

Steve Toner international events in the News

International business contacts abound in Tampa area

Tampa Bay Business Journal

The Tampa Bay Partnership publishes an International Organization Directory, a guide to contacts for international business and trade. Following are excerpts from the directory provided to The Business Journal by the Tampa Bay Partnership. To get a copy of the directory or for more information on the Tampa Bay Partnership's work in the area of international business, call (813) 878-2208.

BI-NATIONAL BUSINESS

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Canadian trade group gets creative; members show up

▪ Tampa Bay Business Journal - by [Michael Buettner](#)

If you're tired of the usual rubber-chicken-and-speech routine at business-club meetings, you might try following the example of the Canadian American International Business Council of Tampa Bay.

The trade-promotion group's August meeting was held at the Florida Aquarium, with a tour of the facility following the dinner and speakers. (Most frequently heard comment: "This is the first time I've been here; it's really nice.")

The previous meeting in June in Naples featured a luau on the beach and a day of golf.

Next month, the council will meet at Oystercatchers Restaurant at the Hyatt Regency Westshore hotel and then catch a two-hour sunset cruise with the Westshore Charter Boat Center's Capt. Bob DeMoss. And in October the group will meet at the Ice Palace to greet the first Canada-based team to play there, the Ottawa Senators.

CAIBC Chairman Steve Toner, president of Tampa-based Toner Communications Inc., said the council started picking unusual locations for its meetings so members could get acquainted with the Bay Area's facilities and resources.

"There's so much here to be seen and enjoyed," he commented.

And if part of the strategy was also to play on people's curiosity to boost attendance, it seems to work. Toner said the group's meetings generally attract 30 to 40 people.

Membership in the group is growing quickly. Started last fall, the CAIBC already has about 50 corporate members and is looking to reach 100 by the end of the year.

The idea behind the council, Toner explained, is to help Bay Area businesses increase trading opportunities with Canada, and vice versa.

"If you want to go international, Canada is the logical first step," he remarked. "It's already Tampa Bay's largest foreign trading partner, largest foreign investor and largest source of foreign tourists. There are no language barriers, no cultural barriers and no time differences."

Expo on a dime

Instead of locking participants into a daylong activity, members of the Tampa Bay International Business Council have scheduled a trade exposition in lieu of April's regularly scheduled meeting.

At a cost of \$20 a person, the expo is expected to offer participants access to some of the top international products and services in the Bay area. Exhibition fees are \$150 per member and \$200 per nonmember.

Then, the nonprofit trade association plans to honor all those volunteers who have chaired the group over its 50-year history.

The guest speaker will be Tampa Mayor Dick Greco.

For more information, call Steve Toner, president of Toner Communications Inc., (813) 288-9784.

Montreal trade show highlights Florida

Although Canada lies to the north, it is the south side of the United States and elsewhere in the Americas where much of its trade interest lies.

George L. Martinez, manager of the export Assistance Center of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, sees exporting to Central America as the wave of the future.

The Tampa Bay area is a gateway to that market.

"Communications technology to countries like El Salvador and Nicaragua is timely and economically viable," said Martinez. "In effect, Latin America has skipped cable technology."

It is this technology gap that seems to intrigue many businesses, organizations and countries in North America.

So for the second year, Florida organizations will travel to Montreal, Canada, in the province of Quebec, for the country's annual International Business World Exhibition.

The September event will draw companies from throughout the United States and the world to explore international business opportunities.

More than 500 Canadian and foreign companies seeking high-level business networking are expected to attend. Quebec exports have doubled in less than six years, and the economy is booming, thanks to the exceptional success of Quebec entrepreneurs in foreign markets.

Florida's pavilion, the centerpiece for the show, is called "Florida: The High-Tech State and Gateway to Latin America." It will feature Tampa Bay area companies in an effort to market the state and its exceptional assets.

The trade show, now in its 16th year, is sponsored by Martin International, a 33-year-old company founded Serge Martin. During a spring visit to the Bay area, Martin made no secret his belief in the Bay area's significance to technology development and trade with the Americas.

