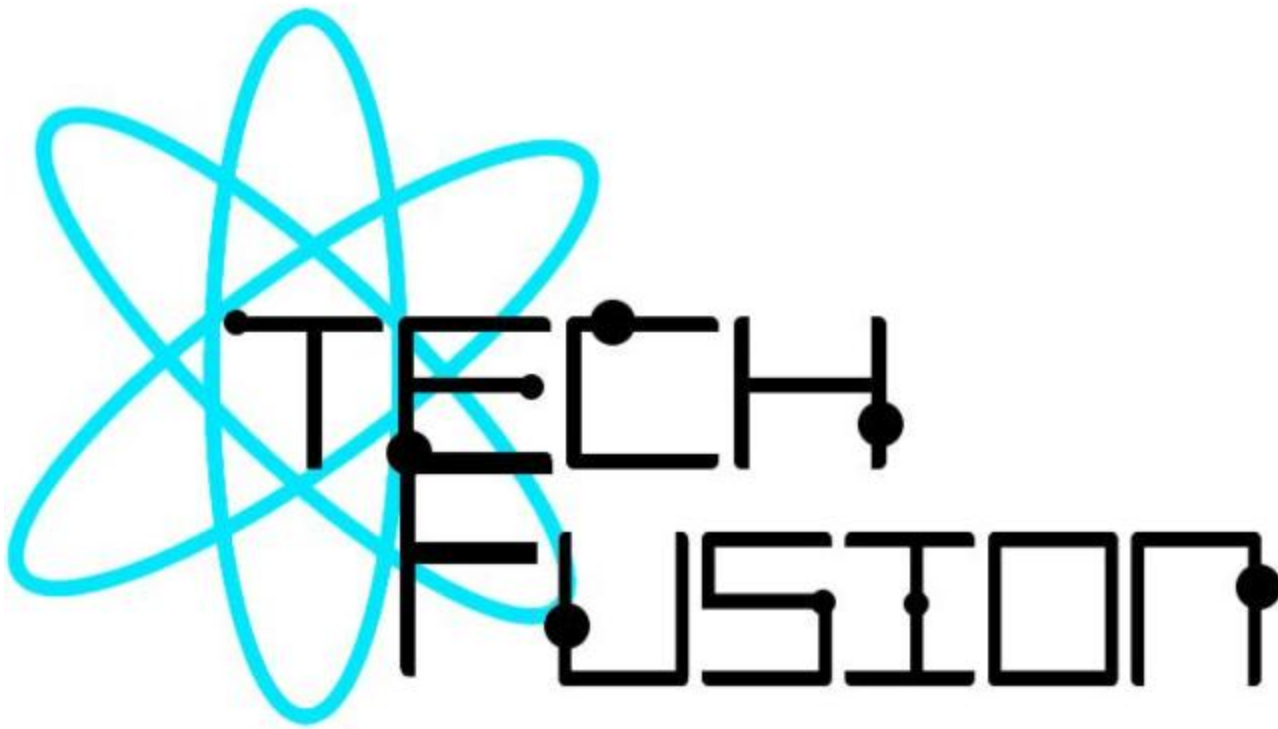




Two small businesses share space thanks to help of SBDC for the Metro East at SIUE

by Megan Weiser
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EDWARDSVILLE - Two clients of the Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC) for the Metro East at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, Tech Fusion and JB's Smartphone Repair, decided to share space for their respective businesses with a ribbon cutting on Friday, Jan. 4.

Tech Fusion owners Julian Smith and Diego Espinoza met JB Smartphone Repair's Josef Bosnyak through a mutual friend in SIUE's Information Technology Services (ITS). Smith and Espinoza contacted Bosnyak about referring customers to each other, and their business relationship grew from there. Later, when the opportunity presented itself, the trio agreed to open a storefront together at 710 S. Main St. in Troy.

Smith and Espinoza were assigned as random roommates for their first year as SIUE students. They realized they shared many things in common, such as a love of technology and pursuing the same field of study, computer management information systems (CMIS).



Both Smith and Espinoza are currently sophomores. The SBDC is happy to support young entrepreneurs as they pursue their dreams and aid their college careers. Smith and Espinoza had no idea of the vast opportunities they would discover.

The SBDC and business specialist Marti Guntren provided Tech Fusion with no cost, one-on-one counseling, legal referrals, marketing guidance, and other resources to help them before and during the process of opening their storefront.

“Marti is always there to answer any questions,” Espinoza said. “That means a lot to us. Her knowledge in website design helped us bond even quicker. Marti also opened our eyes in how we should be communicating and connecting to our customers, because she was familiar in website design.”

Tech Fusion reached out to its business colleague to share the additional space. A recent December 2018 SIUE graduate, Bosnyak earned a bachelor’s in business administration with a focus in entrepreneurship and CMIS.

An entrepreneur at heart, Bosnyak started running his business out of his home a few years ago. His goal was to keep his business afloat and be able to enjoy life without financial constraints. He always imagined being self-employed instead of working for someone else’s dream.

With the help of the SBDC and Director Jo Ann DiMaggio May, Bosnyak created a business plan. He then worked closely with Guntren. He was able to hire his first employee, Alex Busby, and do it correctly with assistance from the SBDC and Guntren. The process of hiring independent contractors created many questions, and Bosnyak wanted to do it right the first time. Busby will help with repairs and run the storefront.

“Marti and the SBDC are always available to help answer questions whenever needed, and confidently direct me to the resources and information I need,” Bosnyak said.

When asked about working with Smith, Espinoza and Bosnyak, Guntren said, “It is exciting for me to see my clients becoming successful, and both Tech Fusion and JB’s Smartphone Repair have worked hard to do just that. However, it is even more exciting to see them come together to form a relationship that complements each business and gives them even more opportunity to succeed.

“We look forward to seeing where these three innovative and ambitious young men advance with their businesses, and we will be happy to help them in the future, if they need our help. Also, now I know where to go if my computer dies or my phone needs help!”

Contact Tech Fusion at 314-690-3564 or info@techfusionconsulting.com. For more information, visit techfusionconsulting.com. You can also find Tech Fusion on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Contact JB's Smartphone Repair at 314-375-3282 or info@CellDrJB.com. For more information, visit celldrjb.com. You can also find JB's Smartphone Repair on Facebook and Instagram.

The Illinois SBDC for the Metro East assists start-up ventures like Tech Fusion & JB's Smartphone Repair, as well as existing businesses headquartered in the nine-county region of Calhoun, Jersey, Madison, Bond, Clinton, St. Clair, Washington, Monroe and Randolph. It is funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and SIUE as a service to Illinois small businesses.

By aiding entrepreneurs and companies in defining their path to success, the SBDC network positively impacts the Metro East by strengthening the business community, creating and retaining new jobs and encouraging new investment. It enhances the region's economic interests by providing one-stop assistance to individuals by means of counseling, training, research and advocacy for new ventures and existing small businesses. When appropriate, the SBDC strives to affiliate its ties to the region to support the goals and objectives of both the SIUE School of Business and the University at large.

To learn about the SBDC, contact the IL SBDC for the Metro East at SIUE at (618) 650-2929.