



NATIONAL GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION FOCUSES ON INNOVATION IN AMERICA

On March 22, 2007, the National Governors Association (NGA) submitted testimony to the U.S. House Education and Labor Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, and Competitiveness. Their testimony centered around the recently released



NGA federal legislative package, *Innovation America: A Partnership*.

According to a recent nationwide public opinion poll conducted by Dr. Frank Luntz for the nation's governors, 9 out of 10 Americans believe that **if our nation fails to innovate, our children and our economy will be left behind**. They see America losing ground in 20 years because other nations are more committed to

education. The testimony stated, "America's economic future is inextricably linked to education and the public's perception of our education system. Simply put, America cannot lead the new global economy if our educational system is lagging behind." It went on to state, "Students not only need to be well-rounded, they also need **entrepreneurial skills, and the capacity to imagine and adapt to the unknown**."

It appears that Nebraska has been ahead of the curve in understanding this. Through the efforts of the Nebraska Entrepreneurship Task Force (NET-Force), we have been focusing on just these issues for several years.

For the full testimony, go to <http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/070322TESTIMONYLINN.PDF>.

WHERE AMERICA STANDS: ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The Council on Competitiveness has released a new report on entrepreneurship in the United States, *Where America Stands: Entrepreneurship*. The report is the first part in a series of focused analyses on the high-impact drivers of U.S. innovation capacity and competitiveness.

While U.S. entrepreneurial performance continues to lead the world by almost any measure, this analysis demonstrates that other nations are catching up to the United States in a variety of ways—and highlights that the U.S. environment for entrepreneurial activity faces its own challenges and opportunities in the 21st century. The Council on Competitiveness

is a group of corporate CEOs, university presidents and labor leaders committed to



the future prosperity of all Americans and enhanced U.S. competitiveness in the global economy

through the creation of high-value economic activity in the United States. You can download the full report at <http://www.compete.org/>.

Source: The National Dialogue on Entrepreneurship, www.publicforuminstitute.org/nde.

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We're on the web!

www.nde.state.ne.us/entreped/

EXPLORE NEW IDEAS AND BEST PRACTICES AT THE NEBRASKA CAREER EDUCATION CONFERENCE

Mark your calendars for the 2007 Nebraska Career Education Conference (NCE Conference), June 4-7 in Kearney, Nebraska at the Holiday Inn.



By attending this conference you will join hundreds of career educators from across Nebraska as they recharge with new ideas and learn best practices from nationally known educators and the very best in our own state.

Monday is devoted to pre-conference workshops. Tuesday is dedicated to keynote speakers, the annual Awards Luncheon, and concurrent sessions throughout the day. Wednesday and Thursday are career field sessions.

For detailed information about the conference, visit the official NCE Conference web site, <http://www.nceconference.com>. Registration is \$90 between March 2 and May 1, but increases to \$125 after May 1.

Professional Development

The Nebraska Career Education Conference is one of the best opportunities for professional development and networking. And, this year, many sessions will focus on entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education.

Entrepreneurship-Focused Sessions

Monday-June 4, 2007



A special pre-session workshop will be offered that will be a rich source of information and teaching resources from the EntrepreneurShip Investigation (ESI) middle school and the Entrepreneurship Focus Program (EFP) high school curricula. See page 3 of this

issue for more information about this session. It's your chance to take home some great curriculum and new ideas to enliven your classes.

Tuesday-June 5, 2007

Tuesday will be a day to explore entrepreneurship during the general sessions and the concurrent workshops. Three concurrent sessions that you definitely won't want to miss are:

- EntrepreneurShip Investigation (ESI)
- Targeted Teaching for Entrepreneurship-Tips, Tricks, and Resources
- The Entrepreneurial Economy-Revitalizing Communities, Expanding Opportunities, Growing From Within

College Credit Available

Wayne State College will again offer the opportunity for 3 hours of graduate credit for participating in the NCE Conference.

The course has a new prefix and title this year. (Those of you who have taken the conference for credit in the past may want to check with your school system to see if it is possible for you to retake it again under the new course number.)

CED 650-H1 CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

The course requires that you attend 3 of the 4 days of the Conference, as well as participate in a curriculum development component and online discussions afterward. You **MUST** have computer access and Internet capabilities, as Wayne State will be using the WebCT platform for the online follow-up component. All work must be completed and submitted by e-mail within WebCT by June 30th.

To enroll in the course call the Wayne State College Office of Continuing Education at 800.228.9972 ext. 7217 and ask for Lisa Reynolds. Tuition is \$490.50 (Nebraska Resident) plus a \$30 matriculation fee if you have never taken a course through WSC before.

