot of people work in fields that have nothing to do with what they studied in college. My degree is 100% what I do now," he said. "I could not have worked in my field now without that foundation."

After graduating, Boston got involved in brand marketing and brand loyalty for high-end liquor brands and public companies, which gave him introductions to corporate boards and executives.

Now, when Boston sees an Rplate on a car out on the road, he gets an emotional feeling.

"It reminds me that it was just an idea, and now it is real and it is happening. It is humbling," he said. "The big thing for me is the functionality of the plate and what it does. It gives more features and more values than a metal plate."

The Essentials

[Neville Boston](#)

Title: Founder and chief strategy officer, ReviverMX Inc.

Age: 50

Education: B.A. in political science, government from UC Berkeley and marketing at the Haas School of Business at UC Berkeley, 2002.

Career: Founder and chief marketing officer Crosswalk Productions Inc., 2004-2006; chief operating officer, Kinetix, 2006-2009; founder of ReviverMX Inc.

Family: Married to Sharon, with three children, Brianna, Luke, and Hudson. Lives in Cameron Park.

Something people would be surprised to know about you: "I was a nerd in school and extremely shy."

Mark Anderson

Staff Writer

Sacramento Business Journal



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Neville Boston is the founder of ReviverMX Inc.