



## Network Newsletter

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## Early Stage Innovation Program Announced

Does your company have an innovation that requires some support to move it forward? The Advance Program could help. This IRAP sponsored program provides up to **\$5,000** towards the appropriate expertise and resources to move an idea/innovation to the market place. The support can include prototype development, market research, technical feasibility, engineering and design.

## New Staff Member

The Northwestern Ontario Innovation Center is pleased to announce that **Rick Prior** has joined our team as **Director of Development**. Rick has an extensive business background of over 30 years includes sales and management experience in both the retail and wholesale sectors.

## Upcoming Events - Register Soon

### Innovation - The Key to Business Success Workshop, January 15th, 2008

This workshop will explore the process utilized by leading companies to drive new products to the market quickly and successfully. Over 40% of business revenues are from products and services that were not on the market three years ago. If you are not innovating you are losing money. A must for individuals, businesses and organizations who realize they must innovate or die!

### Lean Operations Workshops - January 30th, 2008 Whitewater Golf Course, Thunder Bay

These two, half-day courses will introduce participants to the basics of Lean Enterprise thinking and demonstrate a logical approach to implementing improved business practices. The morning workshop is focused on Lean for Manufacturing and the afternoon workshop is geared toward service and office environments. Lean Thinking has transformed companies worldwide, it can help your business. Travel support available to regional companies who attend.

### Business Success Forum - February 21st, Travelodge Hotel, Thunder Bay

Whether a large or small enterprise, business success is the focus and common thread. What makes people want to do business with you, work with you, and be apart of your team? Learn how to: create an environment that fosters long-term business relationships, build loyalty, foster teamwork, create business success, and source funding for your business" success. You won't want to miss this motivational seminar that will take your business to the next level. The winner of the 2008 Thunder Bay and region Idea Factory Challenge will be announced at lunch.

### Regional Innovation - The Key to Business Success Workshop

**Fort Frances** - January 21st 6:30 to 9:00 p.m.

**Kenora** - January 23rd 6:30 to 9:00 p.m.

## New Innovator Member Program

By becoming an Innovator Member of the Northwestern Ontario Innovation Centre, you will have access to experts, events and programs that will assist you in developing your idea, business or innovative project.

## Innovator Member Profile

**Michael Racco, JustParts.com** – Born and raised in Thunder Bay, Michael Racco grew up involved with his family business, Thunder Bay Auto Parts. Michael is now launching new technology that will revolutionize the auto part industry.

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## **IDEA Factory Challenges - 2008**

The Challenge is on! We are again seeking the best new innovative ideas in our region. The Innovation Centre has partnered with three Community Futures Development Corporations to offer Challenges in their regions. Businesses and individuals are able to apply to the IFC in order to win a prize package that will assist them in developing their innovative idea.

## **New Training Lab Facility**

Drop in a check out our new training lab space. This facility offers a professional, comfortable, productive environment to train your employees, customers or other stakeholders. Are you seeking Information Technology training and want to save the expense of sending people out of town? We can source an instructor, additional participants and make your training happen at a reasonable cost.

## **E-Newsletter Tip Month**

### **Customer Service 101:**

While recovering from open-heart surgery, Mike Wagner of the White Rabbit Group had plenty of time to analyze how the hospital's doctors, nurses and medical support staff engaged in their work and owned the outcomes. In the process, he developed some broad conclusions about customer service.

## **Recommended Reading**

**The State of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in Northern Ontario** - November 2007 - This FedNor study reports on the state of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Northern Ontario. Northern Ontario stakeholders are interested in the performance of small- and medium-sized enterprises in all sectors as a means of creating wealth and prosperity for the people who choose to live in this part of our vast province.

**For further information about each of these topics please go to our website!**  
[www.nwoinnovation.ca](http://www.nwoinnovation.ca)

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please e-mail us at [info@nwoinnovation.ca](mailto:info@nwoinnovation.ca)**

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