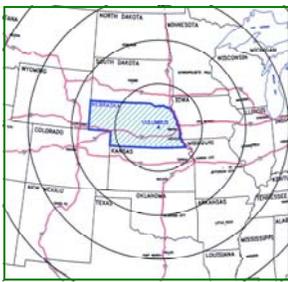
If you have any questions or want to see the course syllabus contact Dr. Patricia Arneson paarnes1@wsc.edu or call 1-800-228-9972 ext. 7255 (her office).

CITY BOASTS MANUFACTURING E'SHIP

By Adrian Sanchez, Columbus Telegram,
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This article was one in a series of stories about Columbus, Nebraska local entrepreneurs in honor of Entrepreneurship WEEK USA.

COLUMBUS - Columbus achieved the status as the biggest manufacturing community in the region because of entrepreneurial enterprises such as Behlen Mfg. Co. and Duo-Lift Mfg. Co. Inc.



Walt Behlen began Behlen Manufacturing Company in 1936 at the garage behind the local family home. Behlen is one of the most renowned entrepreneurs in the area, the state and in the nation and his eventual successor, Tony Raimondo, chairman and CEO of

Behlen Mfg., has received similar recognition.

Mary Ann Hruska, the daughter of Behlen described why her father began the business and was so driven to succeed.

“At the time he had been working for the Railway Express Agency for 25 years. He wasn't making very much money so he may have thought he could do better on his own,” Hruska said. “He had always been tinkering. He was intellectually driven. I don't think he ever read a novel. It was always science, always history, always geography.”

As a teenager Behlen faced many obstacles and after surviving kidney disease he was forced to work as a teen for the railroad because the family needed the money.

He later returned to school while maintaining his job at night and graduated from Columbus High School at the age of 24.

“He must have just had a unique set of molecules and atoms that pushed him,” Hruska said. “As time goes on we will probably have less ability to actually figure out who he was and how he became what he was.”

Behlen's first successful products, steel toe caps and reusable egg case lid clamps, led to other product ideas and the formation of a full-time manufacturing business in 1943.

“Once he had employees he felt strongly that he had a responsibility to his own family and a responsibility to see things go well for those employees, their families and the businesses that relied on those families for income,” Hruska said. “Once he started he needed to continue and had enormous fun doing it.”

She spoke highly of her dad's influence on the workers and his integrity operating the company.

The initial success may be attributed to employees who gave Behlen their all because they knew he was doing the same, Hruska said. “Every employee in the factory knew who he was because he worked with them and knew how to do what they were doing.”

She described how dedicated he was to his business even during difficult times, such as when the Wickes Corporation bought the company.

“It was sad for him that management change was made so drastically after he sold to them,” Hruska said. “He believed in (Behlen Manufacturing) so much he never sold a share of Wickes stock.”

Now the company is under the guidance of Raimondo, and she said her family is proud of the job he has done to turn the business around.



“As long as the Behlen name is on the building, we are proud it is being run with the same sort of integrity dad used,” Hruska said. “Although (Behlen) retired from work 40 years ago it is satisfying to know he is regarded today as still important.”

Behlen Mfg. Co. received Inc. Magazine's Turnaround Entrepreneur of the Year Award in 1994 under the direction of Raimondo and sales have grown from \$100 million at the time to \$200 million now.

Raimondo said his role as an entrepreneur was not just to grow a business, but to grow the people associated with the business.

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CITY BOASTS MANUFACTURING E'SHIP

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"Helping people grow has been the key to success, because a company can't grow unless the people grow, which is sometimes hard for people to see," he said.

Taking strategic risks and being innovative are two characteristics of successful entrepreneurs, Raimondo said.

"Walter Behlen was a classic entrepreneur because he risked his home ... everything," he said.

"Entrepreneurial people have to have that confidence in themselves to have the ability to take risks. That is something you are born with."

Jim Hellbusch was born with an entrepreneurial attitude, which, accompanied by his manufacturing abilities, led him to establish Duo-Lift in 1943.



Duo-Lift started as a part-time wagon-lift business and Jim built his father's business into an international manufacturing company. Today, Duo-Lift manufactures one of the largest lines of fertilizer trailers and running gears in the country and is known throughout the industry as a manufacturer of high quality equipment with special emphasis on safety.

Jim established a three-year timeline for the business to get off the ground, but his innovations and willingness to take on challenges others turn down grew a lasting, viable business.