"Florida is not just fun and sun," Martin said during a reception for a Canadian trade delegation visiting the Bay area in May. "It's business. And it's big business."

Florida and Canadian companies need assistance finding each other in order to bring high tech together with venture capital, said **Steve Toner, director of the Canadian American Business Council.**

Venture capital is something Canada definitely possesses.

Caisse de depot et placement du Quebec is a huge privately managed pension fund that exceeded \$105 billion in assets at the end of 1999. Martin sits on its board. And based on Martin's remarks during the May trade mission, it is positioned for investment in the high-tech market here.

The focus of this year's Florida exhibit is to draw new investment and venture capital to the state, considered by Canada to be the stepping stone to Latin America, said Toner.

Trade with Canada is beneficial to the whole of Florida, said Wayne Kline, vice president of the International Trade Association for the Central Florida Development Council Inc. and a member of the Polk County economic development team.

"We've already seen the benefits of trade missions in Canada," said Kline. "If you are in the business of economic development, you must realize that foreign businesses do not recognize counties. It's Florida versus Texas and North Carolina, etc. to them."

The show expects to attract more than 350 exhibitors and 15,000 visitors.

The World Trade Center Tampa Bay will host the 3,600-square-foot Florida pavilion for 100 high-tech Florida firms. The trip is expected to pave the way for wireless communication in all the Americas, said Arie Vroon, vice president of World Trade Center Tampa Bay.

"There's no question there's an opportunity for business in Latin America, and Tampa is the link," said Vroon. "I think it's accurate to say that many countries in America went straight from telephone to wireless."

Trade talks have been in full swing since the May 15-17 Trade Mission Tampa Bay, where Canadian companies were shown opportunities in the Bay area and where many major connections were made.

In 1997, Florida exports to Canada totaled more than \$2 billion and Canadian exports to the United States totaled more than \$2.5 billion.

"Its one thing to go to a trade show, its another to be successful," said Vroon.

To reach Ken Salgat, call (813) 342-2477, or send your e-mail to ksalgat@amcity.com.

Money magnet

An influx of overseas capital boosts Tampa's economy

Tampa Bay Business Journal - by [Ken Salgat](#) Staff Writer

Read almost any economic report in the country and you'll most likely find Florida at the top of the list as a desirable business location. A primary reason: Tampa is gaining recognition as the technological highway to Latin America for many economic development professionals.

Investment in Tampa, both from expansion of overseas companies and from overseas venture capital firms, is a building block to economic growth.

The foundations already have been set for sustained economic growth in Tampa, said Stuart Rogel, president and chief executive officer for Tampa Bay Partnership, an economic development group serving the seven county Bay area. Now its just a question of which companies to bring in to spur the growth.

"We have already seen considerable interest from an international standpoint," said Rogel.

"There have even been some substantial partnership agreements reached already, but like all good things, it takes time to work out the kinks."

Steve Toner, president of the Canadian American Business Council, said that a number of science and technology companies have already moved into the area, one as recently as May, not to mention great interest from traditional international companies.

One of the largest transportation companies in Canada plans to announce its expansion to Tampa Sept. 1.

Hansen Global Forwarding, a member of L. Hansen's Forwarding Inc., headquartered in Toronto, is a van lines car carrier company specializing in cross-border relocation of automobiles. The expansion to a location within the United States was an extension of the company's 20-year-old business.

"The industry itself is a multimillion dollar business, and we (Hansen) had been looking for a way to extend our success to the U.S. and Latin America," said Earl "Duke" Wigley, business manager for the U.S. regional division.

Hansen will move into a location near Tampa International Airport as soon as the principals put "pen to ink."

"We chose Tampa as our first venture across the border because of the immense existing clientele base already here," said Wigley. "We also plan to expand to the West Coast of the United States, probably in California, by the end of 2001."

With five branch offices throughout Canada, Hansen chose its location on the U.S. East Coast based on incentives in both Florida and in Tampa particularly.

