

WPI Venture Forum

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WPI VENTURE FORUM CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February 17, 1998

Growth Forecasting—Not Just Smoke and Mirrors

March 17, 1998

Surviving the Crisis

All meetings in Kinnicutt Hall, Salisbury Labs
(our usual location).

For a recorded announcement of the next
program or to receive future mailings, call
(508) 831-5821.

Directions to WPI Campus, Salisbury Labs, Room 115

From the East—Take Massachusetts Turnpike (I-90) to Exit 11A (I-495). Proceed north to I-290, then west into Worcester. Take Exit 18, turn right at end of ramp, then take an immediate right before the next traffic light. At the next light, proceed straight through, bearing right onto Salisbury Street. At the WPI sign, turn left onto Boynton Street. Parking will be on your right, behind Gordon Library. Salisbury Labs is up the hill across from the Library.

From the North—Take I-495 south to I-290. Follow directions as from the east.

From the South and West—Take Massachusetts Turnpike (I-90) to Exit 10 (Auburn). Proceed east on I-290 into Worcester. Take Exit 17, turn left at end of ramp, follow Route 9 west through Lincoln Square, straight onto Highland Street. Turn right onto Boynton Street. After crossing Institute Road, parking will be on your left, behind Gordon Library. Salisbury Labs is up the hill across from the Library.



Growth Forecasting — Not Just Smoke And Mirrors

A look at the upcoming meeting.

Tuesday, February 17, 1998
WPI Campus, Salisbury Labs
Registration: 6:00pm
Meeting Begins: 6:30pm
Admission Fee: \$7.00

Growth forecasting is essential for your company, whether it's just starting out or primed to conquer its market. Forecasting can be achieved by working from the bottom up — that is planning and building based on current equipment, space, personnel and cash. Conversely, in many growth situations, forecasting starts with projected sales, and builds through planning your required square footage.

According to NTB Associates, a management consulting service, forecasting is a tool that links all business operations to sales. Like any tool, you need to start with good information and realistic goals. There are also many factors that will affect your forecasts, including market changes, internal company shifts and internal and external technology advancements.

It is not easy to forecast for growth accurately. However, you will quickly know if your forecasting missed the mark and needs tuning. With each iteration, the forecasts will become more accurate and easier to adjust.

Mr. David D. Gleason will make February's feature presentation. Mr. Gleason is now a busi-

ness consultant based in Sharon, Massachusetts. In 1983, he was one of the founders of Pilot Software, where he served as the company's CFO. In 1994, the company found success when Dun & Bradstreet acquired it. Pilot pioneered the online information analysis and presentation fields. The company grew from a few employees to over 350 in nine countries in 1994. As CFO, Mr. Gleason was responsible for the company's growth forecasting and will draw on his experience for his presentation.

Prior to Pilot, Mr. Gleason held accounting and financial systems positions in two Fortune 500 firms and two small businesses. He earned a BA from Yale University and an MBA at Harvard University. Mr. Gleason is currently a consultant on planning and financial management to small and midsize businesses.

Crystal Ball

Even though no one can predict the future, Mr. Gleason will address the value of forecasting. He will also cover the limitations of forecasting to help you avoid typical pitfalls when developing your own projections. The presentation will also cover the actual building of a financial forecast that will hold up to the scrutiny and become a useful tool for running your business. Finally, Mr. Gleason will provide tips on what outside investors do and do not want to find in your financial projections and growth forecasts.

Case Presentation

*Susan Rudd, President and Founder
Acorn Communications Corp.
1A Acorn Street
Boston, MA 02108*

Our February case presentation is a fairly new company that has a highly experienced management team. Ms. Susan Rudd founded Acorn Communications Corporation in 1993 and will present the company's business plan.

