

Invention2Venture (I2V) a huge success at IIT by [Smit Bavishi](#)

The Invention2Venture workshop (I2V) held at the MTCC Auditorium on March 31 was a huge success. Close to one hundred students, faculty members and entrepreneurs attended the event. Students from various schools, such as DePaul and the Milwaukee School of Engineering, also attended the event.

Professor Janusz Filipiak, Chairman and CEO of Comarch, delivered I2V's opening keynote address. Prof. Filipiak's talk focused on how Comarch's close ties to various academic institutions across Europe helped Comarch gain exclusive access to a huge talent pool. This was crucial for Comarch's business success. He also talked about the informal culture within Comarch to innovate and lead the IT industry in Eastern Europe.

Today, Comarch is Poland's top IT company with offices all around the world. Its profit figures have been rising exponentially each year. Also Comarch recently announced that it will move its main office for US operations to the University Technology Park at IIT. This will be great opportunity for IIT and its students to work with a world-class, fast-growing IT company.

The keynote address was followed by a panel of speakers consisting of Jay Fisher, director of IIT's Jules F. Knapp Entrepreneurship Center, Melissa Talarico from the Chicagoland Entrepreneurial Center, and Michael Evans, co-founder of Grubhub.com. This session catered to engineers who wish to develop a commercial product from their idea using the various resources available to them.

Mike Evans, an engineer from MIT, thrilled the audience with his story of how Grubhub.com, a website for restaurant delivery, was founded in 2003. In a short span of time, Grubhub.com has become one of Chicago's hottest businesses and has quickly expanded to other cities such as New York and San Francisco.

The next session was on Idea Validation and Product Design by Marco Susani, Director for Design of Seamless Mobility at Motorola. Marco Susani's team was behind the creation of the wildly popular Motorola RAZR cell phone. Susani's session focused on how the RAZR concept was inspired and how it was eventually transformed into a commercial product that set new standards for the design of the next generation of cell phones.

Stanford Ovshinsky, President and Chief Scientist at ECD Ovonics, delivered the lunch keynote. Dean Harvey Kahalas from the Stuart School of Business introduced Mr. Ovshinsky. With over 350 patents, Mr. Stanford Ovshinsky, who never attended college, is considered to be "the Edison of our age" by the Economist. His keynote focused on the pioneering work he and his colleagues have been doing since the '60s in the field of renewable energy.

For over four decades Mr. Ovshinsky has been convincing politicians and the general public to shift towards the Solar-Hydrogen economy instead of our fossil-fuel based economy, which had lead to various problems across the globe. He believes that it has been extremely hard to bring change to the world; however, he feels that finally the world is listening to him. In his keynote, he encouraged the next generation of scientists, engineers and entrepreneurs to truly make a difference by building new industries and saving the planet.

Zack Kaplan, the CEO and co-founder of Inventables, delivered the next session. His session focused on how Inventables was founded and how it helps established businesses to come up with creative products and ideas. Kaplan then talked about the creation of some of the prototypes and samples they sell to their clients to spark innovation.

Finally, Chris Gladwin, President of Cleversafe, and James Dugan, CEO and general partner at OCA Ventures, delivered the final session on obtaining financing for your new business. Gladwin and Dugan candidly described the many hurdles faced by new entrepreneurs when it comes to getting money for their new business from venture capitalists and angel investors.

This event was organized by the IIT Entrepreneurship Program and was sponsored by the Kern Entrepreneurship Education Network (KEEN), National Collegiate Inventors and Innovators Alliance (NCIIA), and the Coleman Foundation.