"What you have here is one of the best airports in the country, a top-notch port system and a close proximity to rail," Wigley said. "What else can a moving company ask for?"

Hansen expected to begin occupancy of an existing building in early September and will employ approximately 18 semi-trucks and trailers, along with rail, airline and boat, said Wigley.

Another Canadian company on the move to Florida is tied to one of the largest venture capital companies in North America, **Martin International Inc.** in Montreal. Martin International reported 1999 combined assets totaling more than \$105 billion.

The company has displayed a proven track record in its dedication to international investment through Tampa since visiting the area during a May Canadian trade mission, sponsored by the World Trade Center of Tampa Bay. And the company's president, Serge Martin, believes he has struck gold in Tampa.

"Canadian companies and many throughout the United States are recognizing the value of establishing a presence in Florida," said Martin.

"Tampa is second to none in the quality of its research. The interesting aspect for venture capitalists is that Tampa is the best kept secret in the Bay area."

Ken Parker, president of the World Trade Center of Tampa Bay, believes investment capital will become very approachable to local business owners within the next year.

"We had a very successful mission in May and are looking forward to traveling ourselves to the Canadian mission in September," said Parker. "With the increased visibility brought to the event because of Mayor (Dick) Greco's participation, I expect to see great things in the coming months."

ITEC attracts thousands to dawdle in technology

Tampa Bay Business Journal - by [Pamela Griner Leavy](#)

Organizers estimate about 4,500 people attended the May 2-3 Tampa Bay Information Technology Exposition and Conference at the Tampa Convention Center.

On the exhibit floor Gregg Vosler, director of marketing for NeuTelligent.com in Tampa, was heard lamenting that his Web-hosting company would not be webcasting the execution of convicted Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh.

McVeigh is scheduled to be put to death May 16 at a federal prison in Terre Haute, Ind. More than 165 people died in the 1995 blast .

The Kforce Inc. booth staffed by Judy Masse and Brian Bucklund still was identified as Kforce.com, though Kforce dropped the "com" moniker last week.

Tampa Bay Buccaneer Shelton Quarles handed out autographed photos at the Sprint PCS booth, and **Steve Toner, president of TonerCom International** in Tampa, was busy promoting the Oct. 2-4 Canadian American Business Council Montreal trade mission. And Bob Singerman demonstrated the Tampa Bay Partnership "Tampa Bay, The Climate is Right" Web site video produced by SSP Media Inc. in Tampa.

A last minute entry to the host of workshops was a presentation by lawyer Ken Segarnick titled "Corporate Crackdown: Safeguarding Against the Legal Traps of Corporate E-Mail."

Among the more than 120 exhibitors were Jeff Zampino of Type Monkeys Inc. in Largo; Jason Shiver of Edu-Tech Inc. Computer Training Center in Tampa; Bill Lusk, account executive in Gartner Inc.'s Clearwater office; Tom Workman, director of sales and marketing for Network Engineering Solutions Inc. in Clearwater; Lee Carr, account executive at Computer Cable Connection Inc. in Tampa; Donald Cheesman, senior systems engineer at Gateway Computer Associates Inc. in St. Petersburg; Richard Lewis, senior consultant in the information technology division of Marsar & Co. Inc., executive search specialists in Tampa; and Susan Gunn, president of AlignTech Inc. in Odessa.

For all, free shoe shines by Irish & Co. were offered by the Tampa company Adelphia Business Solutions Inc.

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Firm looking to expand its presence in Paris

More French will be spoken on a mission to Montreal

Tampa Bay Business Journal - by [Ken Salqat](#) Staff Writer

TAMPA -- In Paris, where the Seine flows like wine and where wine flows continuously, a potential flow of trade is in the offing between Tampa Bay area businesses and the French.

Beginning Oct. 14, France is the target of a Bay area-led international trade mission.

Participants hope to promote, build and potentially expand business relationships between the Bay area and the French cities of Paris and Le Havre.

