

Boston nonprofit looks to link global innovators



David

McLaughlin is executive director at Boston World Partnerships. (David L. Ryan/Globe Staff)

By James F. Smith

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Boston today launches what organizers say will be an innovative global network of advocates for the city, built on a combination of cutting-edge technology and old-fashioned people-to-people contact.

After 18 months of planning, a nonprofit group called Boston World Partnerships will deploy 125 business leaders and academics to take the city's promotion beyond traditional trade missions and conventions.

One tool going live today is an interactive website, www.bostonworldpartnerships.com, that provides an array of two-way channels for those interested in doing business in Greater Boston.

But executive director David McLaughlin said the organization's strength lies equally in the group of influential Bostonians who have volunteered to make the case for Boston around the world. Dubbed "connectors," they are a mix of corporate chiefs and young entrepreneurs who will engage people in talking about "Boston as global capital of innovation," McLaughlin said.

The model is to match the networking that occurs with university alumni clubs, he said, where people who are passionate about Boston seek out those who might be looking for new opportunities here. The goal is to generate at least one new business lead for Boston every day.

McLaughlin, a 38-year-old marketer and former filmmaker from Mattapan, said the organization will draw heavily on the area's universities and healthcare companies, and not just on established corporate leaders. He said the universities are a pillar of Boston's reputation and are skilled at marketing themselves globally.

Among the "connectors" is Dorothy Orszulak, director of corporate relations for the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, who said Fletcher is a logical partner because "doing business internationally is in our blood."

"What is unique and novel is utilizing social networking technologies to build personal contacts," she said. "After all, it's not just about who you know, but who's going to pick up the phone."

Another connector is Markus Mueller, a German entrepreneur who opened a subsidiary of his Munich-based smartphone software company, ubitexx, in Cambridge in November as his base for expansion into the US market. He said his involvement in the partnership's group had already looped him into Boston.

"It's a great way to connect to a lot of interesting people in Boston. I'm brand new to the US market, so I was very eager to get in touch with people there," he said.

In a telephone interview from Germany, he said he has already begun promoting Boston with colleagues in the European Confederation of Young Entrepreneurs, which counts 40,000 members, and he will speak at a coming meeting of the group's national German branch about Boston's attractive climate for high-tech firms.

The Boston World Partnerships board is chaired by Mayor Thomas M. Menino, who wanted to create a nonprofit rather than another city agency to coordinate the new marketing push. The Boston Redevelopment Authority contributed \$1 million, and [Procter & Gamble Co.](#), the parent of [Gillette Co.](#), gave \$400,000 to set up the organization, which has five full-time employees.

Yoon Lee, a staffer who previously marketed executive programs at Harvard Business School, said she and McLaughlin met with about 700 Boston people in recent months in developing the inaugural group of 125 connectors. She said about 40 percent of them are people of color, and about one-fourth are foreign-born.

"They are really global-minded," she said. "They add to the international fabric of the conversation about Boston."

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