



# biz Getting down to **ness**

BUSINESS INNOVATION ZONE



## Upcoming Events

**August 17**

### Marketing Dynamics 2011: Keeping up is key

Marketing has been going through many changes and marketers who understand this shift will be positioned to navigate it successfully. At the August Business Insights and Networking Luncheon, you will get a glimpse into what is on the digital horizon from [Drew McLellan](#), top dog at [McLellan Marketing Group](#) and nationally known marketing blogger.

\$12 admission fee (lunch included)

### Pitch your big idea and you could win up to \$15,000!

Do you have a killer tech-based business idea? Want to win some seed money (\$5K for a regional win & \$10K to the statewide grand prize winner) to launch your big dream? Here's all you have to do:

- Create a 1-5 minute pitch video and upload it to the [Dream Big, Grow Here](#) site
- Activate your network to generate votes for your idea
- Keep generating traffic/votes for your idea



#### About Dream Big Grow Here

In June of 2010, the University of Northern Iowa Regional Business Center (RBC) developed a partnership with the Iowa Bankers Association and the Community Vitality Center. Their goal was to attract and link emerging Iowa entrepreneurs with the capital resources available, within the state, to serve them.

11:30 A.M.  
August 17, 2011  
Greater Des Moines  
Partnership  
700 Locust St., Suite 100  
[Get Map](#)

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information, contact us at  
[events@bizci.com](mailto:events@bizci.com)

We now accept [Dwolla!](#)

A statewide contest entitled Dream Big Grow Here was launched, featuring \$1,000 monthly grants awarded online to emerging and existing Iowa small business owners who uploaded their 'dreams', then encouraged friends, family and other business owners to vote for them.

Wildly popular, Dream Big Grow Here attracted 63,489 visitors during the five month beta test. Given the success of Dream Big Grow Here and increased interest in online resources among innovators, the RBC approached a small group of statewide sponsors to provide matching funds for the regional contests and the statewide pitch-off. The regional contests have cash awards of \$5,000 and the statewide pitch-off would have a grand prize of \$10,000.

There will be eight regional contests, including ours here in Central Iowa. Each region will select (through crowd voting) a winner, who will receive \$5,000. Those eight regional winners will then compete against one another (again, crowd voting) in the statewide pitch-off for the \$10,000 prize.

If you would like more information on how to participate, email [Mike Colwell](mailto:Mike.Colwell) or visit [www.DreamBigDesMoines.com](http://www.DreamBigDesMoines.com) for details.

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## Erickson credits BIZ for his company's growth



Andrew Erickson was sure his new company could succeed, but he knew he needed to expand.

"It had to be something bigger than just me," said Erickson, president and owner of [YourGameNow.com LLC](#). The Urbandale-based company focuses on providing professional-quality video recording coverage of various high school and professional athletic events in Iowa.

He turned to the Business Innovation Zone (BIZ) and the BIZ Executive Director, Mike Colwell. "Mike has been a huge influence—a huge help," said Erickson. He credits the BIZ and Colwell with helping expand YourGameNow.com to where it is now.

### From L.A. to Iowa

In 2007, Erickson got a job in Los Angeles as an assistant production manager for America's Got Talent, Erickson wanted to be closer to his family.

Returning to Iowa, he began building YourGameNow.com, refining his business model and looking for ways to raise money to expand the operation. Erickson turned to the BIZ for assistance, and Colwell helped him with business development necessities such as putting together presentations to give to potential investors.

Colwell also helped him apply for grants, and Erickson succeeded in getting one for \$75,000 from the Iowa Department of Economic Development. "It's a long process, and he was my business coach through the whole thing," Erickson said.

Today, Erickson's company has two full-time employees, and he plans to hire two more. He is also putting together a team of 50 field-producer contractors who will provide the video coverage of the high school athletic events.

Erickson appreciates the help he got from Colwell, personally, and from the BIZ services, such as its Business Insights and Networking Luncheons. "They're just a great way to get a good dose of how to manage different aspects of your business," said Erickson.

#### **Looking ahead**

This fall, Erickson will launch his ambitious plan to provide professional-quality video recordings of varsity football games, as well as boys and girls basketball games played by all 47 Class 4A high school teams in Iowa. Games will be recorded from start to finish and will include graphics, as well as game descriptions from radio or stadium announcers.

While high school athletics will make up the majority of the company's coverage, YourGameNow.com already covers selected professional events, too. Clients include the Iowa Barnstormers arena football team, the Iowa Energy basketball team and the Iowa Sports Connection.

In addition to Iowa athletics, YourGameNow.com also has provided coverage of the Amateur Athletic Union Junior Olympic Games and USA Track & Field events.

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## **Shifting from consulting to a product-based company**

For many businesses, one of the greatest challenges is that they sell their expertise for

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an hourly fee. The limitations of the consulting or service model are pretty evident.



- Your inventory can be no greater than the number of hours your team can work.
- You can't make it once and sell it many times.
- It's difficult to scale.
- Every day, you have to go out and find new/repeat buyers.

These truths had banged [Agren](#) founders Stan and Tom Buman on the head more than once, and at the June BIZ meeting Tom described their eventual shift from a consultancy to a product-based company.

For Agren, the stars aligned (funding, opportunity, an innovation introduced into the market) and it was clear they should seize the chance to design and develop software that would replicate the hands-on type of work they'd been consulting on for years. The software could do the same work, but faster, more efficiently and with 95% accuracy. A task that took six months to complete could now be done in less than 20 minutes.

They were confident the product would work well and be of great service to their core audience. But as they began to create the software, they realized they'd need to build a completely different company to support it. The Agren that supported a consultancy was different from the one they'd need to bring their product to market. Tom identified some key questions that needed to be answered in the early stages.

Questions to ask yourself:

- Can we retain and protect our intellectual property rights?
- Are we ready to invest in high-quality professional partners (lawyers, accountants, marketing, etc.)?
- How can we leverage our resources?
- Do we really know/understand the audience?
- What is required to get to market (time, money, etc.)?
- What is our pricing strategy?

Once you're satisfied with the answers to those questions, you're ready to roll up your sleeves and make it happen. That's where the surprises pop up, according to Tom.

Each surprise brought a new lesson learned. Tom shared some of the most important ones:

- Don't think you have to abandon the service side of the business as you're developing the product side.
- Make sure your brand reflects who you are becoming. If it's too tied to your service business, it may be time for a change.
- Leverage partnerships to fill in your gaps of expertise/knowledge.
- Be realistic in your projections because there are more surprises ahead.
- It doesn't have to be perfect, it just has to be good (perfect means you'll never launch).

In the end, Tom summed up the shift by saying that it's a completely new ball game and much of your transition rests on you recognizing that and making adjustments accordingly.

To learn more about Agren and Tom Buman, check out his full presentation video and slides [here](#).

This project is funded by a grant from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). SBA's funding should not be construed as an endorsement of any products, opinions, or services. All SBA-funded projects are extended to the public on a nondiscriminatory basis.

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