

Bay City co. springboard for entrepreneurs

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Struggling to get his fledgling business off the ground, Myron Ennest turned to a Bay City company that specializes in bringing new products to market.

McKinley Technology Inc., 106 S. Walnut St., has worked since the early 1990s to turn promising technical ideas and inventions into money-making businesses.



By Alexander Cohn | Bay City Times

Mark McKinley asks his wife, Karen, her opinion of a dog leash they hope to distribute as Mark Kochevar, right, adds to the conversation.

"We commercialize new technologies. That means not just marketing, but taking it to a point where it's making a profit," said Mark McKinley, president and CEO of McKinley Technology.

The goal is to create companies that have a revenue stream for investors or allow them to profit on exit through merger or sale.

Mark McKinley learned the ropes of successful business marketing while working for Dow Chemical Co. to promote super-absorbent materials widely used in items such as diapers. Today, he's helping people such as Ennest, a Saginaw insurance agent who owns the patent to a new type of locking rope clamp.

Ennest said even though he had modest success selling the clamps for use in military tents and orders were growing, he found it difficult to keep the business going.

"I outgrew myself. I was using my own money and I'd never ventured into finding investors and putting it all together," Ennest said. "You need money for accountants, attorneys and other things. For an individual, it's a nightmare."

Ennest took his product and his ideas to McKinley about a year and a half ago.



By Alexander Cohn | Bay City Times

Entrepreneur Myron Ennest rearranges the display packaging for his product, Toughman Tie-Down.

Together, they formed a new company called Clamp Tech LLC. In exchange for a partnership interest and some shares in the new company, McKinley helps Ennest with legal issues, patent searches, financial planning, marketing and lining up investors.

Clamp Tech President Stacy Pastein works as a contract partner for McKinley Technology. The former Dow Corning Corp. marketing and sales manager said the business plan at McKinley is different than a traditional incubator.

"An incubator lets companies come in and gives them a place to stay," Pastein said. "We actually go in and operate the company."

Clamp Tech is working to secure more military contracts and to get its product in retail hardware and outdoor stores, Pastein said.

The clamps, along with a new Toughman Tie-Down clamp-and-cable product, can secure parked aircraft, boats and marine buoys and may have uses for other items such as animal leashes, Ennest said.

McKinley said the clamp exemplifies the type of promising technology his company is best able to foster.

"We look for legitimate ideas with some promise. We're real fussy about what we pick and choose," he said.

Another company McKinley is marketing is Bordener Engineered Surfaces, which produces a laminate material that looks like granite or Corian, but costs less.

McKinley, 49, who grew up in Royal Oak and Saginaw, formed the company in 1991 with the help of Mark Kochevar, whose background is in financial management. Their company chose Bay City to set up business because it's between the metro Detroit area and northern Michigan's outdoor recreation opportunities.

Clifford Van Dyke, president of the Bay County Growth Alliance, called McKinley Technology a bright spot for the area's economy as it seeks new high-tech business prospects.

"I think it's interesting that Bay City has an enterprise that's trying to help inventors," Van Dyke said. "We're trying to get something started in this city and we have a pretty unique business trying to do that."

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