Acorn Communications Corp. provides telephony applications to Internet Service Providers and telephone companies to deliver integrated messaging services for mobile workers and the mass market. The company was incorporated in 1994 as a software company to focus on voice driven client server applications for Internet Service Providers and wireless and wireline telephone carriers. Acorn specializes in voice and telephony, as the primary user interface for control of a variety of network data services with products that include:

- MailTalk as the product and MailTel™ as the service for "store and forward" messaging and email access and control from a telephone/voice interface,
- Personal Intelligent Networking (PIN): Personal communications services (including personal assistant and PDA applications) for telephone control of data services including "follow me messaging," and "thin clients" for intelligent handsets, and,
- TransAgent: Telephone creation of electronic data transactions for the next generation of financial services that creates transactions from voice input. ▶

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February
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VENTURE

The mission of the WPI Venture Forum is to promote and serve technology-based entrepreneurial activity through education, networking, and recognition.

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Letter From The Chair

A Look Back, And Ahead

by Brian Dingman, Chair

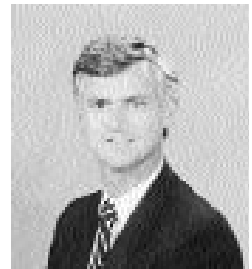
As I am writing this letter, the new year is upon us. Like most people, at this time of the year I find myself reflecting on the year coming to a close and contemplating and planning for the year just beginning. This sense of review and planning seems especially heightened because of the impending turn of the century and millennium. And because I am about half way through my one year term as chairman of the Forum, my thoughts have turned to the Forum, its volunteers, activities and members.

1997 was a seminal year for the WPI Venture Forum. Our organization and programs are well established, well received and respected in our community. There is clearly a feeling of worth and accomplishment at all levels of the organization. We continue to hear from our members of their appreciation for the Forum activities, which instills in the volunteers an important sense that their time and effort have born fruit.

As the current leader of our organization, I am concerned with the well-being of the volunteers involved with the Venture Forum. We have a diverse, spirited and energetic twenty-member executive committee which guides the organization. It has been an interesting challenge to attempt to lead such a group of entrepreneurial characters; it often seems that we have twenty equally interesting ideas on the table at all times concerning any particular issue before the executive committee. This personal challenge is more than offset by the energy and education I receive from the executive committee members, not to mention the satisfaction of developing a relationship with these interesting and successful people.

I have also come to know and work with many of the volunteers on our various committees, to a much greater extent than in past years before I was the chairman. I have found that each committee, like the executive committee, is made up of hard-working, strong-willed and often not like-minded individuals. This creates a fascinating and complex committee culture which can synergistically create ideas which did not exist before the group began its consideration. This group thinking phenomenon is heightened in our committees by the entrepreneurial spirit and mentality of the individual

members, as well as the fact that each member is participating by choice as a volunteer, rather than as part of his or her work-related duties.



As I look ahead, I see an organization which is in a state of flux. Our relationship with WPI has changed and is evolving. This new year should present great possibilities of increased collaboration between the Venture Forum and WPI from the very highest levels on down. We are two separate but related organizations which are positioned to assist one another in accomplishing our respective missions, while at the same time creating together that which does not exist currently within either organization. We are extremely fortunate to count among our volunteers and supporters well-placed and committed members of the WPI community, who, I'm sure, will see that the relationship between the organizations is enhanced in this coming year.

Our organization will also change due to the current state of the economy. Those less entrepreneurial persons who desire a relatively secure corporate position are in large part employed and, presumably, happy. The economy presents wonderful opportunity for entrepreneurs and business owners and executives with a vision for success. In the past, we have seen a greater number of what I would call "entrepreneurs by circumstance"; individuals who were consulting or starting a business at least partially because of lack of opportunity elsewhere, rather than due to an opportunity at hand. Please don't misunderstand me - we need both types of individuals in order for the economy to succeed. I am simply making an observation of the changing nature of Venture Forum members. Another related change is that our members, as a whole, are busier producing products or services than they have been in the past.

