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TechFire Teaches Lean Startup Methods for Business Model Generation

Keith Gordon, Director of TechFire

Most startups and businesses that come to TechFire are looking for more than good advice. They are usually looking for three things: (1) help with their technology or prototypes (ETC's specialty), (2) back-office business support (TechFire network's specialty), and (3) standardized mentoring that results in value added in less time (TechFire mentors specialty). I'd like to take this moment to tell you more about the Lean Startup method; one of the key methods that our serial entrepreneurs use to mentor and educate our young companies about value creation and their nascent markets.

When the National Science Foundation (NSF) seriously explored why so many of their investments in startup and business commercialization resulted in so little return on investments (ROI), it led directly to the investigation into the premises that young companies use to startup. By searching for mentorship that worked, they discovered that no real "process" yet existed by which to standardize and teach value creation and market demand discovery. In the process of linking up with Stanford professor and serial entrepreneur Steve Blank, the Lean Startup method was born. The method itself teaches that if value is to be created and a business model is to launch on solid footing, then targeted market research, customer discovery and value propositions have to be

advanced, challenged and reconciled. The Lean Startup method offers quite a bit more than just that, however once NSF realized these notions and built the curriculum, they watched their commercialization rates soar.

TechFire, through our partnerships with MTech (a University of Maryland Incubator and Value propagation source), has fully embraced the Lean Startup method. TechFire is one of the only incubators in the country to use this cutting-edge new foundation to guide our clients! In fact, TechFire not only administers the process to our clients, our serial entrepreneurs are industry mentors in the DC I-Corps process (the Lean Startup 8 week course in DC). TechFire has also engaged in partnership with the College of Southern MD to offer TechFire services and Lean Startup education on campus! You can find TechFire mentors at CSM on the first Friday of each month, so please reach out to us if you are interested in learning more, or just stop by for a visit! Let TechFire introduce you to what will greatly increase your chances at real business success!

Building Collaboration

The Army Research Lab has recently launched a new pilot program that would enable academia, industry professionals, and government employees to work more collaboratively. The Open Campus Concept (OCC) will develop an environment that fosters innovation, collaboration and superior performance. It will also lead to the continuous flow of people and ideas to ensure transformative scientific discovery, innovation and transition that are critical to national security. ARL is capitalizing on the widely acknowledged model that innovation depends on bringing multiple disciplines together to engage in collaborative projects that often yield unpredictable, but highly productive results. By bringing together academia, industry and government, the Army believes it can enhance its performance through onsite R&D collaboration.

There are multiple benefits of getting involved with the OCC program. Besides unique access to facilities and shared human capital, the program exposes collaborators to new ideas and areas for collaboration, which could lead to joint proposal funding and support in the form of collaboration from ARL scientists and engineers. In addition to learning insight into S&T challenges that the Army faces, the career development and personal growth opportunity cannot be overlooked. The OCC is a novel opportunity that will increase public involvement and understanding of defense science, technology and exploration. It has the additional benefit of inspiring an entrepreneurial community in the process.



The pilot program plans to open their Adelphi, MD location first. ARL is conducting a recruitment campaign seeking the best visiting scientific partners in such disciplines as low dimensional electronics, multi-scale materials, biological sciences, cyber security, and other critical Army technology areas. ARL will be physically opening designated portions of ARL Adelphi Laboratory Center to local academic and industry partners. This Adelphi location spans three research buildings and includes access to ARL's state-of-the-art clean room. The space will be dedicated to partners conducting unclassified fundamental research in materials, electronics and intelligent systems.

ETC and TechFire are proud to announce that we are collaborating with ARL to launch the Open Campus Concept and assist community involvement in collaborating within an ideal entrepreneurial ecosystem. ETC's industry knowledge and partnerships with many local colleges and universities, will enable the team to play a fundamental role in the creation of this environment that will assist in technology transfer and conduct truly innovative research and development.

TechFire Value & Graduates:

Two Graduates on what they do and where TechFire added value

Kingdomware Technologies® develops custom web, software, data & mobile applications solutions for government, businesses and nonprofits. Kingdomware also provides web based mass notification, incident management, document storage, human relations and indirect rates calculation solutions. Our experience with TechFire was invaluable and focused on ChurchNotifier.com – our web based solution for churches. ChurchNotifier.com helps churches or ministries notify, remind, connect, reach and teach its members, ultimately building up the church community as a whole. When it comes to ChurchNotifier.com, TechFire helped Kingdomware connect with their prospective customers, see through their customers' eyes and refine their value proposition to attract them. We are already experiencing an increase in interest and sales as a result.

A-JAC Services, LLC, is certified as a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB) and Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) company that provides customized IT services to government and commercial organizations throughout the United States since 2012. A-JAC Services are a Logistics and Information Technology service provider with capabilities to support a wide range of integrated business solutions. A-JAC's

methods ensure the best bond between technology and business processes and delivers quantifiable benefits to our customers. Our goal is to identify and navigate growth opportunities within the federal and commercial sectors. Our services include, but not limited to: Logistics & Office Services and IT Operations & Management.

TechFire was very inspirational in helping A-JAC move to the next level by offering critical feedback in key areas, such as communications, interpersonal relationships, technical abilities, and change management. We learned from TechFire's expertise about completing a strong Operating Agreement and TechFire gave us access to a friendly ear with which to share frustrations as well as successes.

TechFire has highly skilled employees and has the experience of getting companies to the next level with its professional business structure. A-JAC gained a significant amount of business knowledge through the discussion of topics such as setting short term to long term goals, and developing a solid business structure, to operate a business starting from day one. The one-on-one meetings with TechFire's serial entrepreneurs are highly beneficial to A-JAC Services' growth.

Our TechFire Network is Over 100 Strong!

Here are some recent partnerships:



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