

Tampa Bay Innovation Center: *Think it...Build it...Grow it*

The Tampa Bay area is beginning to come into its own as a home for innovation and entrepreneurship – and it's up to us to begin communicating that good news throughout the community. One new focal point will be Tampa Bay Innovation Center, the next step for STAR TEC.

From the time STAR TEC was established in 2003, we have known that the local technology community needed more than a business accelerator could offer. Initially, our response was to develop a series of programs in a “plug and play” fashion to fill needs as we identified them.

However, we knew we needed a comprehensive strategic underpinning. Working closely with many other like-minded organizations in the community, including [Pinellas County Economic Development](#), [Tampa Bay Technology Forum](#), University of South Florida and its [USF CONNECT](#) program, [Florida Venture Forum](#), and the [Tampa Bay Inventors Council](#) as well as our advisory board, mentors, volunteers and clients, we have greatly expanded our vision.

What we realized was that the fuel that drives any entrepreneurial support program is innovation...and that our best and most valuable role will be to nurture and develop innovative ideas and the people who create them.

This is not a theoretical discussion. Following are the elements we have already put into place – with others still to come -- in the Tampa Bay Innovation Center, using the elements of our brand promise:

- *Think it:* A number of programs are already in place for the earliest stage innovators, including:
 - StartUp Xchange – an informal open conversation opportunity with mentors and other innovators to help define a concept, talk to others who have been there/done that and others who are still at the earliest stages of entrepreneurial development.
 - IDEA Camp – a high-energy, interactive event with collaborative workshops and presentations, designed for targeted groups of innovators who want to refine their business model, develop and articulate their value proposition and create a plan to move their idea forward.
 - Launch Lab – a coworking opportunity to build your business concept, grow your business, energize your thought processes and become part of a stimulating community. Mentoring and business start up assistance provided.
 - Market research – Validate your idea. Our customized market research/business intelligence reports will provide valuable assistance, guidance, and direction to ensure that your technology flourishes in this competitive market.
- *Build it:* Building a technology idea into a successful business takes subject matter experts, experienced mentors, and trained professionals. The Build It program identifies high potential entrepreneurs and facilitates their dynamic growth with training, networks, resources and mentors during a twelve month period.

- *Grow it:* The Tampa Bay Innovation Center accelerator will continue to “accelerate entrepreneurial success” through mentorship, targeted business assistance, collaboration with other clients, exposure to community resources and funding opportunities.

In addition, we will continue our TEC Talk series of monthly conversations with valuable community experts. This series runs the full circuit, supporting all three elements of Think it, Build it, Grow it.

The Tampa Bay Innovation Center, working as a partner with key organizations, whether local, statewide or national, will be better able to leverage state and county resources; provide greater access for our clients to start-up capital, researchers, service providers, academic institutions and technology organizations; expand our ability to create high-technology clusters and high paying jobs and collaborate to provide a true support system for technology start-ups in the Tampa Bay area.

We look forward to moving forward with these ambitious goals – and appreciate your feedback and involvement.