These adjustments are the result of the changing needs of our members for the services we provide. This has sparked much debate among the volunteers of the Venture Forum as we try to meet the needs our members. ►

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Copyright Protection Of User Interfaces For Computer Programs



by Fred Meeker and Peter McDermott, Banner & Witcoff

The competitive importance of user interfaces in computer software cannot be overestimated. Often the success or failure of a computer product will be determined by the ease of use of the user interface. However, copyright protection of user interfaces for computer programs is a troublesome area.

A Shift In The Law

Enforcement of ownership rights in user interfaces has undergone a dramatic change in the last few years, with a major shift away from copyright protection and toward patent protection. In general, the US Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit (which handles appeals in all patent infringement lawsuits) has expanded the availability of *patent protection* for user interfaces and other software programs. Under the decisions of the Federal Circuit, both copyright and patent protection may be available. As that

court has stated, patent law provides protection for the process performed by a computer in accordance with a program, whereas copyright protects the author's particular expression of that process. Only if the patentable process and its expression are indistinguishable or inextricably intertwined would the process "merge" with the expression and so preclude copyright protection.

But the federal appeals courts in some of the federal circuits have been issuing decisions which narrow the *copyright protection* available to user interfaces. Massachusetts and the other New England states sit in the First Circuit, which has played a major role in narrowing copyright protection for user interfaces.

The Idea-Expression Dichotomy

There is an underlying tension in copyright protection of computer programs in general and of user interfaces in particular. Copyright protection is available for a creative work, but not for a method of operating a machine.

User interfaces to computer programs can be argued to be simply a means of organizing, in a logical manner, the user options for sending instructions to the computer. User interfaces in the computer arts generally are audiovisual displays employing various devices for conveying information to or from computer programs to alter the audiovisual output of the computer program. Common devices of user interfaces include a series of menus arranged in a hierarchical fashion, tool bars, dialogue boxes, and

icons. In this view every computer program and every user interface is a method of operating a computer for which copyright protection is not available.

It can be strongly argued to the contrary, however, that a user interface is a creative work involving aesthetic choices in the form of expression embodied in the user interface. Thus, tension arises in that although a user interface may be found to be protectable under the copyright laws as a "literary work", an "audio-visual work" and/or a "compilation", it may instead be found to be unprotectable as a mere *method of operating* a computer.

So the copyright laws both explicitly grant protection and exclude protection for user interfaces, leaving the courts to sort out the resulting confusion.

The First Circuit's Position

Currently, there exists disagreement among the various federal appeal courts concerning how to draw the line between protectable expression and unprotectable method of operation in the area of user interfaces. In *Lotus Development v. Borland International*, the First Circuit Courts of Appeals, which covers Massachusetts, held that the Lotus 1-2-3 menu command hierarchy is a method of operation and hence not eligible for protection under the copyright laws. According to the court, any user interface by which a person operates something, whether it is a computer, a food processor or a car, is nothing more than a method of operation.

Fortunately, the First Circuit has not yet taken the extreme position that user interfaces are never eligible for copyright protection. Also, it is important to note that several of the other federal circuits grant more leeway to the copyright protection of computer programming code.

Positions Taken By Other Circuits

The Second Circuit in *Softel v. Dragon Medical*, a case decided after *Lotus*, did not follow the lead of the First Circuit. Instead, the Second Circuit found that copying external file structures, English language commands, functional ►

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Networking for Success

By Jerrold M. Shapiro, Principal, Laser Surgery Solutions

Those attending the WPI Venture Forum's November meeting were treated to an in-depth presentation and practicum by Nancy J. Stephens, founder and owner of Net-Works, a Carlisle consulting firm specializing in business development.

Source of Company Success

The CEO of Verifone, a new high tech company, attributed his company's success not to its technology but to its relationships with its employees and customers. To meet companies' needs for relationships and results, Nancy Stephens has created a structured format for networking, one that has produced results for her company's clients.

