

Gale Klappa honored, entrepreneurs and investors mix at BizStarts' February 4th event

BizStarts Milwaukee's most recent networking event at the new Crowne Plaza in Wauwatosa was electric, which made sense because it honored We Energies Chairman/President/CEO **Gale Klappa**.

BizStarts' fearless leaders, **John Torinus** and **Dan Steininger**, welcomed the large gathering and provided some updates on BizStarts' progress. Dan discussed the importance of the "entrepreneurial ecosystem" and said BizStarts "is the start-up and growth strategy of Milwaukee 7" - a promising notion, since research from the Kaufmann Foundation reveals all that new net jobs tend to come from companies that are five years old or less.

John took it one step further, noting that "the ecosystem we set out to establish is starting to take root" and that "starting a company is almost a patriotic act."



*Honored guest of the evening, We Energies Chairman/President/CEO **Gale Klappa**, is joined by (left to right) **Monica Graham**, **Dan Steininger**, **John Torinus** and **Penny Scheuerman**.*

Guest of Honor Gale Klappa, who is also co-chair of [Milwaukee 7](#), has played a key role in helping BizStarts go from great idea to an organization with impact.

From his early days at Georgia Power & Light, Klappa experienced how a utility can contribute to the local economy. He also noted the positive effect entrepreneurship had on Bristol in the United Kingdom, where he also worked for a time, and how not sustaining the spirit and opportunities of entrepreneurship can cause that economic momentum to grind to a halt.

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By the numbers

Here's how that ecosystem is working just over the past 18 months:

- **19** innovative, fast-growing businesses started – and that number grew to 20 by the time the event concluded
- **20** universities and colleges actively participating in the College Consortium
- **35** committed mentors and coaches
- **205** Entrepreneurs and Business owners receiving entrepreneurship and business training
- **102,815** hits on [bizstartsmilwaukee.com](#)

Leading We Energies and the Milwaukee 7, Klappa knew he could make a big difference. Under his guidance, We Energies hosts the Milwaukee 7 Resource Center and provides meeting space in its beautiful, Art Deco-style auditorium for BizStarts events, as well as other economic initiatives such as Milwaukee 7 and the Water Council. Several notable We Energies employees have been able to dedicate time into the BizStarts effort, including Penny Scheurman and Monica Graham, who continue to coordinate events and provide staff leadership along with Marcia Theusch from the Milwaukee Development Commission.



The goal, said Klappa, was to be a “key catalyst in helping to turn this area into an entrepreneurial economy.”

After all, what is now We Energies was originally founded by two entrepreneurs. They were mindful of their early entry into the field; in fact, they designed We Energies’ headquarters on Michigan Street to be convertible to a hotel, noted Klappa, “if the whole ‘electricity thing’ didn’t work out.”

John Torinus presents Gale Klappa with a gift of appreciation for his BizStarts support.

For BizStarts and the region, successes are piling up: new companies are starting; some previous start-ups, such as Prodesse, are cashing out nicely; and the demand for mentors and coaches for the volume of entrepreneurs is on the increase. Dan Steininger noted that the deal flow was so strong, it was hard to keep up.

BizStarts’ biggest challenge right now, Steininger said, was creating more early stage funding. There are four new groups working on funds. The current pace is one deal per month; Steininger and Torinus indicated they would like that pace to do become two to three per month as soon as possible.

With the vast array of entrepreneurs and investors in attendance, those numbers should happen. As Gale Klappa remarked during his comments, “The future of Milwaukee is in this room tonight.”

At right, entrepreneurs Malcolm & Amy Newsome of [ETW Services](#) and [GoGreenDeals.com](#), part of the 100-plus people in attendance.



Next BizStarts *Inspirational Entrepreneur* Event: Join us March 9 for words of wisdom from Sue Marks and Michael Major

BizStarts’ popular *Inspirational Entrepreneur* series returns to the **We Energies Auditorium** on **March 9** for breakfast, networking and (obviously) inspiration.

Meet and hear from **Sue Marks**, CEO of [Pinstripe, Inc.](#), and **Michael Major**, CEO of [Cambridge Major Laboratories](#). Pinstripe matches and recruits top talent with organizations in key industries. Meanwhile, Cambridge Major recently expanded their Germantown facility, which develops and manufactures products for the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries.

