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## Welcome to e-news for NEXT

NEXT is the resource collaborative that specializes in developing the region's fast-growth entrepreneurial sector. The mission of NEXT is to create a new culture of entrepreneurship in the region and dramatically increase the number and quality of fast-growth, entrepreneurial companies headquartered in our region. NEXT pursues three key initiatives to achieve its mission: client services to technology-based entrepreneurs; infrastructure; and voice/advocacy.

For additional information, contact Brenda Laakso at 864-239-3711.

### ▶ EVENT CALENDAR

**NEXT Best Practices Forum "Retaining Employees - After they say Yes (orientation, incentives, reviews, activities)".** Don Karns of Step Change Solutions, LLC will be our speaker. Monday, June 2, 12:00 – 1:30 p.m., held at the Y-Teen Center located at 612B S. Main Street, Greenville SC 29601 (above Go Fish and Spill the Beans). Lunch is provided.

**FastTrac® NewVenture™** FastTrac NewVenture is ground zero for anyone interested in starting a business. An education program created by entrepreneurs for entrepreneurs, FastTrac NewVenture is designed to help you evaluate and perfect your business concept. Taught by seasoned entrepreneurs in your community, FastTrac's hands-on program uses your idea as a case study, giving you an opportunity to "workshop" your venture in a safe and supportive environment. FastTrac NewVenture is a nine-module, 31.5 hour, program. The cost for the NewVenture course is \$195. Register and pay at least 2 weeks in advance to receive a \$50 discount! **FastTrac NewVenture – Greenville.** Meets Mondays for 10 sessions beginning June 16, 2008, 6:00 - 9:00 p.m. [Register here.](#) [Check the program schedule](#) to view other locations and dates.

**FastTrac® GrowthVenture™** What do you get out of FastTrac GrowthVenture? That's easy. Control of your business and your life. Graduates of FastTrac GrowthVenture describe the program as one that encourages entrepreneurs to streamline their business processes, analyze strengths and shortcomings, and achieve more balance in their work and personal lives. By working closely with other entrepreneurs in the intensive, FastTrac GrowthVenture environment, you'll interact with a group of people with whom you can share ideas, strategies, and successes. You'll also hone business skills that you'll use to shape your business for years to come. The cost for the GrowthVenture course is \$295. Register and pay at least 2 weeks in advance to receive a \$50 discount! **FastTrac GrowthVenture – Greenville.** Meets Tuesdays for 10 sessions beginning June 17, 2008, 6:00 - 9:00 p.m. [Register here.](#) [Check the program schedule](#) to view other locations and dates.

**FastTrac® TechVenture™** What do you get out of FastTrac TechVenture? That's easy. The tools you need to advance your technology venture to the next stage of business, whether that is seeking your last round of financing before going public, or moving beyond the start-up stage. Graduates of FastTrac TechVenture describe the program as one that encourages technology entrepreneurs to determine the economic feasibility of their business concept, reevaluate the feasibility of the technology, design a business model that matches a personal vision, and create a business plan to communicate the opportunity to investors. The cost for the TechVenture course is \$395. Register and pay at least 2 weeks in advance to receive a \$50 discount! **FastTrac TechVenture – Greenville.** Meets Thursdays for 10 sessions beginning September 10, 2008, 6:00 - 9:00 p.m. [Register here.](#) [Check the program schedule](#) to view other locations and dates.

**NEXT Best Practices Forum "TBD".** Monday, July 7, 12:00 – 1:30 p.m., Greenville Chamber Boardroom.

## NEXT PARTNER SERVICES and EVENTS

### GSATC upcoming events:

June 4th 11:30am @ The Crowne Plaza - Jim Pepin, CTO and Director of High Performance Computing at Clemson speaks at GSATC. For more information and to register: <http://www.gsadc.org/2008/05/23/jim-pepin/> <<http://www.gsadc.org/2008/05/23/jim-pepin/>>

June 18th 5:30pm @ Barley's - GSATC - Tech After Five. The first beer is on me! Come for Business Networking and to talk to cool start-ups. (If you'd like to demo at Tech After Five, contact Damien Stevens [dsteven@servosity.com](mailto:dsteven@servosity.com) <<mailto:dsteven@servosity.com>>). For more information and to register: <http://www.gsadc.org/programs/ta5/> <<http://www.gsadc.org/programs/ta5/>>

### Downtown Greenville cultural events:

[http://www.greenergreenville.com/visitors/events\\_cal\\_resultsGG.asp?Start\\_DateM=06&Start\\_DateD=15&Start\\_DateY=2007](http://www.greenergreenville.com/visitors/events_cal_resultsGG.asp?Start_DateM=06&Start_DateD=15&Start_DateY=2007)

## ▶ UPDATES

### MEMBER NEWS

**Outdoor Interactive, Greenville, SC - Technology (A Special Report) --- Just for You: Web sites have long tried to make shopping more personal; Now they have the tools to do it, The Wall Street Journal R5, English, (Copyright (c) 2008, Dow Jones & Company, Inc.).** Sometimes turning online shoppers into buyers takes a personal touch. That's where the latest generation of e-commerce personalization tools comes in. This is the software behind the features - mainly product recommendations -- that cater to individual shoppers' tastes and needs on a Web site. Compared with earlier versions, the latest tools perform more analysis of shoppers' activity, and the resulting recommendations are more likely to reflect the interests of individual customers. What's more, they're cheaper to deploy.

As a result, more online merchants are adding personalization features to their Web sites, and many of those that do are seeing substantial jumps in their rates of converting browsers into buyers.

"I remember these things from years ago. They were expensive, never really worked right, they required too much work, IT guys hated these things," says James Haltiwanger Jr., a veteran of online businesses who currently operates OutdoorSuperStore.com LLC. "But when I took a look at some of the latest, all I could say was, 'Wow, that's what I have been looking for.'"

