

## High-tech eclipses tourism

Strong growth sees high-tech industry hit \$1.6-billion in total revenue

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You would have been forgiven if you had mistaken last night's Vancouver Island Advanced Technology Centre annual awards dinner for a Phoenix Suns playoff game.

With 500 bright orange, foam fingers extending from the arms of the high-tech community, it was hard to tell the difference.

The party-favour fingers were ordered to celebrate the high-tech industry hitting the \$1.6-billion total revenue plateau, taking it well past tourism as Victoria's No. 1 non-government industry.

And they gave a festive feeling to an evening celebrating an industry that has been quietly on the rise since the dot-com bust six years ago.

"There was a bit of a lull after that, and keep in mind we weren't hit as hard as other cities like Seattle, but there was an all-around hangover," said Dan Gunn, executive director of VIATeC. "It was hard to get investment, hard to get people interested and hard to be motivated."

But Gunn said the companies that survived the downturn turned their energies toward business fundamentals which served them well when the markets were ready for them.

And last night at the Victoria Conference Centre those companies got to enjoy another year of strong growth.

"The point of [the awards] is we go about doing our thing all year, working hard and we don't hang out a lot of shingles, attention or glamour on the sector," added Gunn. "So once a year we get together, trade the lab coats for dress coats and have a good time."



CREDIT: Bruce Stotesbury, Times Colonist

Members of the Vancouver Island Advanced Technology Centre celebrate hitting the \$1.67-billion total revenue mark. The industry also gave itself a pat on the back last night at its annual gala by honouring success stories with awards that ranged from technology company of the year to environmental excellence.

The three high-profile awards went to online lead-generation and marketing firm Neverblue Media, which took home the award as technology company of the year; network marketing software firm Oprius Software won emerging technology company of the year; and Peter Berrang, a co-founder of the Axys Group of companies, who took home the Colin Lennox award for technology champion. Axys is well known for designing and manufacturing sophisticated ocean buoys for research and data collection.

Online book retailer Abebooks.com was named VIATeC's member of the year, which Gunn said recognizes commitment to the high-tech community.

"It's a great way for us as an organization to say thanks to somebody," he said. "Being a member of VIATeC comes with a monetary commitment but it's a whole other type of commitment they make to participate and be an active member of the community."

Other award winners last night included:

GenoLogics Life Sciences Software for human resources excellence; Noah Wheelock from Atomic Crayon was named employee of the year; Triton Logging won for environmental excellence; Wayne Poncia of Etraffic Solutions was named executive of the year; Atomic Crayon won for online strategy of the year; newsmaker of the year was Contech Electronics; Archipelago Marine Research won for innovative excellence (process or product); Hydroxyl Systems won product of the year; and Paretologic won for innovative excellence (software or electronic service delivery).

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