"We'll do a lot of projects that other manufacturers turn down. It is gratifying to meet challenges and hear customers say 'This is exactly what I wanted.'"

At a young age Jim built a motorcycle and a two-seat car, things he said just came naturally to him. "It is just in my nature. I like to build things," Jim said. Jim's wife, Connie, said he has always had a creative mind and the desire to contribute.

"He is creative and thinks of need-based things to manufacture related to agriculture," Connie said. "Tell him what you need and he will figure out what he needs to do to make it happen."

Jim attributes a part of their success to his skilled workers and said he would like to expand operations and start a second shift, but is having difficulty hiring additional skilled workers.



"We pride ourselves on building a high quality product with an emphasis on safety," he said, and will not compromise quality of a product to increase numbers.

His advice for future entrepreneurs is to expect long work weeks and take educated risks.

"It is gratifying to know that you took a gamble and risked everything and came out successful," Jim said. "You have to be able to take the bad with the good."

Connie said for those thinking of being entrepreneurs you "have to be willing to work seven days a week and do whatever it takes to get the work done to be successful." Also, "start small and only add when you can afford it," she said, and have the ability to quickly adapt.

Jim said his mind is always on the business, but "I would love to develop that ability (to leave work behind) some day, but right now I can't."

Both emphasized the need to help grow the community.

Connie said business owners have the "responsibility to get involved in the community. Get involved in the community, in industry and take advantage of opportunities," she said, which can be key aspects of success.

Jim said that "part of being an entrepreneur is being able to dedicate part of your time to community development. I don't believe you should be an entrepreneur and stay in your own little world"

Reprinted with permission of the Columbus Telegram. Visual elements drawn from Community Facts, Columbus, NE, February 2005, www.ci.columbus.ne.us and Duo-Lift website, www.duolift.com.

NEW VENTURES WORLD COMPETITION WINNERS ANNOUNCED

The Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship recently hosted the 21st Annual New Ventures World Competition at the Embassy Suites in Lincoln, Nebraska.

The goal of the competition is to improve the chances of entrepreneurial success by exposing students to quality feedback, investment opportunities, and a chance to see some of the most competitive and innovative entrepreneurial enterprises in the world

Winners were announced in both the undergraduate and graduate categories.

Undergraduate:

1st Place-\$10,000: Effiventa; University of Manitoba
 2nd Place-\$3,000: Blue Sky Energy Solutions; University of Arizona
 3rd Place-\$2,000: logMedia; Syracuse University
 Honorable Mention, \$750: Great Plains Nursery; University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Graduate:

1st Place-\$15,000: Agile Sports Technology; University of Nebraska-Lincoln
 2nd Place-\$5,000: ViraTag LLC; Georgia Tech
 3rd Place-\$3,000: Macuclear; University of Texas-Austin
 Honorable Mention, \$1,000: Securamed Inc.; UCLA

Agile Sports Technology followed up the Graduate Division win with yet another win at the Nebraska Business Plan Competition. That one garnered them another \$25,000 in cash and services!

Agile Sports has created a product called the Huddle System. It takes a sports team's videos, playbooks, scouting reports and tests, and moves them to an interactive, user-friendly digital platform. They can then be downloaded to a laptop or other portable device. Agile is operated by John Wirtz, David Graff and Brian Kaiser.

FREE TEACHER RESOURCES – YES, FREE!

GoVenture offers an array of free teaching resources and there is no catch, no cost, no obligation, nothing you have to sign up for, no surveys to complete. How's that for a deal?

GoVenture is a leading educational publisher that has pioneered several innovations in educational software and frequently makes free resources available. By offering free resources, their objective is to help make teachers and students more successful, while hoping that by doing so it might prompt further review of other GoVenture educational games and simulations. The games and simulations are described as "highly realistic, interactive, fun learning experiences — software, board games, and more!"



Free Trial CD Package

If you like the free resources, you can a free trial CD of their games and simulations through the website or by calling toll-free **800.331.2282**. There is no cost or obligation and nothing to return.

Free online and paper-based resources include:

- Lesson Plans
- Crossword Puzzles
- Cryptograms
- Trivia Games
- Word Searches
- Mini Stock Market Simulation
- Business Games
- Idea Wrestler (evaluate a business idea)
- Self-Evaluation (do you have what it takes?)
- Business Planner (basic business plan template)
- Start a Business (summary)
- Discovery Center (business slideshows)
- POS software (cash register) for school stores
- Learning games for babies & toddlers
- Newsletter for Teachers

To explore the free resources, simply visit their website at www.goventure.net.