One company in particular, **SIS International Research Inc.** in Sarasota, thinks chances for it to expand its presence in France are very good.

SIS International Research, founded in 1984 by Ruth Stanat, is an international business research firm with thousands of affiliate research offices in more than 120 countries. Because of the upcoming mission -- and with a little help from a friend -- those numbers are likely to change.

"Ruth Stanat and I have known each other for years, and we help one other out from time to time," said Marcia Cohen, who owns and runs her own law firm in St. Petersburg, the Law Offices of Marcia Cohen.

Cohen said Stanat asked her to ascertain whether business opportunities existed in Paris, and whether the company's market research services could be expanded.

"They already have two offices in Paris but might expand their presence if there's enough interest shown," Cohen said.

Cohen is no stranger to Paris.

She has been a guest speaker at the University of Paris and will speak again Jan. 11 at a forum on U.S. civil rights and international employment law. The forum is to promote a more globalized business view -- something she believes is overdue.

"We in the Tampa Bay area, and whole of Florida, together have not had as much emphasis placed on international relations in the past," said Cohen. "We are situated to play a great role in international trade. We have many U.S. employers with operations in Europe and many European employers with operations in the United States. The employment law implications associated with this relationship are very vast, and I try to assist employers with that."

Representatives of eight different sponsors and business leaders such as Cohen and the French American Business Council of West Florida will make the trip.

Sponsors are: The U.S. Department of Commerce, the Canadian American Business Council, Bay Area Manufacturers Association, Tampa Bay Women in International Trade Inc., Enterprise Florida Inc., the Greater Tampa Bay Chamber of Commerce and Sister Cities International Inc.

The trade mission has its potential tied to past success.

"The country is the world's fifth largest economy and accounts for \$25 billion in trade with the United States annually," said **Steve Toner, president of TonerCom International Inc. in Tampa and the Canadian American Business Council.**

In fact, three of the top four largest foreign employers in Florida are companies with French owners, according to Enterprise Florida Inc. information:

- Essilor of America Inc. in St. Petersburg
- Rexel Inc. in Coral Gables
- L'il Champ Food Stores Inc. in Jacksonville

Unlike **Toner, who helps arrange Bay area trade missions annually**, Sister Cities International is fairly new to the trade mission game. Sister Cities International is a nonprofit, citizen-diplomacy network created to strengthen partnerships between the United States and international communities.

"The program was started by President Eisenhower in 1957 to promote peace on a person-by-person, city-by-city basis," said Rose-Marie Magriby, board member for Tampa Sister Cities International Inc. "And although the mission is social, it really focuses on trade. Le Havre is not only a sister city to Tampa but also a seaport in Normandy.

"We're trying to create more trade with the French community and more visibility with the city of Tampa. We have a trade history with Le Havre. What we're trying to look at are other products that can be boosted through import and exports. We want to increase port call traffic between Le Havre and Tampa by pushing Tampa's direct route to Mexico."

See related article: **tampabay.bcentral.com/tampabay/stories/2001/09/03/story5.html**.

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TAMPA -- On Oct. 3, an annual gathering of **Tampa Bay** area business and economic development professionals again will be testing its French language skills at an international trade convention in Montreal, Canada.

However, this year's group is in for some changes.

For the past 16 years, Steve Toner has helped organize Bay area- and Florida-sponsored trade missions to Montreal.

He knows the ropes of international trade to Canada, and he knows the people who get it done, what works and what does not.

Toner is the president of both TonerCom International Inc. and the Canadian American Business Council, both in Tampa.

The previous trade missions were to the annual International World Exhibition. But this year's mission will depart Tampa a few weeks later and deal directly with multimedia convergent technologies.

"Trade Mission Montreal: Canadian Multimedia Dealmaker 2001" will run Oct. 3-5. The focus of the mission this year will be how technology melds, and the scheduling, more streamlined.

"This year's mission to Montreal will function a bit differently than in previous years, both in the convention we attend and in how the functions are arranged," said Toner.

The changes though, seem for the better.

