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Ten Entrepreneurs, Five Minutes, Two Winners



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The WPI Venture Forum is a program
of the Collaborative for Entrepreneurship &
Innovation at Worcester Polytechnic Institute

In a fast-paced battle for funding and fame, ten early-stage technology companies will go head-to-head in the WPI Venture Forum

This year's judging panel includes Karl Büttner, William Contente, Jason Honeyman, Gus Weber, and Marcia Woods.



KARL BÜTTNER



WILLIAM CONTENTE



JASON HONEYMAN



GUS WEBER



MARCIA WOODS

Five-Minute Pitch Contest. The fifth annual contest, to be held Tuesday, June 14 in the WPI Campus Center, will feature ten finalists who have met the first round judges' criteria for quality of business model, innovation application, market opportunity, competitive advantage and their leadership team. Early-stage means the companies may be at any stage from conceptual to operating.

Both the five distinguished judges and audience members will have the opportunity to evaluate the finalists on their presentation skills and overall performance. Two cash prizes will be awarded, one from the judges and the other based on audience choice, voted on through wireless devices. The prizes are provided through the generosity of sponsors Wolf Greenfield and Gesmer Updegrove LLP.

Karl Büttner is Chief Mentorship Officer for Mass Challenge, a Boston-based non-profit that sponsors a global competition for start-ups. Büttner founded the software company 170 Systems in 1990, and led it through bootstrapping and venture capital funding to a successful acquisition. He also serves as advisor to several other venture mentoring programs.

A partner of the Boston law firm Gesmer Updegrove LLP, William Contente assists a wide range of emerging companies and has extensive experience in mergers and acquisitions, domestic and international licensing, angel and venture capital as well as other financing arrangements. He served as managing partner from 2002 to

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A monthly publication of The WPI Venture Forum
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A LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Looking Back, Looking Forward

The 20th anniversary year of the WPI Venture Forum has been a special year, particularly as it honored the memory of a special person, Jim Fee, co-founder of the WPI Venture Forum and my former co-chair.

The WPI Venture Forum kicked off its anniversary year with a memorable inaugural program featuring several luminaries and interactive breakout sessions. Other innovative programs featured topics as diverse as health care, digital gaming, clean technology, funding and globalization. In addition, our year included the always-popular Five-Minute Pitch and Business Plan competitions, a highly participatory networking/brainstorming event at the Higgins House, a Gateway Park life sciences networking event, and a Worcester Tornadoes outing.

In keeping with the theme of Sponsorship, Satisfaction, and Succession, this year's initiatives included:

- A new Facebook page and a fast-growing LinkedIn group, enhancing our online community interaction;
- A new WPI Venture Forum Handbook and group email lists to enable more people to participate in leadership roles; and
- A Leadership Award program, honoring individuals who, through exemplary service and leadership, have had a significant



Deirdre Sanders

impact on the WPI Venture Forum. This year's honoree is Bob Hokanson, who will receive his award at our June 14 meeting.

Activities at the Executive Board level included a meeting with WPI School of Business Dean Mark Rice to discuss how the WPI Venture Forum and the school can work together. From that meeting, a task force was

formed to provide guidance to the Board. Following a presentation by the task force, the Board held Saturday morning planning sessions to develop a roadmap for our future growth. These planning sessions provided new direction for a vision of what we can become, as well as strategies, tactics and goals to achieve that vision, and metrics to measure our progress. The Board will be meeting throughout the summer to continue its work on these exciting developments.

As a result of the dedication of so many people, this year has exceeded all expectations, and I am honored to have served as Chair.

Sincerely,

Deirdre Sanders
Chair, WPI Venture Forum
Principal and Shareholder,
Hamilton Brook Smith Reynolds

Choosing the Right Type of Entity for Your Business

Here's a typical question we receive at our firm: "How should I organize my new business?" Our typical response: "That depends." A choice of legal entity really depends upon your short- and long-term goals, the type of business you are establishing, and who the owners will be. Will it have VC funding? If so, a C corporation (C Corp) could be the way to go. Will it own real estate? If so, then a Limited Liability Company (LLC) is usually the best option.

Many entrepreneurs understand that both an S corporation (S Corp) and an LLC are not taxed separately but are pass-through entities that pass their taxable results through to their owners. These entities tend to be more tax efficient than a C Corp, which pays a tax on all of their taxable income (including capital gain income) at a top tax rate of approximately 34 percent. The remaining profit is then taxed a second time when dividends are paid or when the business is sold.

Although S Corps and LLCs have similar taxation, there are several differences between them that can make one a better choice than the other.

In businesses where the owners will take a low salary, it might make more sense to organize as an S Corp. Under current tax law, allocations of income from an S Corp are not subject to self-employment taxes assuming that the owners take reasonable compensation from the entity. This is a better result than an LLC where income allocations would be subject to self-employment taxes.

