

## MICROSOFT TO INCUBATE - BUT HERE?

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TAMPA, Fla., Sept. 21 (LocalBusiness.com) -- Microsoft executive Jim Gillen told a packed house at the Internet Business Association that his company will make a "major announcement" within two weeks regarding its Microsoft.net, next generation technology, efforts to incubate small start-ups to generate applications for the new software platform.

Gillen stopped talking immediately afterwards Wednesday, referring all questions to Microsoft's executive in charge of starting a Tampa-area "eco-net" to nurture companies here.

Last spring, software giant Microsoft said it would focus on Tampa to set up a Tampa Bay-wide "eco-net" linking local bankers, lawyers and entrepreneurs with each other.

Mark Barry, the Microsoft Atlanta executive in charge of the Tampa effort, told LocalBusiness.com late Wednesday that he was still in the talking stages with many of the players in the effort.

On the other hand, several sources in the high-tech arena said Barry was near finalizing a deal combining the investment bankers at St. Petersburg's Raymond James with newly-unemployed BrainBuzz.com founder Tom Wallace in a network centered around Tampa Mayor Dick Greco's efforts to bring more high-tech start-ups to Tampa's downtown.

Previously, Barry has mentioned starting a dot-com incubator in town using local players as the prime movers. Greco also has been said to be looking at an incubator as the catalyst for bringing high-technology firms downtown.

Other local names that have mentioned interest in a privately-run incubator have been John Hill, John McDonald and Mike Siewruk, partners in Hyde Park Capital, as well as Kimberly During, founder and president of Palm Harbor Web development firm K-Tek Systems.

"I'm banking that Tampa's going to be the place," Barry said last spring. "We have a presence today in Tampa (with a sales office) and Tampa has more capacity to grow than other cities in Florida, more potential for us to incubate top-notch dot-coms."

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