



New launch: Rocket Languages' chief executive Jason Oxenham, front, with the Arabic team Melanie Fairweather (back left), Youstina Aiad and Michael Ghattas.

Photo: CARYS MONTEATH

Online language courses rocketing for city firm

Tina Law

More than 60,000 people across the world are learning languages via programmes developed in a Christchurch studio.

Rocket Languages is selling more than 200 of its online language courses each week and is predicting 100 per cent growth this year.

The company has experienced similar growth each year since it was set up in 2004 by friends Jason Oxenham and Mark Ling.

Oxenham said he expected to see a dip in growth as the economic pressure went on last year, but it had experienced the opposite.

About 65 per cent of sales were made to the United States, 10 per cent to Canada, 5 per cent to Australasia and the remaining amount was scattered around the world.

New Zealand sales were less than 1 per cent, so Rocket Languages was virtually unknown in this country.

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However, it was ranked 34th in the Deloitte Fast 50 index last year and took out the top spot for the company with the fastest growing investment in research and development.

Rocket Languages was profitable after 12 months, but Oxenham and Ling have concentrated on putting the profits back into the company to develop new products.

Seven languages were offered including Spanish, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Chinese and sign language. The company was also about to launch Arabic,

Korean and Hindi languages.

The company employs 11 full-time staff and 22 part-timers, up from nine full-timers and 10 part-timers 18 months ago.

Oxenham said they had managed to find all the staff they needed in Christchurch, although someone fluent in Arabic who spoke with a United States accent had been a challenge. After launching the next three languages, Rocket would concentrate on developing complimentary products including audio books and videos.