After introducing her associate, attorney Stuart Hirsh — a certified trainer and coach — Nancy encouraged entrepreneurs to think about all the ways they can leverage their products to increase sales. Can you describe and quantify your company's products in a unique way? Look at your market share and opportunities to grow into new niches, then "plant seeds where you want them to grow," she said. Make sure that your marketing plan jives with your business plan.

Sales/Effort Cycle

With the aid of a handout, Nancy explained the Sales/Effort Cycle of Initiate, Cultivate, Maximize then Optimize, and displayed these as quadrants on a diagram plotting sales results versus effort expended. In the first two years of a company's life, the Initiate quadrant, you expend significant effort on prospecting, cold calls and outreach without many results. Once genuine leads are developed, your efforts using the traditional sales approaches of presentations and process management increase significantly as you Cultivate the relationship with the customer and make your first sale. The high effort level continues as you provide services to develop and nurture the new account in order to Maximize sales. In the Optimize phase, you use your innovative skills to redefine the client relationship and develop new sales opportunities; this requires less effort and returns high results, and gives you the time to return to the Initiate phase with other accounts.

Networking Defined

Of the three elements for customer-focused sales and business success — knowing how to *get* the business, *do* the business and *run* the business — Nancy concentrated on the first since most entrepreneurs know how to do the other two. She stated that the goal of networking is "to establish open communication and develop long-term mutually beneficial relationships." These relationships can be external — through business to business meetings, informal one-on-one meetings — or internal — with people in your office, subcontractors and suppliers — or with those whom you serve and service: the client. Networking is more a way of operating than a segment of your business. It's as old as the "I like you, you like me, so let's do business" paradigm. Distinct from "working the room" where the decision maker you need to reach is unlikely to be there when you are, networking can be defined as the "place to create referral sources."

POWER Networking

The selling environment determines when networking works best. When the product or service is complex and a high degree of client confidence in you is required, then networking works incredibly well. Your preparations for a networking event can be summarized by the acronym: **POWER**. **Purpose** — why you are networking and a two minute plan of what you want to walk away with; **Opportunity** — help people fulfill their desire to help you by letting them know exactly what you want, i.e. the target company or person; **Why** — based on all the options available, explain why the client should do business with you; **Excellence** — of all those you meet, choose one or two people to follow up with based on whether they serve the same customer base in the same industry as you do, whether they are colleagues in the same business who serve a different market than you do, and on whether they are people you like; and **Resource** — you will get calls from people who perceive you as a resource.

Networking Don'ts

In preparing us for the networking break, Nancy explained three major networking mistakes to avoid, and the solutions: 1. Focusing on yourself (focus on the other person, tap into your curios-



Photo by Ron Bouley

Nancy Stephens explains the POWER of networking.

ity factor and don't sit with people you know;) 2. Treating networking as if you're broadcasting (shift from broadcasting to investigating who's out there, listen eighty percent of the time, ask yourself, "Who learned more? Who talked more?") 3. Lack of follow up (use a system like the criteria listed above and follow up with at least one person.) Our assignments during the break were to talk to someone we knew and to learn something new, and to talk to someone we didn't know at all and to learn what their business was all about. The audience learned that they were more relaxed while doing the first assignment, and that the contact was more of an update. The second assignment forced you to listen and then build on what you know.

Practicum - Five Alive Methodology

During the practicum, Nancy explained the key concepts of her Five Alive Methodology, then sent

us out on another assignment. The fundamental principal is that it takes five “impressions” until you are alive in someone else’s mind, i.e. until they feel connected to you and trust you. Not all the impressions have to be face to face; some can be calls or notes. **Step 1** is to make the connection, to decide if there’s a possible relationship. You want an introduction by someone you know to the client. It may be easier than you think to find a mutual acquaintance; a “Contacts and Influence” study showed that the average person knows one thousand people, and is one phone call away from 3500 people. **Step 2** is to demonstrate how you work as a business person by sending a personalized note, not necessarily hand written, referring to where you met — this reconnects you to the networking contact. **Step 3** is solidify the mutual benefit by setting up an appointment for a networking, not a sales, call. **Step 4** is to educate your contact about your needs and to stimulate them to think of the person who can help you. After meeting your contact, **Step 5** is to send a summary note that positions you for continuous referrals from your contact’s clients. We practiced Step 4 by first recalling, for each area of our own work, a situation where we did a great job for the client. Then we had to meet someone new, describe the problem/challenge/issue, define our intervention *i.e.* what we did, and tell the result of what we did. We learned that this approach stimulates the contact’s curiosity, helps them understand what you do through a concrete example and demonstrates tangible results.

