

Fuse confab touts region's technological strengths

by Kevin Tampone, Journal Staff

10/21/05:

SYRACUSE — Upstate New York is facing a critical moment.

The region is poised to turn technology into an engine for economic growth as the Erie Canal and the New York State Thruway were in years past, speakers said Oct. 18 at fuse2005, a conference designed to promote technology-driven business opportunities to the area.

"We all need to learn more about the potential of this and the value it brings to business," said David Montanaro, CEO and chairman of USA Datanet. "It's about connecting with others to produce tangible returns we've never imagined before."

Fuse drew more than 300 executives from across New York and beyond. The idea was to showcase Central New York's technological strengths in areas like health care, security, and communications.

Speakers also focused on the region's technology infrastructure, saying the combination of high-speed networks in place, thanks to investments by groups like Verizon and Syracuse MetroNet Project, makes the area unique in the nation.

Presenters acknowledged, however, that infrastructure and technology alone will not lead to growth.

"Pure technology is always fun, but it doesn't get the job done," said James Louderback, a senior vice president with Ziff Davis Media. "What gets the job done is harnessing that technology in a strategic way."

It comes down to making connections and letting people know what the area has to offer, Montanaro said.

Fuse has already helped progress toward that goal, he added. Montanaro said he and other event sponsors had spoken to contacts around the country in anticipation of fuse to invite them to the conference and tell them about the area's strengths.

The business community's connections are one of its most neglected assets, he added.

There is no reason Syracuse and the surrounding area can't capitalize on that potential, said Ian Taylor, a member of U.K. Parliament and an executive director at Interregnum, an investment bank that has opened a Syracuse office to work with DestiNY USA. The raw materials for establishing a vibrant cluster of technology-driven businesses are already here, he added.

Taylor delivered one of the event's keynote speeches.

"You represent that raw material through your skills and your talents and your contacts," he said. "If you take the initiative, there will be many people who will want to follow and support you."

Contact Tampone at ktampone@cnybj.com