Businesses with fewer than five employees are accountable for over 16% of overall employment in Nebraska.

SMALL BUSINESS IS A JOB “GENERATOR”

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics recently reported that small businesses generated 65 percent of the net employment growth between September 1992 and March 2005.

Some detractors like to say that small business job generation is simply a myth. But, according to the Small Business Administration's Office of Advocacy, “the reality is that most net job creation takes place in the first two years of a firm's existence and within firms that employ fewer than 20 workers. Many of these firms will become fast-growing “gazelles” that will eventually grow to be large firms that employ hundreds or thousands of people. That growth is due to hard work, innovation, and risk taking by entrepreneurs who have a vision for the future and the pas-sion to turn dreams into reality.”



Office of Advocacy research shows that firms with fewer than 20 employees annually pay 45 percent more per employee than their larger counterparts to comply with federal regulations.

For More Information

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics tracked employment changes over a 13-year period and found that firms with fewer than 500 employees created 13.5 million of the 20.6 million net jobs generated by the private sector. See www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/cewfs.pdf.

The Office of Advocacy has published three studies on the cost impact of regulations since 1995:

W. Mark Crain, *The Impact of Regulatory Costs on Small Firms*, Sept. 2005, 93 pages. www.sba.gov/advo/research/rs264tot.pdf.

W. Mark Crain and Thomas D. Hopkins, *The Impact of Regulatory Costs on Small Firms*, Oct. 2001, 61 pages. www.sba.gov/advo/research/rs207tot.pdf.

Thomas D. Hopkins, *A Survey of Regulatory Burdens-Profiles of Regulatory Costs*, Nov. 1995, 103 pages. www.sba.gov/advo/research/rs1995hoptot.pdf.

VISA USA AND NFIB'S YEF ANNOUNCE NEW PARTNERSHIP

Visa USA announced in February that they will distribute a \$300,000 grant to the National Federation of Independent Business Young Entrepreneur Foundation to be a copresenting sponsor of NFIB YEF's innovative educational programs that aim to ignite the entrepreneurial spirit in students nationwide.

NFIB President and CEO Todd Stottlemeyer said the NFIB/Visa USA partnership is a solid step towards promoting careers in entrepreneurship to more high school and college aged students.

“The U.S. economy and our rapidly changing world of new ideas, products and technologies depend upon the entrepreneurial spirit flourishing in America,” Stottlemeyer said. “Having the support of Visa USA for NFIB's Young Entrepreneur Foundation initiatives is an acknowledgement that our programs truly do encourage students to become entrepreneurs. We are very excited about this partnership.”

Three primary resources that Visa's generous grant will sponsor include:

- **The Entrepreneur-in-the-Classroom** program (EITC) – a three-module curriculum designed to bring real life stories of entrepreneurship into the classroom.
- **Take Time to Teach (T3) Mentoring** – a program designed to familiarize teachers with the subjects of small business and entrepreneurship. NFIB-member entrepreneurs serve as mentors to educators and offer real-world advice and expertise on starting and running a business.
- **Johnny Money: The Online Game** – the third integral component of the EITC programs enhances students' exploration of the risks and rewards of small-business ownership. The game will be used to reinforce lessons learned through the EITC curriculum by simulating the day-to-day responsibilities of a small business.



NURTURING ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN NEBRASKA

A CASE STUDY IN ACTION: COLBY THOMSON & ALLIED STRATEGY

Article by Gregg Christensen
NDE Career Education Specialist

At the recent Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship's Hall of Fame Dinner and Awards Program, I had the unique pleasure of being seated near Colby Thomson.

During the dinner, Colby talked about his experiences in graduating from UNL's J.D. Edwards Program (undergraduate degree) and College of Business Administration MBA program, plus his entrepreneurial venture, Allied Strategy.

That conversation was intriguing so we followed up with an interview for *Nebraska E-News Monthly*. Colby took time from his incredibly busy schedule to meet with me just an hour before he was about to host the second meeting of the newly formed Young Professionals Entrepreneurship Group at Allied Strategy's offices in Lincoln! Read on to learn more about Colby, his life experiences as a young entrepreneur and Allied Strategy.

Starting Young

Colby related how his parents raised him not to have preconceived notions about careers. His mother had an independent career as a private investigator. His father served in the military as a pilot, owned a hair styling salon, and was a professional skier. As Colby said, he "Didn't have tough, in-bred assumptions about what a career was supposed to be."