We wrapped up the practicum by discussing tracking and touch base systems. The old adage, “Out of sight, out of mind.” is truly characteristic of networking. To prevent an overload of follow up activity, Nancy recommends that you divide your contacts into three groups and call

each group with decreasing frequency. Call the core group of about a dozen contacts frequently. Maintain monthly contact with the fifty people that have a good synergy with your customer base. Use a newsletter to link to everyone else.

Q & A

In response to questions from the audience, Nancy recommended that you qualify contacts by asking good, strategic questions; for example, What do you do? What kinds of clients or customers do you have? With regard to sending Christmas cards, Nancy doesn’t like to be like everyone else, so she sends New Year’s cards. Since she’s always focused on business, this seems like a good time to remind contacts about her since everyone is ready to go for the year. “But, with whatever you’re doing always keep in mind the objective of your contact with an individual.”

When asked what contact software she prefers, Nancy said, “I love ACT!, because it’s user friendly, has a lot of flexibility and does what I need. But, whatever system you like is okay because it will help you to follow through with contacts.” Nancy then turned the question back to the audience for what they used and got four responses: Sharper Image, Day Timer, Maximizer and Pocket Organizer. As for web sites, she’s in the midst of developing her own web site right now. “You need to have an objective for the site and go through three steps: analyze what you want, design the web site, and measure the results of it. A most important point is that if you have a web site you have to commit to it in order to keep it current.” Asked for her preference for database marketing software, Nancy had none. The questioner liked Marketplace and Market Manager, which man-

ages your existing client base against Dun & Bradstreet’s client base.

Questioned about the value of describing a successful client assignment as a way to tell a contact what you do versus that of a 30 second sound bite to describe your company or service, Nancy thinks a short conversation starter is good. “Stay away from titles which cause them to categorize you, and tend to put people off. Use a result sentence which begins, ‘I help people/companies...’ “

How do you enter a room filled with people and make use of the networking opportunity? “First of all do your ‘parking lot planning’ about what you’d like to accomplish with the networking before you arrive. If you have a chance to do so, look at the list of attendees, and scan it to see who you’d like to meet. Also, go to the person at the registration desk or use the membership coordinator, and ask them to introduce you to a person you’d like to meet.”

When asked, “What percentage of contacts give you real clients?” Nancy referred back to the contact tiers discussed earlier. Most clients will come from tier one contacts (the core) and in descending order by tier, so that tier three will provide the least number.

Conclusion

Nancy Stephens wrapped up her practicum by suggesting that we choose and test two or three items from her presentation. Remember to focus on the client, to make networking your way of operating, and to use the inexpensive, underutilized techniques of networking to bring you back to the business events you can control.

Jerrold M. Shapiro, Ph.D., Principal and Founder of Laser Surgery Solutions, invents new surgical products to order for clients in the medical device industry. He can be reached at (508) 872-8725 or via e-mail at J4shapiro@AOL.com. VF

Systematizing Your Work Flow

by Jean Sifleet, JD, CPA and Cynthia Sechrest, CPA

When we last talked with Carla Smithson, our hypothetical business owner of Smooth Solutions, she was working on a systematic way to handle projects and assess profitability on a project by project basis.

Carla has come a long way in the few months that she has been working with her business advisory team. She has been setting aside a couple of hours every month to work with her advisors on developing her business. First, she got her record keeping under control. Then she tackled her cash flow problem and put systems into place to keep tabs on receipts and disbursements on a regular monthly schedule. Now, she is working on improving project profitability.

