

Incubator team offers real-life advice to budding business

New York BizLab offers entrepreneurs access to experts

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Schenectady

If it's Tuesday, it must be legal advice day at the New York BizLab. Thursday? Think accounting.

On Monday, the private business incubator on downtown State Street announced it has assembled a volunteer team of legal, accounting, recruiting and human resources experts — dubbed BizHub — to help launch fledgling entrepreneurs. And those experts will staff offices on a recurring, predictable schedule.

"The team we have brought together understands the entrepreneurial mind — many are entrepreneurs themselves," said **Antonio Civitella**, founder and president of the incubator. "They will play a key role in helping our protege companies grow smart and grow fast."

Owner of **Transfinder** Corp., which develops school bus routing software, Civitella founded the incubator about a year ago in the three-story, 35,000-square-foot former bank building that is now wrapping up a \$3 million renovation.

It already includes startup tenants like SureDone, a New York City-based e-commerce site; Lottery Rewards, a Schenectady business founded by the former CEO of the **New York State Lottery** that offers prizes and other incentives to holders of losing state lottery tickets; Furlocity, a pet services brokering site, and Fundabilities, a crowdsourcing site that helps budding entrepreneurs raise cash.

"We can help startups avoid some of the pitfalls from a legal perspective, like the disappearing partner scenario," said **Rich Honen**, a partner at the Albany law firm of **Phillips Lytle** LLP. "We can help people avoid some common mistakes. I love the model that has been created here."

The advisory team also includes human resources firms HR Resolved in Clifton Park and Deb Best Practices in Albany; accounting firms **Marvin and Company** and UHY LLP; financial consulting firm CFO for Hire; Albany law firm Lavelle & Finn; and recruitment firm Pinnacle Recruiting.

"We can help a startup create an interviewing process, create a hiring process," said **Debra Best**. "Otherwise, it can be like throwing darts at the wall."

Added Bill Tansey Jr., of HR Resolved, in the absence of knowing what jobs require what skills, it means that a new business founder can start making mistakes like "hiring their friends."

A potential intern was already there looking for an opportunity. "There is a lot of experience coming together to help young people like myself," said **Kyle Rooney**, a Clifton Park resident who just finished his junior year at **Clarkson University**.

The incubator is looking for more potential tenants, said Managing Director **Rick D'Errico**. Tenants can either rent space there to fuel their launch, or provide an equity stake to Civitella, if he is convinced of the enterprise's ultimate viability.

D'Errico said another goal of the incubator is for tenants to bounce ideas and scenarios off each other. "We want them to be able to share their experiences — and some of solutions — with each other," he said.