"In the past, companies have had the face-to-face meetings with potential business partners arranged for them following arrival in the city," said Toner. "This year, we've arranged that any participating company will have a minimum of 10 meetings confirmed before they even set foot on a plane."

The change is significant because many participants feel the meetings are where most of the exchange of information takes place, said Toner.

With the scheduling already in place, business people can more quickly get down to business.

Last year, Canadian investment firms made numerous contacts to the office requesting meetings with Tampa business leaders, said Donald Businger, director of commercial affairs for the Montreal office of the U.S. Consulate General.

"These conventions have been successful because business people actually can meet face-to-face and discuss business opportunities which before might have been simply a fleeting desire," said Businger.

It is estimated that foreign multimedia suppliers provide more than \$50 billion of material inputs of Canadian multimedia production, said Toner.

Based on overall trade, port, air, truck and rail, Canada is the United States' largest trading partner, with more than \$1 billion in trade per day.

Last year's exhibition began Sept. 20 and ran through Sept. 22. It drew some 2,000 visitors. More than 30 Bay area companies made the more than 1,500-mile flight to Montreal last year.

This year's mission has similar goals.

Mike Fountain, University of South Florida's executive director of the Office for Corporate Development, attended the 2000 convention and will be north of the border again this year.

"My situation with this trip is focused more on biotechnology, and I think that it is a major change for the better here in Florida," said Fountain. "You're seeing in the state a reawakening in the life sciences and biotechnology fields, and we need to explore possibilities abroad."

To reach Ken Salgat, call (813) 342-2477, or send your e-mail to ksalgat@bizjournals.com.

World Trade Center works to expand global business

Joint effort: WTC helps put Bay area on the map

Tampa Bay Business Journal - by [Aja Whitaker](#) Staff Writer

Related News

TAMPA -- The World Trade Center **Tampa Bay** remains standing thousands of miles away from the World Trade Center New York tragedy.

While the Manhattan "Twin Towers" have always overshadowed the more than 300 trade centers in almost 100 countries in the World Trade Centers Association network, news about the Sept. 11 tragedy elevated visibility for **WTC Tampa** and its work.

It possibly helped boost occupancy rates to almost half of the WTC's 43 available offices, said J.H. Gary, chief operating officer of WTC TPA Inc., handling the executive suites and real estate operation.

"We attempt to capitalize on the address," said Gary. "We have found that it (Sept. 11) has a positive affect. It brought our visibility up. It made people aware that there are World Trade Centers throughout the world."

Word of mouth has been the best source for tenants and will continue to be the dominant strategy for WTC Tampa in the coming year, said Gary. It also will advertise in publications to target international business and general business that could benefit from its services, he said.

The WTC Tampa, located at 110 Channelside Drive, is comprised of an 85,000-square-foot suite. The space is divided into 43 offices leased from the Tampa Port Authority headquarters building.

The paring of landlord and tenant in a building adjacent to downtown Tampa is ideal for both parties, who want to give prominence to the world of international trade, said Laurie Rafter, public relations manager for the Tampa Port Authority.

"We were thrilled when the World Trade Center became tenants," said Rafter. "The entire international community in Tampa is starting to work together to foster international trade and put Tampa on the international map. The World Trade Center being here makes that easier."

Broadening the horizons of the local international business community also is a goal for recently appointed chief operating officer of the not-for-profit World Trade Association of Tampa Bay, Steve Toner.

"The international business community here in Tampa now has a facility as a focal point to use to assist each of their own businesses and make their own global contacts," said Toner. "We will assist them by putting on programs with all of the entities in Tampa Bay that also assist international trade."

Coordinating events held at the WTC facilities in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Commerce Exporting Assistance Center also will increase awareness and visibility, said Toner.

Three events are scheduled for February, March and May. Additionally, four prospective trade missions are being developed for later in the year, Toner said.