Thanks to his father's professional skiing background, Colby garnered a summer job between 4th and 5th grade water skiing as part of a giant theme park attraction in

Japan. He purchased a computer with the money he earned, which then led him to take early college software programming classes...and that started him setting up computers for people.

Sparking Interest

During high school, an English teacher assigned a class project for students to start a small business and then write about their experiences. Colby managed to make

\$1,800 in just two weeks with his computer services business; and that definitely sparked his interest.

Between his sophomore and junior years in high school he got a job with an internet company during the dotcom boom. The company was eventually acquired and dissolved, but that led him to help start a company with other former employees and friends. He learned the intricacies of privately held stock, the need to be cautious and vigilant about people taking advantage of his youth, and even had a corner office—all while still in high school. That company eventually took a plunge during the Dotcom bust and was eventually sold.

It's All About Relationships

His experiences with that company gave him a connection with a person involved in founding a network security company. And, at the same time, he started a DJ business with a



friend producing mix-tapes, providing live entertainment, and having fun while earning money. But, most of that money was invested back into the business for high-tech equipment. As Colby stated, "It was a lot of fun, but not a real money-maker."

All of these were experiments on what he might want to do. He learned that there is a difference between doing what you enjoy and what can actually make money.

Compelling Ideas

When Colby entered college at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in the J.D. Edwards Honors Program he continued his work in connection with the internet security company. This work experience, his college classes, and previous entrepreneurial ventures combined to teach him that he needed to come up with a unique business idea that was compelling in order to be successful.

Segue now to his junior year, when he and partners did a class project for Mutual of Omaha through the J.D. Edwards Design Studio. The experience with this

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project caused them to see how much money could be made in the insurance industry and the business value of the concept they had developed.

This led Colby to take a business plan course at UNL in which he wrote a business plan for an idea specific to the insurance industry. He and his partners decided, based on their experience with Mutual of Omaha, to tailor the business plan to that concept idea and entered it in several competitions. They won several of them and large cash prizes resulted. In fact, their company was the first Nebraska winner of the UNL World Business Plan competition in its 18 year history.



The Value of Work Experience

While still attending UNL, Colby got a job with a large health care technology company in Kansas City. Although he had initially thought this would be a perfect match for him since it would involve helping people through health care, this was not the case. He felt limited by his very focused job role and 9 to 5 hours. Accomplishing more just got him more work with no added financial benefit.

During this time, his mother happened to see an article in the newspaper about a networking forum for entrepreneurs (Entrepreneurs Exchange) being hosted in the city. He registered and it became a crucial turning point for him. As he stated, he “got lots of inspiration, heard great speakers, bought several books, and networked like crazy.”

One speaker had just sold his company, had a background in the insurance industry, and was a UNL Grad. He and Colby went to dinner and Colby pitched his business plan idea to him. Owners of another small start-up company he met liked the idea, wanted to help, and offered a free location for their servers (a \$750 a month expense savings). All of this made Colby and his partners feel supported by the Kansas City entrepreneurship community, where Colby later started an organization for Young Entrepreneurs.

Small businesses added approximately 8,000 net new jobs, or just under one-third of all new jobs in the state, between 2002 and 2003.

Advice from Colby—Lessons Learned

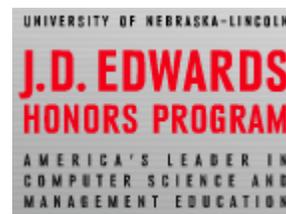
Colby advises that “It’s important to take things one step at a time.”

Critical to gaining venture capital is due diligence. This involved constantly refining the business plan while entering it into competition. The competitions they won allowed them to buy laptops and other equipment with the cash awards. Eventually they found that they were getting conflicting advice from competition judges, which meant they had reached a point of diminishing returns from these competitions.

Colby shared a theory of his, “As you gain competency in a subject, you can measure your progress on the learning curve by looking back at how embarrassed you are with your past work. This is what business plans are good for... getting your stupidity out on the table so others can help clue you in and check your assumptions. When you can look back after a few months and not cringe reading it to your peers, you may be on to something.”

Benefits of Attending UNL

Throughout Colby’s undergrad and grad programs, he and co-founders Jeff Runyan and Britton Nielsen received scholarships and stipends through the J.D. Edwards Honors program that paid for their college degrees.



While he and his company partners were finishing their undergraduate degrees and working on their MBA classes, they hired teams of student software developers through the J.D. Edwards Design Studio to help build the software infrastructure for their business. They had to pay for this privilege, but the up-side was that they were able to have a little office at the university, rent-free. To learn more about the J.D. Edwards Honors Program, go to <http://jdedwards.unl.edu/>.

