

PNNL helps entrepreneurs learn how to make it rain

Andrea McMakin, PNNL

With technology stocks plunging to new lows and investors guarding their thinned pocketbooks warily, many start-up firms are having trouble obtaining equity capital in this dry financial climate. But, said three Seattle-area investors, there's still money available for savvy "rain-makers" if you know what to do. This was the message conveyed in a one-day workshop, "Rainmaking in a Capital Drought," sponsored by Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland on Aug. 30.

Thirty-five entrepreneurs, entrepreneurial supporters and investors from Washington and Idaho heard three experienced equity-capital experts tell how to assess, structure, position and present early-stage ventures to maximize opportunities for receiving equity financing. "PNNL's Economic Development Office organized the workshop to address a need expressed repeatedly by local tech start-ups – to become more successful at raising equity capital," said Gary Spanner, Economic Development Office manager.



Jim Moore of Enterprise Capital Resources makes a point at a work-shop at PNNL on raising capital. Thirty-five participants traveled from Eastern Washington and Idaho to learn from three Seattle-based equity-capital experts.

"Some industries remain 'hot' for investors, including biotechnology, wireless telecommunications, optical components and Internet infrastructure," said Jim Moore, managing director of Enterprise Capital Resources, a network of 8,500 private investors. Jim Stanton, chief operating officer of Dimension4, a Seattle software company, spoke about how early-stage companies should create a business strategy to provide a framework for decision-making. Moore explained how to translate this strategy into a compelling business plan with elements that investors expect to see.

Lou Bianco, co-founder and chief financial officer of Cell Therapeutics, a Seattle biotech firm, spoke about the experience of taking his company public, emphasizing strategic business valuation and the importance of a diverse technology platform when one of the company's initial cancer-treatment products failed in clinical trials.

The session closed with a discussion of how to find, qualify and approach investors. PNNL staff members videotaped the workshop for conversion to Web-based streaming video, for viewing by local entrepreneurs.

PNNL's Economic Development Office applies federally funded technological resources to help start, expand and recruit tech-based companies in the Tri-Cities and regionally. Since 1995, PNNL has assisted more than 450 businesses and helped create more than 60 companies. ♦