Irish Entrepreneurs Seek Success in Silicon Valley

In July, 7 Irish technology start-ups travelled to Silicon Valley for a week-long trade mission and met with more than 40 entrepreneurs, technologists, advisors and potential investors. The startups are part of CÉIM an enterprise acceleration program for technology start-ups offered by the Institute of Technology, Sligo and Letterkenny Institute of Technology.

The power of the Irish diaspora was very evident during the visit to Silicon Valley. Of note, was an Irish Network San Francisco (INSF) networking event to coincide with the trade mission. It was attended by about 100 people, including Irish and Irish-American business people from Silicon Valley who shared advice on how Irish startups can expand their business in the U.S. The panelists encouraged Irish entrepreneurs hoping to get established in Silicon Valley to connect with other Irish people working in the Valley and with Irish-Americans, many of whom would be happy to introduce them around. Panelists included Doug Kelly, Alloy Ventures; Leslie Murdock, Murdock Martell and Seamus McAteer, co-founder of M:Metrics. Doug Hickey moderated the event. Tom Horgan, INSF was instrumental in organizing the event with assistance from Jack Kissane, Enterprise Ireland.

During the week, the group also met with other Irish business people including; Seamus McAteer, a telecommunications entrepreneur, Stuart Coulson an investor and entrepreneur and Aisling MacRunnels, a senior executive at Sun Microsystems, as well as executives at Enterprise Ireland. They also met with the Irish consulate and the Irish Pastoral Center. However, true to its reputation as a cultural melting point, the group also conducted key meetings with entrepreneurs and technologists from India, Germany and of course, the USA.

Selected CÉIM participants who travelled to Silicon Valley included: Aidan McKenna, Soko Health; Enda Madden, GroupNos Software; Gerry Burke, Synergy Flow; James McGloin, Eointec Solutions; John McNamara, JB Interactive; Johnny Beirne, Text-a-Track and Heinrich Anhold, Epona Biotech.

The CÉIM participants were well received in Silicon Valley and are now busy following up with contacts they made. Aidan McKenna, SokoHealth an aggregator of healthcare offerings targeted at the US market said, "Strong Irish connections should be the starting point to successful networking in the Valley." As a result of this trade mission, he sought and received a senior technical advisor for his company and began engagement with two top Venture Capital firms. James McGloin, Eointec Solutions, noted, "As a result of the trip, Eointec Solutions are in talks with possible clients. We see great potential in providing research & development services for U.S. companies." John McNamara, JB Interactive said the trip gave him, "excellent exposure to leading minds and investors and some great feedback in how to continue to build the www.sendmode.com service." Other companies participating in the trip also benefited from making connections and learning about the technology trends impacting their products.

Janette Gillen, IT Sligo, said, "We had a very productive week in Silicon Valley. Everyone we met with was very helpful and generous with their time. This trade mission provided a forum for CÉIM participants to showcase their technologies and connect with influencers. It also provided an opportunity to meet with U.S. enterprise acceleration programs. We are eager to continue developing relationships within the Bay Area and encourage anyone who is interested in starting their own technology business in Ireland to get in touch with the CÉIM program."

For more information about CÉIM, please see: www.ceim.ie and contact: Janette Gillen, Business Innovation Centre Manager, Institute of Technology, Sligo: gillen.janette@itsligo.ie or Patrick Donaghy, Business Incubation Manager, Letterkenny Institute of Technology: Patrick.Donaghey@lyit.ie