



Ken Evans

Director
Tampa Bay Technology Forum
Emerging Companies Academy

KEN EVANS' GOAL IS TO CREATE TAMPA 2.0 – “a new generation of locally grown, globally recognized tech startups.” He’s on the lookout for local inventors with the next great idea so he can give them the tools they need to succeed.

His forum is the Emerging Companies Academy, a program of the Tampa Bay Technology Forum, a professional “techie” organization representing some 400 companies.

“Most economic development is focused on the big companies. We’re focused on the grass roots level,” says Evans, who grew up in Syracuse, New York, and graduated from Syracuse University with a degree in economics and information systems management.

Evans’ first job was system analyst/engineer in the emerging local area network market. He later gained expertise in marketing, product development, wireless security, interactive TV, digital media, documentation management and broadband content distribution.

“I traveled the world researching and evangelizing new technologies and markets,” he says. Consultant work for a struggling tech company brought him to Tampa in 2002.

The initial concept of the Emerging Companies Acad-

emy was to help startup companies find funding and keep them operating in Tampa Bay. Since then it’s broadened to encompass everything an entrepreneur needs to know about getting a product to marketplace.

“We’re talking about folks who have a day job and explore their passion on weekends or after the family goes to sleep,” says Evans. “We just want to focus on the practical so their creative side can see the light of day.”

The Academy helps participants do market research and connect the dots from design and production through marketing, sales, shipping and customer support.

About 20 companies have been helped by the Academy. And Evans would like to take it one step further by reaching out to young people.

“We want to give them the confidence that it’s okay for them to take a risk and see if they can make it on their own before they go out and get a 9-5 job,” he says. ■