In businesses holding assets that may appreciate, such as intellectual property, it might make more sense to use an LLC since "phantom gains" might be generated when the S Corp is dissolved or when its assets are distributed.

In businesses where the owners have different needs, the LLC might be a better way to go. There can be times where the entrepreneur has the idea but not the capital necessary to fund the entity and has to seek various sources for funding. LLCs have the flexibility to reward both types of owners that can fit the economics of any group. In some cases, it is possible for the entrepreneur to receive a majority of the profits without contributing the majority of the capital.

If there is a chance that non-resident owners might be involved as investors, the LLC structure is the winner here, as U.S. non-resident aliens cannot be owners of an S Corp. Similarly, C Corps cannot be shareholders of an S Corp, so the LLC structure wins here as well.

If the business will have third-party financing, it may be easier for a member to use losses generated from an LLC than an S Corp. In general, owners need to have "basis" in the investment to be able to deduct losses. Owners of an S Corp receive basis from their initial capital investment plus loans made directly from the shareholder to the S Corp. In an LLC, basis is the sum of the member's net direct investment plus the share of all



by
DAVID MAYOTTE
CPA/ABV, CVA, CFE

debt and other liabilities allocated to the member.

There are many other considerations that were not addressed here that should be explored with your professional team before any entity is established.

David Mayotte is a Vice President at Greenberg, Rosenblatt, Kull & Bitsoli, P.C., a Worcester-based certified public accounting firm serving start-ups and closely-held companies and their owners. He can be reached at dmayotte@GRKB.com. ✓

MAC BANKS BECOMES UNC DEAN

After 16 years of dedicated service and leadership, Professor McRae Banks will be leaving WPI at the end of June to embark on a new opportunity as Dean of the Bryan School of Business and Economics at the University of North Carolina Greensboro.

As Professor and Head of the Department of Management (now School of Business), Banks has been a long-time friend and supporter of the WPI Venture Forum. In his role as the Director for the Collaborative for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, he oversaw the continued success of the WPI Venture Forum, the development of several business plan competitions, and the plethora of WPI's entrepreneurship-related activities. Banks led WPI through its initial accreditation as a business school and saw the department grow in size and quality. Through his leadership efforts, WPI's MBA program gained its current ranking as the #1 part-time program in the US as ranked by *Business Week*.

We wish him all the best for his new challenges and responsibilities in North Carolina.

A LOOK AT THE MAY 2011 MEETING

Prepare to Fund

by

SHERRY S. HANDEL



*Co-moderator
Lori Jones*



*Co-moderator
Otto Prohaska*



Case presenters Bob Strong and David Gagne of ProCaseo

The US market for angel and venture investment is alive and well, and increasingly playing a key role for capital for the US economy, according to the managing director of New England's largest angel group. Keynote speaker for the May 10 WPI Venture Forum, James Geshwiler, Managing Director of CommonAngels, was founding chairman of both the Angel Capital Education Foundation and the Angel Capital Association.

Geshwiler, in his address entitled "Life Cycle of a Deal: Funding Your Venture," pointed out that the angel and VC markets in the US complement one another with roughly the same funding levels, with about \$26 billion for angel investment in 2007 versus \$29.4 billion for VC investment. Angel investment focuses mostly on early stage, but provides funding for a far higher number of deals. Increasingly angels are driving investment in early stage companies with funding between \$10,000 and \$2 million. This funding provides the capital required for these companies to reach key milestones and prepares them for later rounds of growth capital investment of \$2 million to \$12 million from venture capital firms.

As companies grow through four distinct stages — exploratory phase, scaling, early

maturity and maturity — management roles evolve, and investor skills and resources change, Geshwiler explained. "What makes an entrepreneur an entrepreneur is the ability to create the organization," he said. This process can present difficult growing pains as entrepreneurial managers struggle to build the company into a more structured entity. They may feel their creativity is stifled when they want to create new products and services, yet existing products and/or services need management's attention to drive sales, improve quality or expand functionality.

As an example of one approach to angel investing, Geshwiler's group CommonAngels invests in seed rounds of \$10,000 to \$50,000 of \$250,000 to \$1 million, and they do approximately 12 of these deals per year. They also provide four to six deals a year with seed preferred financing of around \$1.5 million each.

Given the current expertise within their investor membership, they tend to focus on new areas of information technology including mobile, digital media/online marketing, web-enabled businesses and software. They look for passionate management who can lead the company, even if they haven't led a start-up before.