Analyzing For Profitable Results

After analyzing the prior years projects - from a cost and profitability perspective - Carla understands that defining the scope and terms of all projects is critical to prevent misunderstandings and unprofitable results.

Carla is working with her advisors to develop a plain English contract that clearly describes the scope of work and the payment terms.

From this analysis of project data, Carla gained a deeper understanding about what is important to her customers and also about where Smooth Solutions made and lost money. She also realizes that she needs to keep focusing on developing her business, so she wants a process in place that will enable her to be efficient.

Systematizing the work flow means:

1. making it standard practice to use contracts on every project,
2. tracking costs on a project by project basis,
3. reviewing projects after completion to assess their profitability,
4. assessing whether anything could have been done better.

These business practices will help Carla to focus on projects that are good business, price projects to be profitable and learn from her experiences. Systematizing the contract process enables Carla to focus on developing more profitable business.

Ask Your Customers

From working with her business advisors, Carla understands that it's much easier to do repeat business with an existing customer than it is to get a new customer. Carla is eager to figure out how to attract more projects from existing customers. She wants to ask for direct customer feedback. Carla knows that it's important to ask the right questions and to ask them in a way that customers will be willing to answer.

The first few questions that she'll ask are clear:

- How satisfied were customers with Smooth Solutions on price? Service? Quality? and overall performance?
- What was the most important service that she provided and why?
- What would they change about how the project was handled?

Carla wants this request for customer feed-

back to be fun for her customers and useful for her business. Carla has considered different ways to solicit customer feedback: personal interviews (individually or in a group), telephone interviews, a mail survey. While there are pros and cons to each approach, Carla decides to do a mail survey and offer a reward as an incentive for responding to the survey.

Carla also decides to personalize the last questions by asking:

"If you were President of Smooth Solutions what would you change"?

Subsequent articles will address what Carla learns from her customer survey and how Carla continues to work with her development team over time.

Cynthia Sechrest, CPA and Jean Sifleet, CPA and JD, collaborate together to solve the problems of their business clients and to help them to grow successfully. They can be reached at 508-772-6332. VF

Letter from the Chair

Continued from page 2

The general feeling among Venture Forum participants is that the economic times have slightly increased the need of members for information relating to growing and maintaining vibrant organizations, for more in-depth information on topics we have treated in the past and slightly decreased the need for more basic business start-up information. One of our upcoming challenges will be to measure the needs of our membership and try to develop programs which best meet those needs.

Finally, our organization has changed fundamentally in that we now for the first time have a dedicated employee working as the coordinator of the Venture Forum. Christine O'Connor has been with us for about four months now. She has solidified our relationship with WPI and has become an invaluable resource for our organization. Although the working relationship between myself, the other Venture Forum volunteers, and Christine is still developing, I can see that in the coming year that Christine will facilitate both the growth and stability of our organization.

When you read this column, the new year will be well underway. I hope that the year is good to you and your loved ones, and, of course, successful and prosperous. Please let me know how it works out for you!



*Brian Dingman is a partner in the Westborough intellectual property law firm of Nields, Lemack and Dingman. Brian can be reached at (508) 898-1818, or by email at NLDlaw@aol.com. **VF***

WPI Venture Forum Presents...

Business Plan Workshop

Keys to Developing a Successful Business Plan: Hands-On Seminar Series

Seminar Series

Beginning Thursday, February 26, 1998, the WPI Venture Forum will conduct a six night workshop on "Developing Your Business Plan." This hands-on, interactive session will be facilitated by Robert Creeden. Mr. Creeden is a Vice President with the Massachusetts Technology Development Corporation, an early-stage venture capital firm focusing on technology-based companies in Massachusetts.