Get a variety of perspectives and network with some of Milwaukee's best (the entrepreneurs, not the beer – after all, it's a breakfast).

We Energies Auditorium, 231 W. Michigan Street, Milwaukee

7:00-8:00am: Sunrise networking and breakfast

8:00-9:00am: Program

9:00-10:00am Post-event networking

There is **no cost** to attend this event

Breakfast and a parking voucher for the Grand Avenue parking structure are included

Reservations kindly required

Register with **Monica Graham**, monica.graham@we-energies.com or 414-221-3225

We look forward to seeing you there!

Join us for the Second STARTUP ACCELERATOR Saturday, March 13

“A Non-conference Conference with a Two Foot Rule”

Does that description intrigue you? It should.... you have to experience it to find out.



StartupAccelerator is a day-long event focused on creating new connections between entrepreneurs, resource providers, and people with a vision or a mission through collaborative and open education [sessions](#), opportunity identification, and social networking.

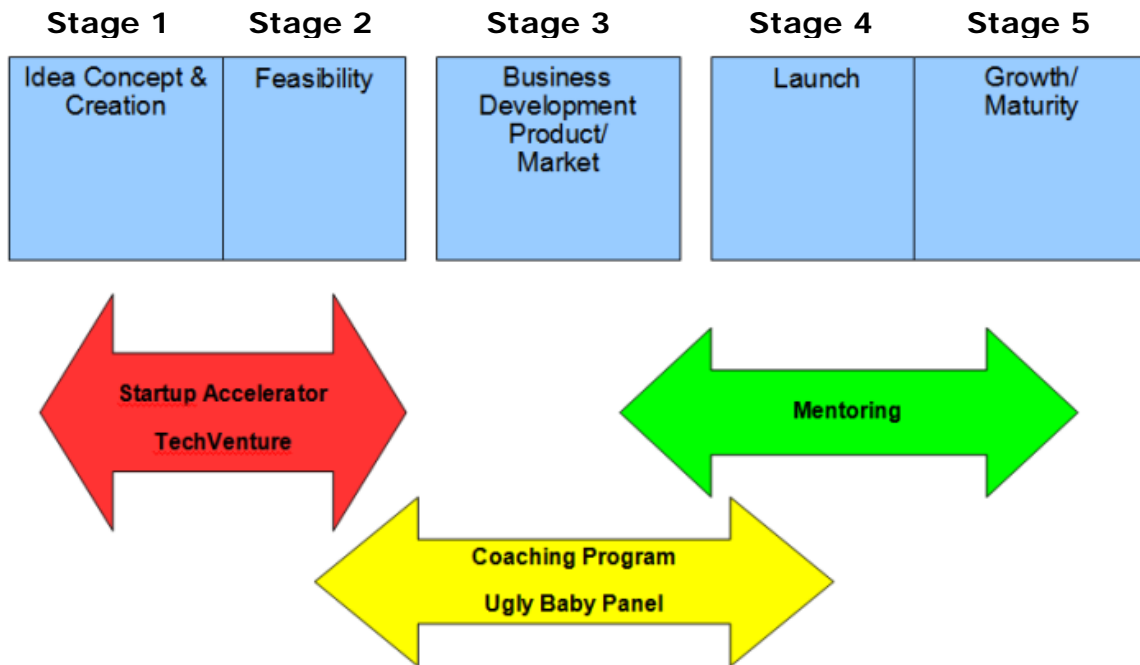
At StartupAccelerator, you are free to interact openly with anyone, and move between sessions at any time. You'll have a chance to do hands-on activities to improve your prospects and your ideas, regardless of what kind of idea you're trying to start. You'll meet and interact with a variety of professionals in different areas of business.

StartupAccelerator is open for ALL to participate. Anyone trying to start something new, or taking something already begun to the next level, should be there. Come for the whole day or just for a few hours. The event will be held at the Center for Advanced Technology and Innovation, 2320 Renaissance Blvd., Sturtevant, WI 53177.

Does Startup Accelerator cost anything? All we ask for is a donation to support the charity of choice -- a small cash donation or some non-perishable food. This program is funded by our generous sponsors. Visit the website www.startupaccelerator.org to register, become a sponsor, see community collaboration in action or contribute to the conversation. We hope to see you there!

