<http://blog.seattletimes.nwsource.com/brierdudley/2009/10/15/fire_conference_eight_companie.html>

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**Brier Dudley's Blog**

Brier Dudley offers a critical look at technology and business issues affecting the Northwest.

**October 15, 2009 10:56 AM**

[**FiRe conference: Eight companies changing the world**](http://blog.seattletimes.nwsource.com/brierdudley/2009/10/15/fire_conference_eight_companie.html)

**Posted by** [**Brier Dudley**](http://search.nwsource.com/search?sort=date&from=ST&source=ST&byline=Brier%20Dudley)

Big companies like Qualcomm and Dell aren't the only ones being highlighted at the Future in Review Conference taking place today at the Seattle Four Seasons Hotel.

FiRe -- the creation of Friday Harbor tech pundit, investor and consultant Mark Anderson -- also presented a handful of small companies with potentially far-reaching innovations.

The eight "FiReStars" billed as changing the world include:

Seattle's Twisted Pair Solutions, which developed technology for connecting various types of radios into a unified communication network. Chief Executive Tom Guthrie described how it helped 48 different agencies in six counties on the Olympic Peninsula have their radios interoperate.

Skyfiber, a Bryan,, Texas-based venture, is using lasers to transmit broadband capacity at up to 1.25 gigabytes per second. Using lasers to handle broadband isn't new technology, but Skyfiber "reduces cost to the point you can actually start widespread use of this technology in an effectual way," President David Achim said.

Vancouver, B.C.-based Sea Breeze is developing renewable energy projects, including a proposed high-voltage, direct current (hvdc) undersea cable between Victoria and Port Angeles.

Serious Materials, a Sunnyvale, Calif. startup with $120 million in funding, is producing green building materials including efficient windows and drywall that's mold- and termite-resistant and generates less dust. Chief Executive Kevin Surace said 12 percent of the world's energy is used to produce bulding materials with largely antiquated technology.

Yet companies such as Serious Materials can't change the multi-billion building products industry by pitching green products. There's a limited market specifically interested in those materials, while the broader market has to be won over by offering more value.

"If you're going to build it you've got to go after the masses. If you're going to go after the masses, you've got to bring real value," he said.

Tesla, the Silicon Valley manufacturer of electric cars, was represented by John Walker, vice president of North American sales. Asked when the company will make models more affordable than its current $100,000 roadster, Walker said the company's (roughly) $50,000 Model S sedan should be on sale in 2 1/2 to 3 years.

Santa Barbara-based CytomX Therapeutics set out to "reinvent the antibody," said Chief Executive Nancy Stagliano.

The company is combining knowledge about drugs such as cancer with drug engineering approaches to make antibodies safer. The products, which are undergoing animal testing for use on cancers, may allow physicians to safely administer higher doses of medicine.

"If they're not limited by toxicity ... the amount of the drug they can give will be much higher," she explained, adding that "we think this is a big idea and a broad play."

Hoana Medical of Honolulu presented a sensor-equipped coverlet that transforms beds at hospitals into "LifeBeds" that track vital signs without anything connected to the patient. They also notify care providers of status and can "speak" to patients who try to get out of bed when they shouldn't.

"Effectively we connect every bed to the Internet," said Patrick Sullivan, chief executive.

InTouch Health of Santa Barbara produces robots that doctors use to remotely check on patients and administer care, providing "remote presence telemedicine." This is especially useful with stroke victims, who need to be seen by specialists within three hours of an incident, explained Chief Executive Yulun Wang. He demonstrated using a laptop in Seattle connected to a robot in Santa Barbara, that unplugged itself, wheeled over to a patient and zoomed in on its pupils and display of vital signs.

"What we do with our robotics is project the physician there," he said.

[www.futureinreview.com/firestarters.php](http://www.futureinreview.com/firestarters.php)

**FIRESTARTERS 2009**

**What is the FiReStarters program?**   
  
For the third year in a row, Strategic News Service (SNS) is selecting 12 businesses - top startups or businesses with new startup technology - for world promotion, based on nominations by trusted strategic investment SNS Members. We believe that these FiReStarter businesses, which are integrated into the FiRe program, are on the cusp of making great strides in improving our world. They are businesses we believe you should know about.   
  
**How does the process work?**   
  
SNS Members have access to and knowledge of key world-changing new businesses, or businesses with new technologies, that deserve recognition. We therefore invite a select number of SNS Member investment firms to nominate businesses they know that fit into this high-caliber category. From these nominations, we perform reviews and select 12 finalists to feature at the FiRe conference. These are businesses we hope to follow for a very long time.   
  
In addition to promoting these businesses before, during, and after FiRe, we follow up with each FiReStarter to learn how and in what ways their business has changed as a result of their participation at FiRe.   
  
If you would like your company to be considered as a FiReStarter nominee in 2009, or if you have any questions, please contact Sharon Anderson-Morris, Director of SNS Programs, at [sam@stratnews.com](http://www.futureinreview.com/sam@stratnews.com).

**FIRESTARTER COMPANIES**

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| SkyFiber Inc. SkyFiber Inc. develops patented wireless light communication products that address the rapidly growing global requirements for fast, secure, and affordable wireless communication solutions. SKYFIBER ™ solutions can economically augment or replace traditional fiberoptic and microwave technologies to meet customer needs for mobility backhaul, enterprise, and campus area networks; last-mile connectivity; secure private data networks; and emergency response networks.   Drawing on the strength of a deep patent portfolio, SKYFIBER has overcome the reliability and distance limitations of earlier generations of free space optics (FSO) technologies. In customer implementations, SKYFIBER products have delivered 99.999% reliability, even in extraordinarily heavy fog, rain, and smog conditions. Additional SKYFIBER benefits include:   * Deployment in a fraction of the time and cost required for traditional solutions such as fiberoptics and microwave communication * No FCC licensing requirements * Industry's smallest physical footprint, reducing the complexities of zoning, site access, and lease costs * Patented separation of antenna and electronics, requiring no rooftop power * Zero RF footprint, ensuring the most secure network transmission available * Lower power consumption and elimination of microwave smog results in an eco-friendly "green" solution * Exclusive patent for Point to Multipoint (PtMP) mesh networking   All of these innovations combine to uniquely enable accelerated growth of market share and revenue, ensuring the highest rates of OPEX and CAPEX savings available in the industry.   The demand for next-generation free-space optical technologies is here. SKYFIBER is prepared to lead the industry in providing wireless light networks to connect the world. For more information, please email [info@skyfiber.com](mailto:info@skyfiber.com).  logo**Participating at FiRe:** [**David C. Achim**](http://www.futureinreview.com/participants.php?galleryid=4095)**,** President and COO (Speaker) [**Mark Doucet**](http://www.futureinreview.com/participants.php?galleryid=4094)**,** Co-Founder, CEO, and CTO [**Adrian Steckel**](http://www.futureinreview.com/participants.php?galleryid=4131)**,** Vice Chairman   **Website:** [www.skyfiber.com](http://www.skyfiber.com/) |