Case Presentation:

ProCaseo

Co-moderator Lori Jones introduced the ProCaseo case presenters, Robert Strong, PhD, President, Founder and Chairman, and David Gagne, Vice President of Operations and board member. Strong stated that ProCaseo's offering can improve health care quality and reduce costs through their service CaseExchange, which will reduce inappropriate hospital acute care discharges that cost an estimated \$27 billion per year in the US.

CaseExchange focuses on finding the best clinical, social support and disease management solutions for a specific patient, and providing tools to help case managers and caregivers with follow up and follow through. "We do this by linking organizations together," Strong said, identifying where nursing home beds are available, for example. "We find where things may be going wrong that leads to an inappropriate discharge." Preventing inappropriate discharges, which often occur when patients exceed insurance-mandated maximum stays, can save hospitals money.

"We take information on the patient from the case manager and match this information against the information in our database,"

Your Venture



Panelists (from left) included David Kantaros, Connie Wright and keynote presenter James Geshwiler.

explained Strong. “CaseExchange computes a score and ranks best matches to the patient’s family/friend or other primary caregiver contact.”

The ProCaseo service builds on an existing social network that reaches out to hospitals and post-acute care centers to determine ongoing bed care availability. The business model is an annual subscription model. An assumed subscription renewal rate of 95 percent would generate a recurring revenue stream that would bring the company cash positive in the fourth quarter of year two, assuming that the company gets the \$3 million needed to grow the company to the self-funding stage.

The evening’s case panelists included keynote speaker James Geshwiler, David Kantaros, Partner, Foley & Lardner LLP, and Connie Wright, Principal, Commonwealth Pacific Ventures. Strong explained to the panel that he and Gagne were seeking feedback on:

- How to fund the beta site
- How do we exit with this business model
- The viability of the social network model

Panelists at first focused on the content of Strong’s presentation, which had several gaps. “What’s the customer reaction to your service? What’s the adoption rate?” asked Kantaros. “Investors want to see more than an idea, they want to see adopters,” yet ProCaseo’s presentation did not mention any sales. “Institutional investors at minimum want to see a beta site, and they want to see a customer testimonial,” he noted.

“Your intellectual property differentiates you from your competitors,” said Wright, “but this wasn’t addressed in your presentation.” She noted they should spell out customer savings in their presentation and explain how social networking helps them reach the target numbers of hospitals and acute care centers. “You have a big business opportunity, but you need to create a sense of urgency around demographics – the aging baby boomers – and the availability of hospital beds,” she added. A reasonable assumption for their exit strategy would be acquisition.

Looking at the overall business model, Geshwiler asked several key questions, “Who

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Ten Entrepreneurs, Five Minutes, Two Winners

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

2008 and currently chairs the angel investment group, Launchpad Venture Group.

Wolf Greenfield shareholder **Jason Honeyman** has practiced exclusively in intellectual property law for more than 25 years, serving clients ranging from start-ups to leading industry and academic institutions. He served as the firm's President and Managing Partner from 2005 to 2007. Repeatedly named one of Massachusetts' "Super Lawyers" for intellectual property law, Honeyman was listed among the state's top 100 lawyers in 2008.

Gus Weber is an Entrepreneur in Residence with Polaris Venture Partners, where he focuses on opportunities in seed and early-stage companies across Internet-based technology, social and consumer markets. He also runs Dogpatch Labs,

Polaris' community and workspace for entrepreneurs in Boston, New York and San Francisco. Prior to joining Polaris, he held leadership roles in the office of the Chief Software Architect at Microsoft, having begun his career with positions at Rochester Institute of Technology.

Marcia Dougan Woods, MPH, has more than 20 years of experience in the biotechnology and pharmaceutical industries. The business development manager at the Pioneer Valley Life Sciences Institute in Springfield, Massachusetts, she was formerly the director of External Science Technology and Licensing for the oncology division of Bristol-Myers Squibb. There she was one of only five employees to serve on the Oncology Unrestricted Grants Committee for the Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation. √

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SPOTLIGHT on Entrepreneurs

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Bob Alves

Product: Bird deterrent to prevent bird residue from spoiling boats, yards, pools, gardens, whose owners represent a

\$300 million market. More effective than existing plastic owls and gull sweepers.

Seeking: \$187,000 for engineering prototype, manufacturing tools, initial inventory, website, marketing and legal fees

Email: captrja (at) comcast.net

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INNO4



Vu "Chuck" Nguyen

Product: Systems integrator service that designs, installs, and maintains solutions based upon four

complementary technology platforms.

Seeking: \$500,000 for materials and equipment to fulfill existing orders, expand Massachusetts headquarters, add personnel

Email: President/Principal Bob Feldman, bfeldman (at) inno4llc.com

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Brian Haberstroh

Product: Unique social media couponing platform with a socially conscious twist. A

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Seeking: Tiered funding from \$500,000 to \$5 million for sales, marketing, technology and training a nationwide sales force

Email: Brian (at) TellYourFriend.com

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TOOTOR



Tran Nguyen

Product: Mentoring service to prevent high school drop outs and enable disaffected students to attend college. Market size

some 18 million students.