The Venture Track Path – Are you, or is someone you know, ready to follow it?

Market Continuum



Over the past year, Venture Track has worked on developing a pathway for innovative high-growth start-ups and their entrepreneurs to travel. The TechVenture class helps entrepreneurs work through the first 2 stages of the business continuum. Once an entrepreneur has finished up an initial business plan and presentation the Coaching program will usher them through some one on one coaching and further refinement of their pitch and concepts. Finally, the Mentoring program carries them through the final 2 stages of a Venture Track entrepreneur's journey.

A Venture Track company typically:

- has or will have customers located outside the immediate region.
- has a sustainable competitive advantage such as a patent and/or a unique process, product or service that could be the intellectual basis for a high-growth business.
- will grow at a scalable pace to provide a significant return on investment to investors.

If you or someone you know fits the above criteria, we encourage you to contact <mailto:venturetrack@bizstartsmilwaukee.com>.

FastTrac[®] TechVenture[™]

A look from someone who's been there – and why you should go

So, you want to start a business. Where do you go? How do you get help with your plan, your finances, your first moves? Is your idea even workable?? Dizzying questions hover around entrepreneurs.

Turns out, a great way to get many of them answered is with BizStarts' FastTrac TechVenture (FastTrac and TechVenture are registered trademarks) class. The class is part of the larger Venture Track program, designed to help grow startup companies in the region through education, mentoring and networking. BizStarts Milwaukee and the Small Business Development Centers in Southeast Wisconsin co-sponsor these classes.

I had a chance to be one of 12 who participated in the most recent FastTrac TechVenture class. It took place primarily on Thursday evenings from 6-9pm; there were also two all-day Saturday courses at the CATI (the Center for Advanced Technology and Innovation) in Racine.

Each session generally consisted of two topics essential to one's business plan. In the first session as classmates, we got to know each other and everyone's planned (or fledgling) businesses. Some found opportunities to align; all found ways to network.

In the FastTrac TechVenture course, you have a veritable village of business advisors at the ready, providing feedback as your plan develops. Facilitators such as Mark Huber, Chelsea Krause, Matt Wagner and Oleg Tumarkin were joined in session by experienced entrepreneurs, business leaders and investors whose eyes, ears and expertise were made available at certain sessions. One-on-one coaching takes place in almost every session; Mark and Oleg even made themselves available for coaching outside of class. The facilitators, entrepreneurs, business leaders and investors ask the right questions of you and your plan. Not the easy questions, not always the encouraging ones – the right ones. Honest feedback is essential while you're developing strategy and tactics within a business plan. Sometimes it reaffirms your beliefs; other times it forces you to go back and see what needs adjusting.

Some of what you discover includes what types of questions investors will ask once you secure a pitch. Speaking of, one course featured creating, rehearsing and presenting the concept statement (aka the elevator speech.) In the final course – a graduation of sorts – participants make a real pitch for their business: five minutes, multimedia optional, in front of not only the facilitators and your classmates, but actual outside investors. And they come prepared to speak further with people pitching plans they find interesting.

In my experience, my business partner and I discovered a number of reasons to adjust and redevelop our plan. We realized our funding request from investors, coupled with what we were prepared to offer in return, would likely be rebuffed unless we could provide more solid projections and clarify answers to some key questions, helping to lower investors' risk, real or perceived. We also realized that assets we use for our main idea could be used in a series of other projects and services – which we are now doing. Initial proceeds are helping to start the business. Before we seek any outside funding, we'll "bootstrap" to the extent possible – but when the time is right, we'll be more ready to approach investors and make our pitch than we ever were before.

The experiential learning element gave the class real-world usefulness not always gained from traditional courses. Feedback was valuable, resources were plentiful and it was time well spent, even during football Saturdays. With state grants covering 75% of the cost, the balance was money well spent, too! It was one investment where, even as we sit at the infancy of our new company, the returns have been golden.

The next TechVenture class runs 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>.



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>

Pass The Catalyst newsletter on to your friend and associates! They can subscribe to our free newsletter on [BizStarts Milwaukee's Home Page](#) under **BizStarts Newsletter**.