

**The Minnesota Cup 2008
Backgrounder
Haberman & Associates
March 20, 2008**

Contest Mission:

To seek out, support, celebrate and promote Minnesota's newest and most innovative business ideas through an annual statewide contest that connects Minnesota entrepreneurs with our state's leading business leaders, investors and the University of Minnesota.

Brief Description / Boilerplate

The 4th Annual Minnesota Cup is a statewide competition that seeks out aspiring entrepreneurs for the next breakthrough idea. High-tech or no-tech, this competition brings together innovative business ideas from a wide range of industries including automotive, health care services, telecommunications, technology, leisure, outdoor recreation, energy conservation, education and many others. The top breakthrough idea is awarded \$50,000 in seed capital and advice from the state's leaders in finance, accounting, legal and management support services. The contest also awards prizes to the top two runners-up and the top student entry.

Contest Purpose / Contest Description

The search for great ideas or the discovery of the "next big thing" is central to entrepreneurialism in America. The state of Minnesota has a rich history of new business success going back to the inception of such companies as 3M, Best Buy, Medtronic, Carlson Companies, Caribou Coffee and Cargill. The success of these companies and others like them is critical to job creation and the advent of new technologies and services that improve quality of life and the strength of our economy.

The Minnesota Cup encourages entries from a wide range of business ideas. Past years' entries included products and services ranging from high-tech to no-tech, spanning a diverse range of industries including automotive, healthcare services, telecommunications, technology, leisure, outdoor recreation, energy conservation, education and many others.

The Minnesota Cup is looking for entrepreneurs, inventors, small business people – in short, those whose dreams include creating the next breakthrough business success story in Minnesota. Minnesota Cup participants have the opportunity to interact with investors, local business leaders and members of the [Minnesota Cup Review Board](#).

All Minnesotans are encouraged to submit their innovative business ideas online at www.breakthroughideas.org between March 31 and May 23, 2008. Top

entrants will be asked to continue through two more rounds to help contest judges determine five finalists. The finalists will then present their ideas to a prestigious panel of executives, investors and notable entrepreneurs who will choose this year's winner.

The winner will receive the Minnesota Cup, presented by David and Carolyn Cleveland and sponsored by the University of Minnesota and Wells Fargo, as well as \$50,000 in seed capital and advice from the state's leaders in finance, accounting, legal and management support services. Second and third place winners will receive \$10,000 and \$5,000, respectively.

Student entrepreneurs (must be full-time and have less than five years of professional work experience) may also submit their business ideas for judging. The top student entrant will receive a \$5,000 prize.

Entries for the Minnesota Cup competition may be submitted individually or as a group of up to four people.

The 2008 Minnesota Cup contest will culminate with an awards event in September at the University of Minnesota.

Review Board of Judges:

Core to the Minnesota Cup is the connection between entrants and leaders in Minnesota's business and investor community. To that end, a board of notable regional investors, entrepreneurs and executives has been assembled to judge contest submissions.

The judges include:

- Dave Cleveland – Co-founder, Riverside Bank
- Leslie Frecon – CEO, LFE Capital
- Art Fry – Corporate Scientist (Retired), 3M; Inventor of Post-It Notes
- Morris Goodwin – President and COO, The Hogan Company
- Skip Gage – Chairman and CEO, Gage Marketing Group
- Michael Gorman – Managing Director, Split Rock Partners
- Sima Griffith – Founder, Aethlon Capital
- Fred Haberman – Founder and CEO, Haberman & Associates
- Gary S. Holmes – President and Owner, CSM Corporation
- Joel Lebewitz – Partner, Lurie Besikof Lapidus & Company, LLP
- Brad Lehrman – Managing General Partner, Portage Equity Investments II, LP; Partner, Lommen Abdo, P.A.
- Joy Lindsay – President and Co-Founder, StarTec Investments, LLC
- Scott Litman – Co-founder, Minnesota Cup; Managing Director, SDWA Ventures LLC
- Dan Mallin – Co-founder, Minnesota Cup; Managing Director, SDWA Ventures LLC

- Dan McElroy – Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED)
- Shawn McIntee – Partner, Mason
- Mike Moore – Director, William C. Norris Institute; Co-Founder and Director, Early-Stage Investors Network
- Jay Novak – Editor and Publisher, Twin Cities Business
- Debra Peterson – Regional President, Metro MN Community Banking, Wells Fargo & Company
- Doug Ramler – Principal, Gray Plant Mooty
- Sam Richter – CEO, SBR Worldwide (Small Business Resources)
- Jeff Robbins – Attorney, Messerli & Kramer
- Thom Sandberg – Founder, The Kenyon Consortium
- John Stavig – Director, Entrepreneurial Studies, Carlson School of Management
- Dale Wahlstrom – CEO, The BioBusiness Alliance of Minnesota
- Jessica Zeaske – Associate Director, Venture Center, University of Minnesota

Judging Criteria for Entrants

Entries will be judged on the following criteria:

- *Business Concept/Idea:* The contest seeks business concepts with a clear and well-articulated value proposition. Judges will be looking to understand why the market needs this idea. Who is the target audience and how well does the product/service stand out in a competitive environment? Ideas can be for a product or service, an entirely new idea or the evolution of a previous idea. Ideas that show the greatest innovation will be viewed more favorably.
- *Implementation:* What is the entrant's strategy for turning the idea into a high-growth business? Judges will be evaluating ideas on their potential to generate revenue, profits and employment. Judges are looking for ideas that can create a positive economic impact within two years.
- *Quality of Presentation:* As the contest progresses from round one to round two, more emphasis will be placed on the entrant's presentation quality.

Three Rounds of Judging:

Round One: March 31 – May 23, 2008

Entrants will be asked to provide an executive summary of their idea or concept. Submissions should provide the following information in 500 words or less:

- A description of the product/service
- An explanation of the market size, potential and opportunity
- An overview of the sales and marketing plan
- A summary detailing the operating plan

Round Two: June 16 – July 25, 2008

Thirty entrants will be selected to participate in the second round, in which each participant will be asked to develop a detailed business plan including the following:

- A more detailed explanation of how their idea can become a viable business
- A marketing and sales plan that details how they will address a market need
- A two-year financial projection, focusing on how they plan to generate revenue and profits
- A powerful use of graphics, such as illustrations and diagrams

Round Three: August 20 – Sept. 11, 2008

Five finalists will be selected to move to the third and final round. These participants will be required to prepare a 15-minute oral presentation of their proposed business plan, to be presented on Sept. 11, 2008. Entrants are encouraged to use presentation materials, such as posters, PowerPoint, handouts, prototypes, multimedia, etc.

Final Event: Awards Event, McNamara Alumni Center, Sept. 11, 2008

Five finalists will be honored in fall 2008 at the Fourth Annual Minnesota Cup award event at the University of Minnesota. Finalists will make their oral presentations at this event, and the judges will announce the three winners and award all prizes.

Minnesota Cup Sponsors:

- The University of Minnesota
- Wells Fargo
- Department of Employment and Economic Development
- Kenyon Consortium (Advertising)
- Valtira (Web)
- James J. Hill Reference Library (Research)
- Twin Cities Business (Media)
- Maslon (Legal)
- Messerli & Kramer (Legal)
- Gray Plant Mooty (Legal)
- Lommen Abdo (Legal)
- Lurie Besikof Lapidus & Co. (Accounting)
- W Creative (Web Design)
- SDWA Ventures (Consulting)
- BioBusiness Alliance
- Haberman & Associates (Public Relations)

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