



NEWS

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illinois technology development alliance

TechAlert is the bi-monthly newsletter of the Illinois Technology Development Alliance. Our issues feature articles of great interest to entrepreneurs; to investors interested in leading-edge, high-technology opportunities, and to established companies looking for innovative solutions to pressing business needs.

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The Center for Effective Writing Leads Two *45 Minutes With...Sessions*

Six entrepreneurial companies participated in the ITDA's recent *45 Minutes With...* series in February. The topic for the one-on-one consulting sessions was "Effective Grant Writing" conducted by Millie Rey (merey@uchicago.edu) and Michael Eastwood (mwestwo@uchicago.edu) of the Center for Effective Writing in Chicago, IL.

"All six companies came to the session because they were looking for grant writing help," Rey says. "What became apparent quickly was that there was interest in other writing tasks because they all add up to the same thing. In every business you always have to sell. To do that, you have to help people understand what your product can do for them."

Rey says that many clients come to the Center for Effective Writing to receive help with a specific task and then realize that what they need is assistance with more than one particular grant application. "We often help with multiple writing tasks," she says, "so that our clients learn to express a clear and consistent message that is tuned to the ear of their multiple audiences."

The businesses represented at the *45 Minutes With...* event ranged from a firm that provides an online tool so that parents can make better choices about toys for their children to a company with ideas about restarting Illinois' coal industry; from a company with an advanced medical therapy to DQI USA, LLC, a Chicago firm that provides a tool that assesses building design and helps lay-people evaluate, quantify, and communicate how well or poorly a building is designed or built.



Although the companies were at different stages of development and in widely divergent industries, each entrepreneur was looking for help in clearly stating what their company does. They also wanted advice on how to conceptualize and then express problems in ways that would attract readers to their solutions.

"Another thing that the entrepreneurs weren't aware of and we helped them understand," says Eastwood, "is how some of what they were saying to draw clients in was actually warning people off. People often don't know HOW they are being misunderstood; they just know that communication has failed. We worked on ways for the entrepreneurs to be understood differently."

Entrepreneurs learn to express solutions in different ways to different audiences.

Goran Lukic, co-founder of DQI USA (www.dqionline.com), is targeting various government entities with significant real estate holdings such as schools, libraries, and hospitals. Effective grant writing is critical to his company's strategy.

"When a city builds new schools, as the city of Chicago is about to do," Lukic says, "they have ways to measure whether or not the project is coming in on time and on budget. They can say what they do and don't like, but they don't have any standardized way to assess and quantify whether or not the building is well-designed or to evaluate objectively an architect's design. We solve that problem for them."

Lukic says that the City of New York has adopted the DQI (design quality indicator) tool to guide them through design and development.

"Mayor Bloomberg wanted a measure of time and budget and a way to be sure they are building good buildings," Lukic says. "One of the reasons I chose to attend the ITDA session was to get advice about developing a message that would resonate with city officials here in Chicago, a city so rich in architectural heritage."

Participating companies were enthusiastic about the *45 Minute* format and the opportunity to receive Rey's and Eastwood's expertise.

"There is no question that it was a good use of my time," Lukic says. "In a start-up you can never miss an opportunity to have a qualified outsider take a look at what you are saying. My partner and I have been so close to this for so long that we needed a fresh perception of our readers. Mike and Millie were able to help me understand that the words I was using to sell our solution were pushing some people's buttons instead. They helped me structure a conversation to better explain to a client how we satisfy what they want."

Rey and Eastwood, who hold advanced degrees and are instructors at the University of Chicago, have keen listening skills, grasp technical information quickly, and know how to write and instruct people how to write.

"When people work with us, they don't have to have everything figured out," Rey says. "The answers are there, but they don't come out in a vacuum. We offer a structured approach of hearing, rephrasing, and identifying the structures that entrepreneurs need to include in their text."



Eastwood adds, "This happens in the framework of a friendly conversation that has a point to it. We know what the text is going to need. We are listening for it as the entrepreneurs tell their stories, and then we let them know how to make their texts work."

The next *45 Minutes With...* session is scheduled April 11 at the ITDA's Chicago location. The topic will be "Expanding into International Business" led by Fabrice Bonvoisin, noted expert in conducting business in multiple countries. To schedule an appointment please, contact Katherine Liu at 312.373.7184 or email liu@itda.biz.



About DQI USA, LLC:

DQI USA, LLC IS A SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS DEDICATED TO IMPROVING THE QUALITY AND PRODUCTIVITY OUR BUILT ENVIRONMENT.

The company is focused on enabling widespread use of the construction industry's first statistically validated design assessment tool, the DQI (Design Quality Indicator). The company was formed in 2006 to commercialize the DQI in the U.S. following its success in the U.K., where it was originally developed.

DQI USA aims to create a nationwide network of DQI Facilitators in the U.S. and establish the DQI as the industry standard for delivering high performing buildings. Available as a web-based tool, the DQI enables procurement teams to holistically define and evaluate design quality at all key stages in the development process. The quantification of "design intangibles" is a unique feature to the DQI enabling the delivery of fundamentally better and more sustainable buildings.

The company was founded with a vision that better designed buildings are fundamentally more valuable and a better use of resources. History shows that poor design results in high costs and low value for money. By capitalizing on the economic, social and environmental benefits of improved building design, the case can be made to unlock potential value, increase economic activity and enhance productivity. In short, investing in high quality buildings can improve the welfare of business and society.

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