

Southern Alberta Intellectual Property Network Conference, March 1, 2007

Posted At : March 3, 2007 4:02 PM | Posted By : Tom West

Related Categories: Web 2.0, Business Process Management (BPM), Conferences, ERP, Collaboration Products, Tom's_Blog, CRM, Social Network, social engineering

Southern Alberta Intellectual Property Network Conference, March 1, 2007

I attended the [Southern Alberta Intellectual Property Network Conference](#), in the University of Calgary Dinning Centre. I attended the conference representing our company so I could learn more about the way people are collaborating with each other to achieve extraordinary research and development. I enjoyed most of the conference and learned a few things as well. After several years of building up [our business](#) and going through the harsh realities of business cycles both up and down, I found much more kindred spirits at [Don Tapscott's](#) presentation in the Palliser Hotel, but that is fodder for another Blog. Following is a blow by blow of the conference from my point of view.

Paul Cataford, President and CEO of [University Technologies International](#), started the meeting off with a presentation that was as close as possible to creating some imaginative thought on how to collaborate and how to get the money to do so. Paul is a veteran of several years in Silicon Valley working with venture capital groups, I'll bet he has some stories! Paul organized the Conference with [Janet Scholtz](#) and others. Thank you Paul and Janet.

[Dr. Richard Hawkins](#), Canada Research Chair in Science, Technology, and Innovation - University of Calgary, was next up. Dr. Hawkins' main ideas were mostly related to getting Canadians to start thinking like his colleagues in Holland and put more money and thought into the necessity of collaborating. Dr. Hawkins felt the Europeans have R&D well figured out and we would do well to take their lead. Certainly Dr. Hawkins' years of "been there seen that" should be credibility enough for this community to take his words seriously. Dr. Hawkins has invited questions and discussion on this matter.

[Dr. Peter Hackett](#), President and CEO of the Alberta Ingenuity Fund, was next up. Dr. Hackett has a very impressive background and he challenged the academics and researchers in the room to go from 15th to 5th in the World and to do so we must spend roughly \$24 billion in new R&D. The only problem he can see is that virtually no business is willing for this as they can't see the \$240 billion they would expect from that type of investment, interesting point and probably the very reason we are lagging from a one time 5th place to our now lowly 15th place. Dr. Hackett sees collaboration as the only way to create an environment of integrated efforts toward grand challenges. Dr. Hackett and Ingenuity want to hear proposals from universities and businesses alike to create catalytic change in our world, sounds like an open invitation for financing BIG IDEAS.

Bruce Wallace, Director of Innovation Development, [Alberta Association of Colleges and Technical Institutes](#) with [Rick Tofani](#), Director of Applied Research and Innovation - [Red Deer College](#) spoke next. They spoke of Competency Clusters, Community of Practice (COP). This is a "newish" for us in Alberta. It is the first run at a truly collaborative environment to nurture specific knowledge bases and designed to make breakthroughs. Rick mentioned that there is a considerable push for R&D for Bio-Fuel, lots of money and activity as we desperately need a breakthrough in alternative fuels. Interesting and fresh approach, hope it works as planned.

[Robert Therrien](#), Portfolio Manager - NSERC Partnership Programs spoke of money that is available to Advanced Communication and Information Management R&D efforts. Robert invited inquiry and suggested interested parties look at the [website](#).

Derek Gratz, President and CEO of [WestLink Innovation Network](#) is at the helm of a very interesting organization. Mr. Gratz presented WestLink as an innovative organization formed to facilitate communication, collaboration and technology development and commercialization in Western Canada. The organization offers collaborative memberships and has helped several ideas get commercialized. The thing that got my attention is the [Flintbox](#) software they use as an online platform for linking interested parties to academic research and intellectual property. Flintbox is essentially an online community that is used to collaborate and post work for other members to be able to access.