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By working while going to school Colby learned a lot of lessons. One of the biggest is that “You need to learn the ropes first, and then start the business.” During the MBA program, he and his partners completed course projects that related to their company. It made what they were learning contextual and much more valuable and helped to prepare them for the fulltime launch of their company.

More Lessons

Colby shared that he and his partners started out extremely idealistic. One of the most helpful and encouraging things that happened during college is that IBM brought in top software engineers in financial services who reviewed their project and technologies. The engineers said their concept was five to ten years ahead of the industry. This was both extremely encouraging *and* inspiring because these were incredibly intelligent engineers who KNEW the business and the concept. Plus, they came back and visited with Colby and his associates in subsequent years.

Another valuable lesson learned was that because they were on the “bleeding edge” with their concept and the



Colby Thomson in the nerve center of Allied Strategy

tools and components they used to build their software, their infrastructure had “bugs” that required the fixing or switching out of the open source components they relied on. It had to be re-architected several times.

Also, they were trying to sell a concept in a very risk-averse industry.

Industry professionals would love the idea, but their Boards of Directors would say no, preferring that critical enterprise business systems be purchased from companies such as IBM and Microsoft. In one case, an Insurance company asked them to help them build their own internal version of the same system so it could be considered an in-house project.

Youth is a Double-Edge Sword

The Allied Strategy partners realized over time that youth caused large insurance corporations to question the longevity of a company like theirs (new start-up). They began to see a pattern emerging that their current

offering would be a difficult sell coming from their new company. This caused them to shelve the product they had spent so much time on and focus on another insurance innovation they felt would be more marketable given their situation. A few months prior they had hired a J.D. Edwards intern (Clay Stevens) to try to solve a long-standing industry issue that forced insurance agents to re-enter applicant data for every insurance company from which they wished to receive a quote. The intern developed and helped patent a solution to Colby’s challenge, which brought national attention to the company, and drew the remainder of the company’s resources away from the original idea.



Why Lincoln?

As the company continued their work, the intent was to move to Kansas City. Their investor was there, many of their resources were there, and the company that was providing them free server space was there.

*“Hey, we want you to be here.”
—Jim Krieger, The Gallup Organization*

Lincoln did NOT have this, but Jim Krieger, CFO of the Gallup Organization said, “Hey, we want you to be here,” and gave pause to consider sticking around.

Another plus for Lincoln is that some of the company members had developed roots in Lincoln. In addition, the J.D. Edwards program, with the ready pool of interns, was an asset. All of these factors caused them to stay in Lincoln.

A top priority that Colby says that Nebraska desperately needs to address is angel investors (venture capitalists) with diversified portfolios willing to take high-risks for high return. These investors know that if they invest in fifteen diversified startup businesses with

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high growth potential, only one or two may succeed, but they can still make a tremendous amount of money.

Mindset for an Entrepreneur

Allied Strategy's product is still in testing but they have set up test sites around the United States and are already working with insurance agents in the European Union. Colby understands that innovation carries with it risk, and a fiduciary duty to investors to honor their investment goals. In his words, "It either needs to work or we need to move on to another idea."



Allied Strategy staff brainstorm ideas for product solutions.



It's the staff of Allied Strategy that makes all the difference!

Colby emphasized that "they need to have a mindset that it is ok to fail, solving a problem takes time, and persistence and a good head on your shoulders. Entrepreneurs identify a compelling need, come up with an innovative solution, and implement a responsible plan to see if it works in the marketplace. That's the best you can do. It's a high risk endeavor. If you're going to do this professionally, you need to be realistic as to when it is time to move on to another idea and when it is not."

Another realization is that the entrepreneurship experiences and graduating from the J.D. Edwards Program and UNL MBA programs gave them a tremendous network of contacts in the corporate world (job connections) if the company does not succeed. Many of the team members have received lucrative offers and unexpected corporate attention since founding the company. Colby was recently approached by a talent search for a C level position in the banking industry, but turned it down citing the fun he was having innovating with his friends.

And, Colby said that an advantage to being young is that people are willing to help you. They have also taken great pride in helping other area entrepreneurs to start their businesses and to raise funding. As Colby

says, helping others is often the best way to learn yourself. Some of Colby's friends and classmates at J.D. Edwards have followed their lead and moved in right down the hall to start football software company Agile Sports.