The program will be offered one night per week over six consecutive weeks, including one evening devoted solely to the topic of raising capital! Each session will last two hours and will be held on the campus of WPI. Participants will work with Mr. Creeden and other facilitators on the development of their business plan. The sessions will be both tutorial and interactive in nature, discussing the objectives, components, and format of a good business plan, with time for individual attention given to participants.

Due to the interactive format of the workshop, a limited number of companies will be allowed to participate. The fee for all six nights, including workshop workbook and other materials is \$125.

Workshop sessions will be held on Thursdays, beginning in February: February 26, March 5, March 12, March 19, March 26 and April 2, 1998.

This is the perfect training ground if you plan on entering the WPI Venture Forum \$10,000 Business Plan Contest, held annually.

If interested, please fill out the registration form below and mail with payment to:

WPI Venture Forum
c/o WPI Alumni Association
100 Institute Road
Worcester, MA 01609

Business Plan Workshop Registration

.....

Name _____

Company _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____

The Annual Venture Forum Entrepreneurs Workshop

A Review Of The 1997 Program And Our Upcoming 1998 Program - Supercharging Your Sales!

by Steve Paulson, WPI Venture Forum Executive Board and Workshop Chair 1997

What is the difference between survival and prosperity? We answered this question at last year's WPI Venture Forum Workshop on Market Leadership. We brought in top-notch business professionals who have taken one or more companies to leadership positions within their markets to share their experiences and knowledge with our participants.

Mr. John P. Mongridge, Chairman of Cisco Systems, Inc., opened last year's Workshop. The Keynote Address was followed by three sessions - Sales Growth with Mr. James M. Dow, Chairman

of Microcom, Inc., People with Mr. James P. Masciarelli, President of Archer Consulting, Inc., and Finance with Mr. Christopher D. Robert, President and CEO of Keyfile Corporation. A plenary panel of experts followed each session.

Last year's workshop attracted over 200 attendees from both large and small companies representing various industries from Boston through Central Massachusetts and surrounding states. Numerous attendees commented "on a professionally organized workshop delivering much more than was promised."

On Saturday, March 14, 1998, the WPI Venture Forum presents its 8th Annual Entrepreneurs' Workshop entitled "Supercharging Your Sales." The half-day event focuses on developing effective sales programs, hiring and compensating top performers, new opportunities for electronic commerce and channel selling.

Mark your calendars!! Reserve Saturday, March 14th, 1998. Come and learn new skills, make new contacts and have fun while "Supercharging Your Sales!!!" For more information, call 508-831-5075, fax at 508-831-5604 or visit our web site at www.wpiventureforum.org.

Special Invitation For Entrepreneurs Mentor's Dinner

The WPI Venture Forum invites you to set aside the evening of Thursday, April 30, 1998, to attend a special event. We have arranged for seven successful, local business people to serve as Mentors for small, table-size groups of entrepreneurs. Spend dinner with one of these Mentors and discuss the ups and downs of how to start or grow a company. Find out what it really takes to succeed in business - all in a comfortable, dinner atmosphere.

Our Mentors for this special evening will be:

- Mark J. Conoby, Vice President of Concorp, Inc. Concorp manufactures and services water treatment systems and process control systems.
- Michael A. DiPierro, President, Baystone Corporation. Baystone is involved in turnarounds, acquisitions and temporary CFO management assignments. Michael previously owned Polyform Corp. which specializes in custom plastic parts reaction injection molding
- Howard A. Gries, President, Kinefac Corporation. Kinefac specializes in cold forming machines, systems and die spring machinery, turning machines and automated inspection equipment.
- Donald A. Johnson, Member of the Board of Directors and Former Chief Executive Officer, Corning OCA Corporation. Corning OCA focuses on optical and electro-optical components and systems.
- Paul S. Kennedy, President, Kennedy Die Castings. This company makes precision die castings.
- Mark V. Parish, President and Chairman, Specific Surface Corporation. Specific Surface Corp. designs and manufactures compact industrial fibers.
- Edward P. Sayre, President and CEO, North Systems Associates, Inc. This company specializes in high performance engineering and design.

