



The Catalyst January '10 Edition

Join us February 4th for our next big event!

February's just around the corner... are you ready to mingle with over 200 people interested in business start-ups and entrepreneurship endeavors? Entrepreneurs, service providers, the BizStarts Board of Directors, Governing Council members and more will all gather as BizStarts honors **Gale Klappa**, CEO of We Energies, for his support of BizStarts Milwaukee. Come and join us!! [Find out more here.](#)

Thursday, February 4
4:30 pm to 6:30 pm

Crowne Plaza, 10499 Innovation Drive, Wauwatosa
Appetizers and Cash bar
No cost to attend

BizStarts' 1st Anniversary Recap

Approximately half of all new businesses do not survive their first year. BizStarts has moved into Year 2 with an eye on reducing the number of business failures by helping more entrepreneurs in the Milwaukee 7 region get their businesses up and running... and prospering.

With reflections from **Dan Steininger** and **John Torinus** as well as sound advice from **George Mosher**; a wealth of entrepreneurs, investors and others in attendance celebrated all this and more:

- BizStartsMilwaukee.com had 81,000 hits in its first year.
- Four successful network events, each with over 200 attendees. Some ventures have launched as a result of these events!
- BizStarts Buzz: slowly but surely, Milwaukee is changing to the "We Can Do It!" kind of culture.
- BizStarts Learn: all 20 colleges in the region are involved and collaborating. Entrepreneurship educators are comparing curriculum, exchanging coursework, and working together for the benefit of all students interested in entrepreneurship.
- Venture Track. BizStarts has completed two TechVenture classes so far, with budding entrepreneurs of all ages and backgrounds developing business plans and forming relationships to help turn their ideas into thriving businesses in the region.
- Six Venture Track firms have been matched with mentors (highly successful entrepreneurs volunteering their time and expertise)



Left: Owen Perry from Perry affordable Framing chats with Dan Rauwerdink from M&I Bank, one of the sponsors of BizStarts Milwaukee.

Right: View from above in the Pabst Brewery; where Dan Steininger, John Torinus and George Mosher addressed many an entrepreneur that night.

BizStarts Milwaukee releases first annual report

Now that BizStarts' first anniversary has passed, BizStarts' first annual report is now available! It was an exceptional first year for BizStarts Milwaukee and the annual report provides an excellent overview of BizStarts accomplishments. Learn more about the organization and its successes by viewing or downloading the report [here](#).

FastTrac[®] TechVenture[™] - *Focus on the Business*

One of BizStarts Milwaukee's key initiatives is Venture Track, a program designed to increase the number of successful fast-growing companies in the region through education, mentoring and networking. A key component of this program is the FastTrac TechVenture. Twelve participants completed the second FastTrac TechVenture class on November 19, 2009, co-sponsored by the UW-Parkside Small Business Development Center and BizStarts Milwaukee.

The FastTrac TechVenture series of classes takes an analytical look at innovative-based, technology or life sciences-based businesses with a goal of a completed business plan. What many of the entrepreneurs like best about the classes are the contacts they make and the one-on-one assistance in areas that are critical to the near-term and long-term success of their business.

The classes aren't a typical business planning course. The key ingredients are experiential learning, focused time with experts, peer support and one-on-one coaching specific to the needs of each business. The class facilitators are knowledgeable with an in-depth understanding of growing a business. They introduce participants to the tools needed to evaluate a venture and find financing to build a sustainable business.

The next TechVenture class will run from March 15th until May 24th. To learn more, or enroll in the class, contact **Matt Wagner** at wagner@uwp.edu or **Chelsea Krause** at <mailto:techventure@bizstartsmilwaukee.com>.

FUEL Milwaukee helps kick off new Coaching Program for Innovative High-Growth Companies

A new coaching program has been developed with the help of FUEL Milwaukee. The coaching program is designed to nurture and further develop TechVenture graduates or others who have finished a technology based or life sciences business plan but need further refinements and guidance as they continue to develop their concepts into viable businesses.



BizStarts Milwaukee Inc. was selected for FUEL Milwaukee's Adopt-a-Nonprofit program. FUEL Milwaukee is an economic development initiative of the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce (MMAC) and is the largest professional network of its kind. They specialize in helping companies and individuals connect in the increasingly competitive, ever-changing world of work.

Coaches are volunteers who serve as advisors, guest speakers or provide one-on-one coaching to entrepreneurs during the development phase of their business planning process. Coaches typically are 'experts' in a particular field or want to help entrepreneurs during their development phase. BizStarts Staff or volunteers match coaches with entrepreneurs based on expertise and need.

