

Breakthrough Ideas Backgrounder

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Contest Mission

To seek out, support, celebrate and promote Minnesota's newest and most innovative business ideas through an annual, statewide contest that connects resident entrepreneurs with our state's leading executives, investors and the University of Minnesota.

Contest Purpose / Brief Contest Description

At the heart of the Breakthrough Ideas contest is the idea that the ongoing vitality of our state economy in large part depends upon the constant discovery and nurturing of innovative, trendsetting entrepreneurial ideas. It's these ideas that have the powerful potential to grow and result in the next Medtronics, Cargills and 3Ms of our state.

The Breakthrough Ideas contest supports the entrepreneurial heritage and future of Minnesota business innovation by asking all Minnesotans to submit their breakthrough business ideas online at **breakthroughideas.umn.edu** between March 9 and May 6, 2005. Entrants will be asked to continue through two more contest rounds to help the contest judges determine five finalists, who will present to a prestigious panel of executives, investors and notable entrepreneurs.

The winner of the competition will receive \$25,000 in seed capital, as well as free public relations, legal, research and management-support services. The competition winner will also receive the first-annual Minnesota Cup, presented by David and Carolyn Cleveland and sponsored by the University of Minnesota, our state's center of business innovation. Second and third place winners will receive \$5,000 and \$2,500 respectively.

Entries for the Breakthrough Ideas competition may be submitted individually or from groups of up to four people. The 2005 Breakthrough Ideas contest will culminate with an awards event at the end of August at the University of Minnesota.

Review Board of Judges

One of the contest's core ideas is the connection between the entrants and leaders in Minnesota's business and investor community. To that end, a board of notable regional investors, entrepreneurs and executives has been assembled to judge contest submissions.

The judges include:

- *Dave Cleveland, Chairman, Associated Bank of Minnesota, Co-Founder, Riverside Bank*
- *Tom Gegax, Former Chairman & CEO, Tires Plus*
- *Michael Gorman, Managing Director, Split Rock Partners*
- *Fred Haberman, Founder and CEO, Haberman & Associates*
- *Doug Johnson, Director of the Office of Business Development, University of Minnesota*

- *Matt Kramer, Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development*
- *Scott Litman, Two-Time Entrepreneur of the Year Finalist, Co-Founder, Imaginet*
- *Dan Mallin, Two-Time Entrepreneur of the Year Finalist, Co-Founder, Imaginet*
- *Jay Novak, Editor/Publisher, Twin Cities Business Monthly*
- *Thom Sandberg, Founder, The Kenyon Consortium*
- *Sima Griffith, Founder, Aethlon Capital*
- *Skip Gage, Chairman and CEO, Gage Marketing*
- *Robyn Waters, Founder and President of RW Trend*

Judging Criteria for Entrants

Entries will be judged on the following criteria:

- **Originality:** Is this idea truly new or is it a tweaking of something that is already in existence? Judges will be looking for ideas that are truly new and innovative. An idea can be for a product or service and can be an entirely new idea or the evolution of a previous idea. Ideas that show the greatest innovation will be viewed more favorably.
- **Viability:** Can this idea be commercialized within two years? Can this idea create or serve a market need? What is the entrant's strategy for making the idea into a high-growth business? Judges will be evaluating ideas on their potential to generate revenue, profits and employment.
- **Quality of Presentation:** As the contest progresses from round one to round two, more emphasis will be placed on an entrant's quality of presentation.

Three Rounds of Judging

Round One: March 9 – May 6, 2005

Entrants will be asked to provide a high-level summary of their idea or concept. Submissions should answer the following questions in less than 500 words per question:

- What is your idea or concept?
- How does your idea translate into a high-growth business?
- What is your strategy for executing your idea?
- Why is your idea economically viable?

Round Two: May 23 – June 30, 2005

Thirty entrants will participate in the second round. Entrants will be asked to develop a detailed proposal, which should include the following:

- A more detailed explanation of how their idea can become a viable business.
- A marketing and sales plan that details how they will address a market need.
- A financial projection for two years on how they will generate revenue and profits.
- A powerful use of graphics, such as illustrations and diagrams.

Round Three: July 22 – August 25, 2005

Five finalists will give live presentations to the judging panel. Finalists must:

- Make a 15-minute oral presentation.
- Entrants are encouraged to use presentation materials, such as posters, PowerPoint, handouts, prototypes and/or multimedia.

Final Event: End of August, 2005 (Date TBA)

The five finalists will be honored at the highly promoted first annual Breakthrough Ideas event at the University of Minnesota. At the event, the finalists will make their oral presentations and the three contest winners will be announced and awarded their prizes.

Contest Supporters

The University of Minnesota; The State of Minnesota; Kenyon Consortium (Advertising); Invioni (Web); Haberman & Associates (Public Relations); Maslon, Edelman, Borman & Brand (Legal); *Twin Cities Business Monthly*; James J. Hill Library.