Like our Mentor's Dinner last year, this evening will begin with a short networking session at 6:00pm. Dinner will include a six course meal with beer and/or wine.

Reservations are being taken on a first-come, first-served basis for this limited seating event. To facilitate maximum communication among attendees, a limit of 42 entrepreneurs will participate - six attendees and one Mentor per table. Last year's Dinner was a lot of fun

and very interesting, so reserve your spot now by returning the form below.

Yes, please sign me up to attend the WPI Venture Forum Mentor's Dinner on Thursday, April 30, 1998. Enclosed is my check for \$30 to

cover the cost of the dinner.

Name _____

**Please return this form and check to:
WPI Venture Forum, WPI, Alumni Office,
100 Institute Road, Worcester, MA 01609
Call 508-831-5075 if you need more
information about this event.**

Growth Focusing

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Acorn's software architecture and the ACE development environment ensure that common servers and software modules can be reused across multiple product families.

The reuse of servers and clients leads to a highly leveraged software company that generates new product features and functions rapidly as the market explodes in the next three years.

Four Major Programs

Acorn's business proposal describes the financing requirements for four major programs for which they are seeking funding at this time: 1. Multiprotocol Wireless Messaging, 2. Outbound Voice Reply Capability, 3. Voice Recognition and Control, and 4. Unified Message Access and Control. With these capabilities Acorn will be able to offer unified message access from a single point of control, while allowing users to retain access to their existing Internet and corporate email and voice mailboxes.

Today, Acorn is seeking to raise \$600,000 in funding from investors and strategic business partners to finance the introduction and customer support of its initial MailTalk and MailTel offerings. In the future, Acorn will be seeking an additional \$1.4 million for the four major add-on programs for the initial products. The product line will generate \$19 million in revenue over the next four years. An additional \$1.6 million will allow the company to further broaden their product line and support, leading them to become a \$100 million company.

Ms. Rudd has over 20 years experience in the communications and computing industries. Prior to founding Acorn, she worked for over eight years at Motorola in various roles including Director of Strategic Marketing and Director of Network Services. Earlier, she was a computer systems analyst with Bolt, Beranek & Newman, Burroughs-UNISYS Corporation, the University of Pennsylvania and UK Atomic Energy Authority.

Ms. Rudd will present Acorn's business plan to an advisory panel who will critique the plan and to the Forum audience who can follow up with pointed or general questions. The panel of three industry experts will include a venture capital partner, a communications-marketing leader and a corporate strategy specialist.

Please join us for our February gathering to meet our presenters and other members of the Forum. It is an excellent way to network with industry-wide talent, learn from seasoned experts and voice your opinions. **VF**

Copyright Protection

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modules and a hierarchical series of menus with a touchscreen could be actionable under the copyright laws. The Ninth Circuit also has found computer programming code to be copyright protectable.

On the other hand, the Eleventh Circuit in *Bateman v. Mnemonics*, noting that computer programs are *patentable*, suggested it may be willing to exclude patentable methods of operation from the scope of copyright protection. In order to avoid undermining the competitive principles that are fundamental to the patent system, the Eleventh Circuit suggested it may be necessary to deny copyright protection for those elements of the software that could be protected by a patent.

Conclusion

The approach being taken by the First, Eleventh and other Circuits may be viewed with concern by software creators and by the companies which employ them or license their software, especially if they have been relying solely on copyright protection for their work product. The law may be headed further toward sharp limitation on the use of copyright to protect software. If this trend continues, non-literal copying of software may become actionable only as patent infringement.

*Peter McDermott and Fred Meeker are patent lawyers with the patent law firm Banner & Witcoff. The firm represents technology clients before the US Patent Office and the courts in all areas of patent, copyright, trademark and trade secret law, including licensing and litigation. Fred Meeker is in the firm's Washington, D.C. office (202) 508-9100. Peter McDermott is in the firm's Boston office (617) 345-9100. **VF***