If you are interested in becoming a coach or want to receive coaching assistance and meet the Venture Track criteria, please contact:

<mailto:venturetrack@bizstartsmilwaukee.com>

October College Consortium meeting featured “Engaging the Business Community”

The October 28th BizStarts college consortium meeting at Discovery World featured excellent presentations on engaging the business community by Kanti Prasad, Bostrom Professor of Entrepreneurship, UWM and Woodie Adkins, G. Woodrow Adkins, Adjunct Professor & Uihlein/Spitzer Chair of Entrepreneurship, MSOE. Whether it's serving as an Adjunct Professor, an "Entrepreneur-in-Residence", a judge, an event sponsor, a fund raiser or a guest speaker, business people play very important roles in the success of entrepreneur programming on college campuses in the region.

If you would like to get involved in helping one or more of the 20 colleges in the region with their entrepreneur courses and other programming, please call **Penny Scheuerman** at 414-221-3018 or email her at penny.scheuerman@we-energies.com to discuss your interest.

Featured Inspirational Entrepreneurs: Joe Bartolotta, *Bartolotta Restaurant Group* Mike Harris, *Patina Solutions*

Amidst an October breakfast smorgasbord and the Art Deco style of We Energies' Auditorium, business leaders, aspiring entrepreneurs and college students alike gathered to hear stories, tips and words of wisdom from two highly successful Milwaukee 7 entrepreneurs at the first BizStarts Milwaukee "Inspirational Entrepreneur" event.

Joe Bartolotta, President of Bartolotta Restaurant Group, began with some history... and some lessons.



The first lesson - with apologies to university administrators reading this - is that you don't have to go to college to succeed in business. Joe Bartolotta didn't. He worked at UPS, tended bar and eventually learned about the restaurant business with friends- and family-owned businesses in New York.

Mike Harris, CEO of Patina Solutions (left) and Joe Bartolotta (right) accept their gifts from BizStarts for getting up early and hanging out with us.

Once Joe returned to Milwaukee, his entrepreneur side took over. With help from an investor, he started his first restaurant in 1994 and worked nights, weekends and holidays. While the first venture had to fold, lessons were learned and today Joe sits atop a mini-empire that includes Lake Park Bistro, Bacchus, Mr. B's, Ristorante Bartolotta, Pizzeria Piccola and a catering division that has fed many of us at a slew of events.

Joe's advice now that he has 10 businesses with 460 employees?

- Realize your weaknesses and accept them
- Capitalize on your creative side
- Balance romantic vision with reality
- Surround yourself with people good at doing things you don't like to do
- Create a customer who has an emotional connection with your company.
- Make your mistakes with other people's money

For those particularly interested in the highly competitive restaurant business, Joe recommends that you have a "hospitality gene". Joe still interviews and hires every employee, making sure they have the "hospitality gene" too.

Joe Bartolotta takes leadership seriously, remembering the Italian proverb "A fish stinks from the head." He suggests being decisive and protecting your brand. He also recommends "playing ball" with the charities (his company's foundation is called the "Care-a-lottas") and including your employees in company financial information.

Mike Harris, CEO, Patina Solutions, also discussed his experience with the attendees. Unlike Joe, Mike went the VC (venture capital) route after graduating from UW-Parkside. He got his start in accounting and by age 27 was part of the management team at his first VC firm, Alternative Resources Corp. The following year, he made CFO. The company eventually grew to \$140 million in revenue and went public on NASDAQ.

The percolating mind of the entrepreneur within him whipped up the idea of Accounting Division for ARC. When response to his idea was tepid, he quit and did it himself – and that was the start of Jefferson Wells (original name: “Audit Force”.) With the assistance of \$3 million in Chicago-based VC investment, Jefferson Wells grew to \$131 million in revenue by 1990.

On Mike’s 40th b-day, the Board told him it was time to sell the company. To Manpower. For \$174 million.

Financially comfortable, Mike didn't want to stop developing companies. Since then, he has started Novo Group, Adams Harris and Patina Solutions. As most people in BizStarts will tell you, entrepreneurship can be addictive.

So what was some of Mike’s advice?

- When you create ideas, watch out for the naysayers. Surround yourself with "yes" men and women (it's not good for corporate environment, but great for entrepreneurial climate.)
- Picking your partners is very important.
- Get others involved.
- Don't be afraid of hearing "no."
- Enthusiasm is very important.
- "You can't be a downer and be an entrepreneur."
- Present your idea well, both verbally and written.
- There are two sides to most businesses: the business side and the artistic side. And they should be in constant conflict with each other.
- On raising money: he's never owned the majority of any company he's done. To do Jefferson Wells, he raised \$7.5 million.

Double the advice was twice as nice for the attendees. Thanks to all who came, saw, asked questions and received inspiration.

For up-to-date information on BizStarts Milwaukee, be sure to visit the website:

<http://www.bizstartsmilwaukee.com>

Classes and events relating to business can be found on the BizStarts calendar at:

<http://www.bizstartsmilwaukee.com/Calendar.htm>

What's your story on starting a new business ? Need help? Go to “What's your story on starting a new business?” at:

<http://www.mybizstarts.com/pg/blog/kkrolski/read/3216/whats-your-story-on-starting-a-new-business>

And, check out the BizStarts Milwaukee LinkedIn group!

<http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=1766387>

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