

## Partnering for Success is What Collaboration Is All About

Last week we held the third gathering of the [Marin Business Forum](#), this time featuring guest speaker John Stayton, Director and Co-founder of [Venture Greenhouse](#) and Assistant Professor MBA in Sustainable Enterprise (Green MBA) for Dominican University of California. John's presentation was about "Collaborative Entrepreneurship: How Networks of Small Companies Can Do Big Things" and it reinforced that none of us conduct business in a vacuum. For any company to succeed, that organization needs to find partners to fill the gaps in their strategy and infrastructure. Partnering with other, complementary companies can make you more nimble and



more competitive.

As Stayton pointed out in his presentation, smaller operations are more creative and more innovative by nature. Smaller companies have less hierarchy, less infrastructure, and fewer staff, which means every member of the team is closer to the core tasks that drive the business; they are more accountable, and therefore more creative. According to Stayton, since World War II 95 percent of significant innovation has come from small businesses. In fact, small business typically gets 24 times the output per R&D dollar invested.

Smaller businesses clearly cannot outspend their larger competitors, so they build networks of resources to help fill voids and expand their operations. That extends to operational support services as well. By partnering with experts in accounting, financial management, and human resources, you can improve your competitive advantage by working with the [best experts available](#), rather than trying to hire the best employees available and increasing your payroll.

A member of audience at the Marin Business Forum gathering noted that his video operation had shared space with an audio company and a graphics company, which reduced costs and promoted innovation. They not only shared the rent, telephone, and infrastructure, but they could help one another with various projects. Collaborative office space, such as [the Hub](#) in Berkeley and [Share Exchange](#) in Santa Rosa, are common in the Bay Area and give entrepreneurs a chance to

exchange ideas with their peers as well as workspace.

Technology has been a major factor in promoting collaborative entrepreneurship. Advances in the Internet, the Web, and telecommunications have shattered the walls inhibiting collaboration. The new generation of [millennials](#) raised on Facebook and Twitter are raising the collaborative bar by bringing social media practices into the workplace. Today, workers are using email, file sharing, WebEx, Skype, and other collaboration platforms to streamline processes and improve efficiencies.

During his presentation, Stayton noted that Darwin's theory is really about survival of the most adaptable, and can be readily applied to business. To be more successful, a business doesn't have to be more powerful or smarter to get ahead, it merely has to be more adaptable to change, which means embracing innovation. Citing the [Pareto Efficiency](#), Stayton noted that as businesses evolve they tend toward commoditization and therefore lower profits. Innovation is the search for new profit sources and larger profits, and happier customers. And the cycle of innovation continues to accelerate, so the only way not to be left behind is to innovate with the aid of collaboration.

The Marin Business Forum's mission is to provide a venue for networking, to promote innovation through collaboration. Our mission at Pacific Crest Group is to promote innovation through collaboration as well, acting as a strategic partner to make certain the accounting and HR systems are running efficiently so our clients can concentrate on their core operations and purpose.