Shopping online can feel overwhelming, with some Web sites listing thousands of products to choose from. So almost from the beginning, e-commerce sites looked for ways to personalize the experience, from something as simple as greeting visitors by name to recommending possible purchases based on the similar shopping practices of other customers. Retailers found that these personal touches can make a difference in getting visitors to buy. So demand grew for tools that analyze customers' buying and browsing habits, the amount of time they spend on a site, the terms they search for and scores of other behavioral factors. All that information can then be used to customize each visit to a site.

There were some drawbacks, though, to earlier versions of personalization tools. They were too expensive for many retailers. Many of the tools did little more than gather data -- they didn't perform the analysis that is needed to put that information to work. So it was up to retailers to sift through reams of information and make nearly all the decisions on what kinds of customers would be interested in which products. Some personalization tools performed some of this analysis, but it tended to be shallow, so sites would end up simply recommending their most popular products to most shoppers. And the software was too complex for most retailers to be able to customize it so that it would yield more-individualized recommendations. The latest tools have improved in all these areas. They're cheaper and more powerful. They not only collect data but also analyze it more thoroughly, and some can make individualized product recommendations without the retailer's input. And, thanks to new developments in predictive theory and data analysis, those recommendations are more accurate and can be made after only a few visits by a customer. Also, a slew of well-funded start-ups have flooded the market with products that can be mixed and matched, so retailers can assemble a package of tools that suit their needs instead of committing to a single product with flaws they can't fix.

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Mr. Haltiwanger put together four pieces of software to handle personalization on his OutdoorSuperStore.com site. He launched the sporting-goods retailer in 2000 to sell primarily hunting, fishing and archery products online and through a print catalog. From the start, he realized that personalization tools would help his small, 10-person operation compete with much larger competitors. But the tools Mr. Haltiwanger first tried were too expensive and didn't do a good enough job of differentiating among his customers. One flaw he points out is that they didn't take account of customers' geographic location, a key factor in his business. Customers in Florida, he notes, will buy marine products year-round, but customers in Wisconsin won't. The combination of tools he's using now allows him to make that distinction and many others. One crucial piece of the package is software from RatePoint Inc., of Needham, Mass., that plumbs customer reviews to analyze their buying preferences. That information, used in conjunction with other software that tracks customer activity on the site, has helped the company make recommendations that are more in tune with each shopper's needs. Traffic and sales have both risen dramatically since OutdoorSuperStore.com started using the new software, Mr. Haltiwanger says.

The improvements came at a price. While the cost of personalization software has come down, Mr. Haltiwanger estimates he has dedicated 65% of the money the company has raised from investors to these tools. But, he says, the results justify the expense. "It might be expensive, but it's more expensive to do something like this wrong," he says.

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**TiBA Solutions, LLC**, Greenville, SC - Below is a link praising the South Carolina Business One-Stop. This was a major project for TiBA Solutions, LLC and TiBA is seeing very good sales indicators show success in selling One-Stop's to other states.

<http://www.palmettoscoop.com/2008/05/18/scbos-benefits-state-through-public-private-partnership/>

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## **PRESS RELEASES**

**Kudzu announces Adobe partnership**, Greenville, SC, May 28, 2008 - Kudzu has announced it is partnering with Adobe systems to offer clients rich internet applications. Kudzu is the first Adobe Scene 7 partner in the Carolinas. Companies use Scene 7 to produce dynamic images on their websites, develop e-catalogues, create product configurations, targeted email and print and manage their images. Adobe Scene 7 is a web-based system to increase the online marketing ROI.

About Kudzu

Kudzu is a Greenville, SC based firm that measures, tracks and improves businesses' online marketing ROI.  
[www.kudzufactor.com](http://www.kudzufactor.com)

About Adobe Scene 7

Adobe Scene 7 is used by a wide variety of businesses to shorten the time to market. Scene 7 clients include: Sears, Nike, Bass Pro Shops, Wal-Mart and many other businesses. [www.scene7.com](http://www.scene7.com)

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**ProActive Technology awarded various contracts, and case study**, Greenville, SC, May 27, 2008 - ProActive has been awarded a contract from Georgia Pacific Building Products Division to create a new application for tracking serialized inventory items. ProActive has also been awarded a contract from Greenville County Schools to create an Incident Tracking application to replace the manual referral process.

Microsoft has agreed to do a case study on the application rewrite that ProActive has completed for Georgia Pacific.

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### **MIT DVD BROADCASTS AVAILABLE FOR CHECK-OUT**

Are You Ready for IPO? Strategies and Steps for How and When to Take Your Company Public, January 24, 2008

Enterprising Georgia Energy, Security & the Economy, October 24, 2007

Entrepreneurship: Success, Failure, Greatness A Fireside Chat with Ann Winblad and Jason Pontin  
September. 27, 2007

A.B.L.E. Tech: Achieving Better Life Experiences for People with Injury, Disability and Aging Challenges Through  
21<sup>st</sup> Century Technologies, June 6, 2007

Financial Markets: Outlook 2007 moderated by Liz Claman, CNBC, January 25, 2007

A Very Special Evening with Geoffrey Moore, November 15, 2006

Angel Groups in Action: Funding Early Stage Innovation, June 1, 2005

Forecasting Markets: The Capital Update for 2006, January 26, 2005

The dvd's can be checked out for 2 weeks. Please contact Ginger McKenzie [gmckenzie@greenvillechamber.org](mailto:gmckenzie@greenvillechamber.org) if you are interested. You will need to pick them up from, and return to, the Chamber

For more information on the services of NEXT partner organizations, visit: [NEXTGreenville.com](http://NEXTGreenville.com)

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