

Connecting business and IT talent

A start-up computer software developer, Contech Software Corporation, won the AGSM's first student-run business planning competition, backed by \$30,000 in prize money from Deutsche Bank.

Judged last November, this was Australia's first student-run entrepreneurship competition, and the first prize of \$20,000 was awarded to the Contech Software Corporation team for its business proposal to market software that promises to verify microchips faster and facilitate the design of larger chips.

A second prize of \$10,000 went to final year part-time MBA student Alex Berry, who has helped develop a start-up business called SplitCase Logistics. It offers innovative small-order processing solutions for complete order management applicable to e-tailers and traditional retailing as well as industrial equipment sales and distribution.

INITIATIVE

The competition is part of a new initiative to foster entrepreneurship and new business development skills at the AGSM, known as Connector. It is run by AGSM students and IT students from the School of Computer, Science and Engineering (CSE) at the University of New South Wales.

The Connector portfolio of activities and programs comprises monthly networking forums, the annual business planning competition and an incubator for the best of the business plans.

The networking forums, which began in May 2000, bring together students, business people and alumni. In 2001, successful entrepreneurs and innovators will be invited to speak each month and the Connector team will be seeking corporate sponsorship and involvement for each forum. The first forum is planned for late March.

The 2001 Connector business planning competition has expanded to include four major sponsors with a prize-money target of \$100,000. The competition program will start in June and run for six months,



THE WINNERS

(Top, from left): James Nosworthy and Brad Marshall of Contech Software Corporation accept their cheque from Connector business plan competition judge, Mark Burns, of Deutsche Bank.

(Below): professor Michael Vitale, dean (second from left), with AGSM Connector managers (from left) Angus Jaffray, Steve Waddington and Peter Jochelson.



"A perfect example of the exciting results you can achieve from marrying top business skills with computer science expertise."

— professor Michael Vitale, dean

culminating in a winners' awards event in November. The key criteria for competition eligibility are: inclusion of a student from one of the participating AGSM or university faculties in the team; and no prior funding of more than \$100,000.

Teams that make it through to the finals of the competition will be eligible to enter the Connector incubator. The incubator provides AGSM office facilities and services, as well as faculty and alumni community support and advice. The final stage of the Connector process introduces incubator teams to commercial incubators for future growth.

Mark Burns, head of e-business at Deutsche Bank, says Deutsche Bank was "excited to be associated with this great initiative that encourages and supports the

creation and management of new ventures, and offers students valuable exposure to the venture capital industry".

THE BUZZ

"It is important to create a buzz and to foster networking between talented IT and business management students together with VCs, technology companies and service providers," says associate professor Arun Sharma, head of CSE.

"You only need to take a look at the successful companies that have come out of the MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] competition. It is wholly student run and is a proven incubator. It has produced dozens of companies that are really good, mostly in the information technology field. And don't forget it is not only the winners who have done well over the years, but also the finalists." ★

For more information on Connector forums, business planning competition or incubator, contact AGSM Connector managers Angus Jaffray: angusj@agsm.edu.au, Peter Jochelson: peterj@agsm.edu.au or Steve Waddington: stephenw@agsm.edu.au, who also can provide details of a new Connector Web site.