Agile Sports has followed a similar pattern (see page 6, this issue), winning business plan competitions, purchasing J.D. Edwards Design Studio projects, and raising capital. Both Agile Sports and Allied Strategy, were founded by teams of three J.D. Edwards students with technical backgrounds and MBAs. These primarily out-of-state students, have now come to Nebraska and created high growth technology companies in downtown Lincoln. There is even a plan to create a downtown technology incubator.

Snapshot of Allied Strategy

Taking a snapshot of Allied Strategy now, they have approximately seven full-time employees and six part-time. It is very fluid because of interns from the J.D. Edwards program.

One of the benefits Allied Strategy can offer is flexibility. Employees can work the hours they want, when they want, at the location they want. Allied Strategy is competing on quality of life, while still offering a nationally competitive salary. And, they support employees with their professional goals, such as paying for them to attend conferences and to travel abroad. These are the things that keep staff motivated and enjoying their work.

Final Thoughts



"Keeping your mind open is the most important part. What you realize is that if you act responsibly, you have other opportunities to pursue the lifestyle you desire in the future. It pays to make good decisions, and to have an honest and open dialog with your investors." These are great concepts for any entrepreneur, young or old, to keep in mind.

Nebraska and Lincoln has a great resource in Colby and his Allied Strategy partners. Let's hope we can build the network of angel investors, support systems, and active/vital lifestyle that will continue this momentum.

MENTORING BY THE MASTERS INTERACTIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP VIDEO CONFERENCE

The Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship and Nebraska Community Colleges are proudly presenting “Mentoring by the Masters” Interactive Entrepreneurship Video Conference from 5:30-7:30 p.m. (CST) on April 26, 2007. The conference, originally scheduled to be broadcast during EntrepreneurshipWeek USA, was postponed because of a blizzard.



The theme is practical insights from the “Masters” into starting and growing your own business.

Entrepreneurship students and enthusiasts of all types are invited to participate in the interactive panel discussion with some of Nebraska’s successful entrepreneurs. Students, business owners, and community members from across the state will have the rare opportunity to interact with a live panel of entrepreneurial “Masters” via videoconference. The panel will be videocast from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (Teacher’s College room 202, 14th & Vine) to 6 Nebraska Community College host sites. Those who are not able to attend one of the host locations will be able to view the event on their personal computer via web-stream.

Panel participants include:

- Allen Dayton- Founder & CEO, Video Services of America
- Joseph Knecht- Managing Partner, i2rd
- Mike Browne- Managing Partner, Labadie Communications
- Herb Mast- Founder & CEO, NoBrainer

NEBRASKA ANGELS TAKE WING



Nebraska Angels is a newly formed independent consortium of individual angel investors. The consortium’s mission is to provide opportunities for members to obtain outstanding financial returns by investing in promising early-stage companies primed for expansion.

A core group of successful business professionals formed Nebraska Angels, Inc., in the spring of 2006. Members have ties to Nebraska and are experienced entrepreneurs, CEOs, venture capitalists and business leaders who have funded and built successful

Glenn Friendt, Director of the Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship, will moderate the discussion, along with UNL alum Heather Byers, founder of the start-up company, Great Plains Nursery. The panel members will share their lessons of entrepreneurial success and then respond to questions from the statewide audience.

The cost to attend is FREE; however, seating capacity at each host site is limited. Please contact the following people to reserve your seat for the live event.

- UNL, Lincoln—Ryan Bourlier, 402.472.0629, rbourlie@unlnotes.unl.edu
- Southeast Community College, Lincoln—Tim Mittan, 402.437.2524, tmittan@southeast.edu
- Central Community College, Grand Island—Gene Manhart, 308.398.7468, gmanhart@cccneb.edu
- Central Community College, Hastings—Laura Bulas, 402.461.2516, lbulas@cccneb.edu
- Central Community College Columbus—Doris Lux, 402.562.1242, dlux@cccneb.edu
- Northeast Community College, Norfolk—Joe Ferguson, 402.844.7236, joe@northeastcollege.com
- Mid-Plains Community College, McCook—Carol Stensvad, 308.345.8122, stensvad@mpcc.edu

Live web-stream for personal computers is also available. To reserve your digital seat, please email event coordinator, Ryan Bourlier (rbourlie@unlnotes.unl.edu). You will receive a confirmation email along with viewing instructions. QuickTime software is necessary for viewing (Free download available at <http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/win.html>).

companies. They mentor and coach the entrepreneurs in whom they invest, serve on their boards, provide contacts and assist with team building, strategic planning and fundraising.

