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VAR Files: Zen And the Art of Software Vending

How RGI's Augie Turak broke the mold of the traditional VAR

By [Leighton H. Coleman, III](#)

2:24 PM EST Mon., May 24, 1999

August (Augie) Turak, a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh and protege of IBM Business School creator Louis Mobely, co-founded Raleigh Group International, a solutions-driven vendor of software development tools, with Dave Gold in 1993.



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Turak, 47, ensures that RGI and its subsidiary, Elsinore, remain North Carolina's most innovative and fastest-growing company by applying his experiences as a former executive at MTV Music Television, The Arts & Entertainment Channel, The Financial News Network, United Press International and Bell Atlantic, as well as by using Zen principles in business.

In addition to his various business concerns, Turak created the Self Knowledge Symposium Foundation in 1987, a non-denomination, intercollegiate organization that explores spiritual issues, and he recently authored the soon-to-be-published "Five Years With a Zen Master."

Here's what Turak has to say about the channel and its issues.

The company's mission: RGI provides end-to-end sales and marketing support to complement technical creativity. By cultivating a strong value-added relationship with a large base of Windows developers, RGI provides a ready-made, well-understood market for shrink-wrapped tools manufacturers.

On issues we face today As more customers purchase their software directly from vendors on the Web, VARs will have a harder time finding a niche in which they can be successful sellers. Fortunately, we at RGI have anticipated the changing market and found ourselves a new role--software publisher. By providing the marketing push and taking an equity stake in the products, we found profit where others are finding

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failure.

On being a tools publisher: I believe RGI is unique in its position as a tools publisher--no other company in the industry can deliver end-to-end marketing for new software tools. With at least three new product lines in the wings, we are poised to continue our software publishing success. To survive and remain successful, RGI had to break the mold of the traditional VAR by defining a new category and then finding the products to fill it, rather than waiting for the market to come to us.

On the channel's future: The Internet is cutting out middlemen and, as a result, VARs are shifting their business models. Shrinking margins and intense competition on the Web is making it harder for VARs to be "order-takers." VARs will inevitably be pushed away from being the middlemen. Toward that end, VARS will become giant distributors or an integral part of the development process as software publishers.

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