Dr. Dan Doll, Associate Director, [Hotchkiss Brain Institute](#) - University of Lethbridge came up for the day to speak with us about their program and how they use unique collaboration methodologies to make some breakthroughs in brain research. Dr. Doll and HBI is big on physical proximity based on programs and areas of research. For instance the epilepsy and Parkinson's teams are located together, so you may have Bio-Engineers located next to Neurosurgeons, this is new as just about every research facility has their teams scattered amongst their own functional groups. The new approach is directly responsible for recent findings in MS and drug treatments that help with this debilitating disease.

[Dr. Steve Larter](#), [Canada Research Chair in Petroleum Geology](#), [AIF Scholar](#), [Co-director Alberta Ingenuity Centre for In Situ Energy \(AICISE\)](#), is a business minded person and had loads of interesting advice to R&D people. Here are some gems from Dr. Larter:

1. Need a Project Manager for R&D projects, need to keep the project moving and tracked.
2. Need an up to date website for the project team
3. Consortiums are necessary, but they create a huge overhead of admin, need to be careful that this doesn't adversely effect the project.
4. Collaboration works best if people are not competing

Dr. Alex Zahavich, Director, Applied Research and Innovation Services - [SAIT Polytechnic](#) is a big supporter of academic research sharing with the commercial sector. As Dr. Zahavich rightfully stated, 98% of business is Small to Mid-Sized (SMB) and they need some place to go for help with R&D. With one in twelve of these projects being successful in SAIT, it was nice that Mr. Neil Werfhorst, General Manager - Marketing, [Conematic Heating Systems Inc.](#) was on hand. Mr. Werfhorst is the proud recipient of co-developed technology with SAIT that they are selling into the market place. This successful project is proof positive that a properly managed R&D program can work and can generate substantial commercial traction. Conematic started in 2000 and now has 26 employees and a patented hybrid heating system, good story guys, I am a big supporter of [SAIT](#) as they are a class act and it looks like Conematic is a pretty grateful as well.

Dr. Peter Zizler, **Department of Mathematics, Physics, and Engineering - Mount Royal College**, is an Applied Mathematician and he shared some of his research in Wavelet Crime Reduction. Dr. Zizler considers this a mathematical problem and has put together a team of programmers, and scientists and has some very conclusive results. This program was funded by several sources and uses several collaborative techniques to broaden their reach outside of the little group that is working on the problem.

Dr. Scott Oddie, Principal Investigator - **Red Deer College** gave the final presentation. Dr. Oddie is in the middle of several projects including Adverse Drug Interactions, Geriatric Health Service and Education Needs Assessments, and several other smaller projects. The interesting angle on Dr. Oddie's work is the collaborative methodology they are employing and the way they are reaching out the community for research participants and control groups.

I just wanted to mention that **Association of Science and Engineering Technology (ASET)** was a sponsor of the conference. This is the second time in a month they've come across the radar. I looked into their program a bit and even wrote about them in an old Blog. I think they are worth the attention of all the technology businessmen in Alberta. I was first introduced to ASET by Don Bunch as he is was a very impressive speaker at the **Welding Automation: A Forum for Small and Medium Companies** forum held last month in Edmonton. The ASET program is a valuable source of producing certified technicians and technologists. The program is collaborative and quite different from traditional programs. There are also eight trades currently being considered for this program. The industry dictates their needs to the ASET and programs are created based on the needs (<http://www.advancededucation.gov.ab.ca/appren/>).

Being in the collaborative software business, my thoughts are pretty clearly skewed to solving the issues that this group face on a daily basis. I think that every single entity in the conference can benefit from web-based collaboration tools. It is important with intellectual property to protect it so the investors are rewarded, you have to have a collaborative platform that respects these requirements, not to blow our horn too much, but the **MyCompany Toolbox** is an excellent way for people to work together in a secure environment.

Tom West, Technical Toolboxes Canada, Ltd., twest@ttoolboxes.ca, +1 403 235-3495 x201, www.ttoolboxes.ca, Skype: **twest1960**