Membership in Nebraska Angels is by invitation only, and is extended to individuals who share the group’s vision and will actively contribute to their process. For more information about NAI, e-mail info@nebraskaangels.org or write to NAI, 140 N. 8th Street, Suite 416, Lincoln, NE. 68508, <http://www.nebraskaangels.org>.

Targeted Teaching Topic



DESIGNING FOR THE FUTURE

Business 2.0 magazine announced its “11 Coolest New Products on the Planet” in the April 2007 issue. The cover states, “The winners of our annual design contest are indeed great-looking—but they look even better on their creator’s bottom line.”

Great design has to be much more than just being “pretty” according to the author, Bob Parks. He states that, “When done right, design increases the value of a product by attracting attention, increasing sales, and nurturing customer loyalty.

The judging panel found themes emerging: (1) customization (2) elegant sophistication (3) use of recyclable materials (4) clear contribution to the success of the company.

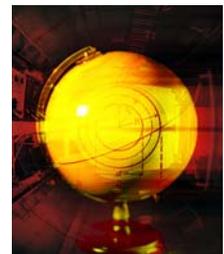
By looking at the design winners, it’s obvious that creativity, combined with form and function made them candidates to be winners. Let’s look at just a few of the winners:

- Kodak EasyShare V570 Digital Camera—The camera has a dual lens system and uses a “retro-cool” design. It has two independent lenses: one for zoom and one for wide-angle shots. The bottom line for Kodak is the camera helped increase gross profit margins from 19 to 28 percent.
- Electrolux Jeppe Utzon BBQ—How about a \$7,100 grill that sold out its first two production runs? It’s a stainless steel table with special panels that slide out to reveal a diamond grill and hot plate! When you’re not cooking, slide the cover back and you have a beautiful patio table!
- Mio DigiWalker H60 GPS Guidebook—This device allows a person to find a special café while walking around town; not just navigate up the nearest mountain. It integrates full GPS mapping in a “slick, pocket-size package.”

As you look at these and the other design winners, creativity and thinking about products and services in different ways along with combining design elements plus functionality (usefulness) got them the awards. For entrepreneurs, these are important lessons to be learned and put into practice.

Keeping with this theme, during the recent Small Business Summit (a five-day online event sponsored by Microsoft), author Guy Kawasaki offered his thoughts on why it’s essential to innovate—and how to do it. Based on his book *Rules for Revolutionaries*, Guy’s presentation laid out the strategic steps to create new products and services. Guy believes that great products must be **DICEE**.

- **D**eep – Must do it all!
- **I**ntelligent – Somebody must be thinking; have a clever idea.
- **C**ompleteness – It’s the totality of the product and experience. For example, how Lexus does presale, postsale and support so well.
- **E**legant – No steep learning curve. An example is the IPOD.
- **E**motive – Make you feel very passionate about them.



Great products can’t be just good, they have to sell! History is littered with wonderful products that were great ideas, but just could not spark enough interest to make their creators profitable.

Sources: *2007 Bottom Line Design Awards* by Bob Parks, Business 2.0, pages 67-74; Small Business Summit, <https://www.sbsummit.com/home.aspx>.

BECA AFTER HOURS BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEUR RESOURCE NETWORKING

River Country Economic Development Corporation has extended an invitation to BECA After-Hours Networking events on April 26 and May 1. The April 26th event will be held in Nebraska City at the Kimmel Education and Research Center from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. The May 1st event will be held at the Auburn State Bank from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

BECA AFTER HOURS A BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEUR RESOURCE NETWORKING SOCIAL

The BECA education and networking program is a collaborative effort of several communities (Auburn, Tecumseh, Nebraska City) and a number of regional service providers including Auburn Economic Development, Tecumseh Economic Development, River Country Economic Development, Rural Enterprise Assistance Project, Southeast Nebraska EDGE Coalition and the University of NE-Lincoln

Education Extension. Funding for this program has been provided in part by the participating communities and entities and through a Building Entrepreneurial Communities Act Grant funded through the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, administered by the Rural Development Commission.

The goal of this program is to stimulate economic growth in Southeast Nebraska through the education and development of potential entrepreneurs and current small business owners. The event is a great way to gather resource and financial information, develop networking relationships and promote the positive aspects of building and growing a business in Southeast Nebraska.

If you have any questions, contact Pat Haverty, Executive Director, River Country Economic Development Corporation, 402.873.4293, www.rivercountryedc.org.

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For timely information on topics related to entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education (K-20) at the local, state, regional, national and international levels and to share information with others, sign up for the Nebraska Entrepreneurship Education Listserv log on to:

<http://lists.k12.ne.us/mailman/listinfo/entre-ed>



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