Seeking: \$5,000 to establish platform for website and initial programming for personalized mentoring service.

Email: tnguyennb (at) wpi.edu

Phone: 714.818.3507

Website: tootor.org

The WPI Venture Forum invites technology entrepreneurs seeking investors or potential partners to make a one-minute elevator pitch at monthly programs.

For rules, registration form, and helpful suggestions on what to include in your pitch, please see wpiventureforum.org/spotlight.html

Venturing to Create the WPI Venture Forum

Co-Founders Reflect on 20-Year-Old Startup

by
ALLISON CHISOLM

In 1990, Jim Dunn '65 and Jim Fee '65 were busy consultants, helping early-stage companies survive and thrive. When they ran into each other at a reunion on WPI's campus, their conversation naturally turned to their work and the challenges they saw companies facing every day.

There were a lot of emerging business opportunities west of Route 128, but "people needed a place to go" to learn from other entrepreneurs, Dunn recalled. So in the spirit of entrepreneurs everywhere, Dunn and Fee saw a need, and worked to meet it. Their first stop was the office of their former electrical engineering professor, Bill Grogan. He suggested they meet Grant Professor of Entrepreneurship Bill Gasko MS '65 PhD '69. The three soon found a common cause.

"I was very interested in the case method," Gasko said, but the curriculum at the time had only written cases. "I wanted to bring students to see actual cases." The trio looked for existing models of venture forum groups, and reviewed those at Brown, MIT, and one in California. MIT was especially helpful. They met many times with Paul Johnson, who organized the business plan contests for the MIT Enterprise Forum. He shared many of the details involved in running the MIT meetings.

To differentiate the WPI Venture Forum, the three founders decided that meetings would welcome presentations from companies at any stage, and would offer supportive mentoring and investor introductions. The founders, now part of a larger executive committee meeting every two weeks, debated whether to host monthly meetings, or an annual program. According to Fee, Gasko solved the dilemma by saying, "Let's do both."

Start-up enterprises, however, were not lining up to present their case at an untested venue. So the group asked WPI to host a business plan workshop on campus. The event was a sellout. The \$95 workshop fees became the source of prize money for a business plan contest held several months later. Some 16 plans were submitted, and "two or three were great," said Dunn. That was their first "plateau of success," he noted.

Monthly meetings, which were open to all at no charge, began in WPI's Salisbury Labs building in the fall of 1991. Early supporters, which included the law firms Mirick O'Connell and Bowditch & Dewey, as well as the Massachusetts Technology Development Corporation (MTDC), were "absolutely critical," said Gasko, as they covered the cost of food and the newsletter, first published that November.

Within six months, Dunn recalled, "we had a case presenter scheduled for every

meeting." Gasko's students could now learn outside the classroom, where they could see firsthand the "pain, suffering, difficulties and joys of entrepreneurship," he said. Service providers and investor numbers grew at each meeting. Gasko served as the first chair, a position that rotated among committee members in the early years.

Founding the WPI Venture Forum "was a wonderful part of my life," said Gasko, now consulting as a principal of Adhva, and who credits the late Jim Fee with many of the initial ideas and much of the energy and persistence involved in starting the organization. Meeting the needs of area startups, it continues to play "an important part of many people's lives."

Added Dunn, now President of Future Solar Systems LLC, "If we hadn't filled the hole, someone else would have, as the spirit of inventing and level of entrepreneurial activity continues to grow, particularly around schools like WPI." ✓

May 2011 Meeting

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

is the customer? There are multiple stakeholders here. Who pays? Who is the decision maker? Who is the end user?" He noted the founders needed a channel management strategy. He also explained that the long sales cycle for this hard-to-penetrate market will mean slower investor decisions.

Sherry Handel was the founder and CEO of two socially responsible companies and is currently the Executive Director of Guard Support of

Massachusetts, a non-profit organization that provides support to members of the Mass. National Guard and their families. Through her leadership, Guard Support launched the Entrepreneurs' Funding Program, providing capital, expertise and training to National Guard members seeking to start, restart or grow a business. ✓



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NEXT PROGRAM
Five Minute Pitch Contest
Tuesday, June 14, 2011



**NEXT PROGRAM: FIVE MINUTE
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Tuesday, June 14, 2011

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NETWORKING: 5:30 – 6:30 P.M.

MEETING: 6:00 – 8:30 P.M.*
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5:30-8:30 p.m.

JUNE 14 Five-Minute Pitch Contest

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