

The Third Frontier In The Midwest: An Interview With John Glazer, Director, TechGROWTH Ohio (Part 2)

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By guest authors [Irina Patterson](#) and Candice Arnold

John: Another example might be developing a prototype or, in the case of a really early stage company, protecting the intellectual property through obtaining patent assistance. So, all of those are things that are needed to take risk *out* of an opportunity. They require resources that often a pre-revenue, early stage innovator does not have.

That's the intelligent thing about the program. It mixes intelligence and analysis with resources. It's very powerful, from our point of view, because, obviously, the company desires the resources. And every company has an idea of what it thinks it wants and needs.

Whether or not the very thing that we can help them with will advance and accelerate commercialization, that's where the intelligence is applied.

The pathway, the commercialization, the diagnostics of exactly what needs to be done to accelerate it, the risk factors investors would like to see minimized – those criteria help us to laser-target our resources to make them more effective.

Irina: How many companies have gone through your program in the past 12 months?

John: More than 100. The number of companies that received dollars to exemplify that transition was far less than 100. It is probably close to 30 in the past 12 months.

Irina: How do you get applicants?

John: That's a matter of branding, referrals, and recruitment. What makes our situation unique is that we are in a depressed, distressed rural setting where there are no established centers of innovation.


There's probably just one, and that would be The Ohio University. The rest of the region – and we cover a large region, a 19-county region – is Appalachian Ohio, which has historically been a [mineral] resource extraction economy where not much has been left behind.

In this environment, identifying innovators and people with new technologies is quite a challenge. And in this setting, personal relationships are what make that happen.

We travel quite extensively in the region and meet with those people who are most likely to encounter an innovator or an engineer with a new idea. You know, economic development organizations, civic leaders, private leaders, successful entrepreneurs who might be called upon to provide help, professional community bankers, lawyers, accountants, and politicians.

What we try to do is leave behind a sense that our organization is one of the most effective tools they have in their tool kits to help the constituents, people, and companies that come to them seeking help. So, we aim to solve their problem by giving them something to contribute when they encounter the opportunity.

Even though it is a rural world here, without large cities and gigantic manufacturers or research and development stuff, it's still an area of great natural beauty and a distinctive pace of life, and that tends to attract some world-class engineers.

We have a number of very small R&D companies with talented people living a lifestyle that they enjoy, and in the process, developing technical ideas; it's that there's no place for them to turn to for the help they need to bring [those ideas] to market. 

That's where we come in. It's not just this network of referrals and recruitment; we also seek to brand ourselves and get recognition in the region.

So, we sponsor a number of educational events. We help others who are involved in building entrepreneurship by contributing speakers, talents, and workshops; getting our companies to come and tell their stories; through branding, where TechGROWTH Ohio has some legs and recognition, but mostly [through] personal relationships [with people] who are recruiting folks in their areas and referring them to us.

Irina: On average, from all sources, how many applications do you receive a month?

John: Let's see . . . most of the applications we get are not going to qualify for our program because they're not going to have technologies. We refer them to other sources of help. I would say, on a monthly basis, there are probably 60 companies or 60 individuals that contact us. Of that 60, 10 or 12 may qualify. Of that 10 or 12, we'll work with them and maybe just one, at the end of day, will be worthy of or ready for the dollar resources we're able to contribute.

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This segment is part 2 in the series : The Third Frontier In The Midwest: An Interview With John Glazer, Director, TechGROWTH Ohio

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