

GSA BUSINESS

THE BUSINESS JOURNAL FOR GREENVILLE, SPARTANBURG & ANDERSON

Spotlight



Bolick seeks to advance innovation

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During a presentation at InnoVenture 2006, Michael Bolick looked to his left, then to his right, and realized he was the only one scribbling notes about proprietary nanotechnologies out of Clemson University. He saw an opportunity to commercialize, and so, Pendleton-based Selah

Technologies LLC was born. Three years later, now with a team of nine, Bolick looks to take Selah to the next level.

GSA Business: I know you were exploring several applications for your technology. Have you narrowed your focus?

Michael Bolick: Initially we saw the in-vitro diagnostic market as one of many areas of opportunity, but probably the most attractive has always been histology and cytology. Histology is the study of tissue and cytology is of cells. As our primary focus we're using Selah Dots to find cancer in tissue and cells.

GSA: I know you were talking about interwoven fabrics and other things.

Bolick: Everything from paints to cosmetics to "friend or foe" identification, there's a lot of opportunity out there. But as we both know, the bane of the entrepreneur is a lack of focus.

GSA: Now that you've got a focus, what's the next step for the company?

Bolick: We're building prototypes showing that Selah Dots can be used to actively target and light up in the presence of cancer. For example, a surgical oncologist cuts away a tumor. We want to prove that tumor can be tested in real time to show where the cancer is – to enable better positive margin assessment. Through our collaborative network we've developed bioconjugated Selah Dots. What that means is we went from the base Selah Dot and we've added targeting capabilities to allow those dots to attach to our target of choice – in this case cancer. The cancer we are focusing on now is epithelial based cancer.

GSA: We hear a lot about how difficult it is to get a loan. I'm sure you are still seeking additional capital, right?

Bolick: We were blessed that in the spring we raised \$1.6 million from accredited investors. Our focus then was to validate our materials platform. Now that we are transitioning toward this narrow focus – toward this diagnostic test kit – we are going to have to go back to receive additional funding. As with any small company, the need for additional capital is a critical determinant to the business' success.

GSA: What are your day-to-day duties now for 2009?

Bolick: My job is to find strategic relationships and make sure I understand the capital markets. I spend a substantial amount of time not only talking with major multinational companies about potential strategic relationships, but also smaller companies for partnerships – to potentially go to market together. We've also reached out to a number of government agencies. We've received two National Science Foundation SBIRs (grants), one of which we announced in November. Seeing that our materials are going to go into the life sciences arena, we met with the National Institutes of Health and the National Cancer Institute. We see a lot of opportunity there.

GSA: Are you traveling a lot?

Bolick: We've met with companies based not only in the United States, but also in the European Union and Asia. I haven't gotten on a plane to leave the country just yet, but we are laying out plans for the rest of the year. I'd say my wife and kids still recognize me, but you're right, I've been traveling a lot. We've got to do what it takes to take the business to the next level.

GSA: Tell us about your facilities here and the hope for the Innovation Center at the Clemson University

March 22, 2009

Advanced Materials Center. As a nanobiotechnology company we have a requirement for wet lab space. That type of space in the Upstate is hard to come by. So we are very thankful that the Clemson University Research Foundation had space available for us to lease. We were encouraged that the Innovation Center was on track earlier in the year because our company is growing and we expect to outgrow the facilities we are in right now in the not-too-distant future. So we were praying that facility would come online. Now that it has been put on hold, we are reevaluating our options. But really the facility we are in right now has been renovated and CURF has done a great job.

*You can hear more from **Bolick** in Episode 57 of our ["What's All The Hype?"](#) podcast at www.gsabusiness.com. Click Interactive Media, then Podcast. **Bolick** discusses the science and ethics of nanotechnology, InnoVenture and the Palmetto Biotech Alliance.*