

Tech tidbits: BoomTime, Senior Scientific, UNM and Larry Sklar

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Bice

BoomTime is booming

Steve Paternoster, owner of Scalo's Northern Italian Grill and Brasserie La Provence, said BoomTime's online promotional services have helped him grow sales by up to 7 percent a year.

Albuquerque-based BoomTime, which launched in 2005, provides point-and-click software for service-related businesses to sell gift certificates online. It also manages web-based promotions for customers.

Paternoster said he was one of BoomTime's first New Mexico customers.

"They now manage all of my web presence for me, and they do all of my social marketing through Twitter, Facebook and other social media," Paternoster said. "Their services have generated incremental sales of between 3 and 7 percent annually."

BoomTime's web management and social media marketing services are new. Originally, the company focused solely on gift vouchers through proprietary software that allows businesses to customize certificates with their own logos and designs. But it broadened its services in recent years to include online marketing, said President **Bill Bice**.

"We offer a much more in-depth product now," Bice said. "We take charge of the full online presence of small businesses."

BoomTime charges a 3 percent commission on gift certificate sales, eliminating risks for customers who pay when they make a sale, Bice said. Full web management costs \$50 per month.

The company has 4,000 clients nationwide, up from 2,000 in 2007. Bice estimates BoomTime has helped its small business clients achieve \$105 million in combined gross sales online since launching.

BoomTime received a \$1.2 million investment from the [Verge Fund](#) in 2006.

Clinical trials start for leukemia-detection technology

Senior Scientific LLC and the [University of New Mexico](#) Health Sciences Center are conducting the first human clinical trials for a new technology to determine how well cancer treatment is working in leukemia patients.

Senior Scientific, based in Albuquerque, developed the technology, which relies on magnetic nanoparticles injected into the body. The particles carry antibodies that bind with cancer cells to pinpoint the exact location of diseases and measure their growth, both for diagnostics and for targeted therapies.

The technique is ultra-sensitive, allowing detection of cancer cells at much lower concentrations than other technologies, said **Edward Flynn**, Ph.D., a nuclear physicist and Senior Scientific founder.

In breast cancer tumors, it has detected disease with just 100,000 cancer cells, compared to the 10 million that mammograms need for detection. With leukemia, the technique is about 50 times more sensitive than existing methods, Flynn said.

In the new clinical trial, which will include about 60 UNMH patients, researchers are testing how well the technology can detect residual leukemia in patients who have received cancer treatments.

“We use bone marrow taken from patients to measure residual leukemia to determine how much is left after treatment,” Flynn explained.

About 40 patients are enrolled in the trial, with about one-third of the testing complete, said **Richard Larson**, M.D., vice president for translational research at UNMH.

“All our initial data indicates that it’s working very well,” Larson said.

The trial will evaluate the accuracy of a magnetic biopsy needle that Flynn created. The needle is used to withdraw leukemia cells from bone marrow after magnetic nanoparticles have been injected into the body to bind with the cancer, Larson said.

“It rapidly pulls all the tumor cells in the bone marrow sample into the needle,” Larson said. “We then pull that out and analyze it to tell how many cancer cells are there.”

Senior Scientific has received about \$7 million in research grants from the National Institutes of Health since 2002.

Investment firm [Manhattan Scientifics Inc.](#) also signed an exclusive licensing agreement last year to market Flynn's technology.

Negotiations are under way with several large drug, device and imaging companies to conduct more clinical trials and begin developing medical devices, Flynn said.

UNM fights for patent protection

Gene Quinn, a U.S. patent attorney and founder of the nationally prominent website [IPWatchdog](#), urged academics to speak out against some controversial federal patent reform proposals during a keynote address at UNM's annual creative awards reception April 21.

The reception, organized by UNM's Science and Technology Corp., recognizes researchers who obtained patents or registered copyrights during the previous year. The STC recognized 27 inventors this year.

At the reception, Quinn spoke about the America Invents Act, approved by the U.S. Senate in March and pending in the House.

Quinn said two proposed provisions could seriously weaken protection for inventors: elimination of "grace periods" for innovators to apply for patents unless they first publish invention disclosures, and a post-grant review process that allows companies to challenge the validity of patents after they're awarded.

The grace period elimination could impede university partnerships with private companies to vet inventions in the market before patenting them, Quinn said.

"It would allow companies that use an invention before it's patented to continue using it, weakening the university's ability and rights to control it," Quinn said.

Post-grant reviews could increase legal costs for cash-strapped universities while delaying patent protection.

That, in turn, could impede private investment because investors will wait until patents are fully in place before committing.

Still, Quinn said universities can influence congressional debate because they command respect among legislators.

“Innovators, especially academic inventors, have a unique opportunity to influence politicians,” Quinn said.

“Senators and congressmen listen to the universities,” he added.

STC President and CEO **Lisa Kuuttila** said the proposed reforms, if approved, could make technology transfer at UNM and other universities much more difficult.

“It will really impact how new companies get created,” Kuuttila said.

Sklar named ‘Special Innovation Fellow’

Larry Sklar, a professor of pathology at UNM’s Cancer Research and Treatment Center, received the second annual Special Innovation Fellow Award at STC’s 2011 creative awards reception.

Sklar, who holds 19 patents, invented a super-fast cytometer, or cell meter, with UNM colleague **Bruce Edwards**.

The HyperCyt allows researchers, pharmaceutical companies and clinics to rapidly sift through hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of molecular compounds for drug discovery.

The HyperCyt is being marketed worldwide by IntelliCyt Corp., a venture-backed Albuquerque startup that has sold more than 100 of the machines since 2008, said IntelliCyt President and CEO **Terry Dunlay**.

“**Larry Sklar** is the science behind our product,” Dunlay said. “That invention led to a new field called ‘high throughput flow cytometry.’ That’s a pretty major accomplishment.”

Sklar uses the HyperCyt to rapidly screen compounds for new applications of federally approved drugs, a process that's called "drug repurposing."

That could lead to new therapies for cancer and other diseases, using existing drugs on the market.

"His invention has actually spawned new research, which could, in turn, spawn new inventions," said STC President and CEO **Lisa Kuuttila**.

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