Toner, also president of TonerCom International, a marketing and public relations company in Tampa, was one of four tenants scheduled to move into World Trade Center Tampa Bay on Jan. 24. George Martinez, director of the U.S. Department of Commerce EAC, the Florida Council of International Development and the Canadian American Business Council are scheduled to take occupancy on the same date, Toner said.

WTC Tampa offers high-tech phone systems, computer systems and a variety of amenities and services. Offices range from 113-251 square feet and cost anywhere from \$800 to \$1,800 per month. A full description can be found on the Web site <http://www.wtctampa.com>.

To reach Aja Whitaker, call (813) 342-2476 or send your e-mail to awhitaker@bizjournals.com

Upcoming

The World Trade Center Tampa Bay has scheduled an "IT Global Cybercrime" seminar at 5 p.m. on Aug. 8 in the World Trade Center Port Authority Board Room, 1001 Channelside Drive, Tampa. For registration information, contact Steve Toner, World Trade Center chief operating officer, at (813) 864-3000 or e-mail Stoner@wtctTampa.com.

Tampa Bay trade center focuses on future

Tampa Bay Business Journal - by [Pamela Griner Leavy](#) Staff Writer

Officials at the World Trade Center Tampa Bay spent the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, trying to reach colleagues in New York City.

Ken Parker, president and chief executive officer of the Tampa Bay area organization and Steve Toner, chief operating officer, watched on television as the north tower, headquarters of the **World Trade Centers Association Inc.**, turned to rubble.

Toner had no illusions about the events in New York, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania.

"When I saw the first plane hit, I thought immediately that it was a terrorist incident," said Toner, who studied international terrorism at the University of Cincinnati. "When the second one hit, and we learned about the Pentagon, I thought it wasn't just one terrorist incident. I thought 'We are at war.'"

Beyond loss of human life and business operations destruction, World Trade Center Tampa Bay officials envisioned a potential international perception challenge.

Would the global business community think the destroyed World Trade Center real estate towers signaled a damaged World Trade Centers Association?

A public misconception already existed, Toner said.

Many people thought the World Trade Center was just another New York commercial real estate facility, similar to the Empire State Building.

The World Trade Centers Association was founded in New York in 1970 as a not-for-profit, apolitical organization to promote the concept of worldwide World Trade Centers, he said.

"Peace and stability through trade" reads the World Trade Centers Web site and membership directory. Its mission statement describes it as an organization that "stands outside politics across national boundaries, in service to those who develop and facilitate international trade."

GROUND ZERO

The World Trade Center Tampa Bay ranks among 297 such centers in 90 countries.

Guy Tozzoli serves as international president of the World Trade Centers Association, an organization nominated six times for the coveted Nobel Peace Prize.

Tozzoli, featured in The New York Times Magazine on Sept. 8, directed the World Trade Center building project for the Port of New York Authority from the early 1960s to the completion of the twin towers in 1973.

In what might have been a lifesaving Sept. 11 decision, he took the George Washington Bridge instead of the Holland Tunnel to work. Early morning traffic accidents delayed his arrival by more than 45 minutes.

Subsequently, Tozzoli wasn't in the association's office on the 77th floor of the north tower office when the first jetliner struck.

The four employees in the office evacuated, but Todd Quida, son of Herbert Quida, World Trade Centers Association executive vice president, worked for Cantor Fitzgerald LP on the 105th floor. He died.

World Trade Centers around the world responded to the attacks with messages of support and grief, including those in Arab countries, Tozzoli told The Business Journal Serving Greater Tampa Bay.

He moved quickly to put the World Trade Centers Association back in business following the attacks, he said.

The association located to temporary Fifth Avenue offices and now operates in temporary midtown headquarters at 66 E. 42nd St. The association holds a 40-year lease with the Port Authority and Tozzoli plans to "be back down there."

The World Trade Centers Association was never out of business, he said. "The organization is not dead," he said. "We are getting more and more members. Sometime a bad thing is a good thing. Before

everyone said 'What's a World Trade Center?' Most people thought there was only one trade center. Now I am suddenly finding out people didn't know there were so many in so many cities."

Tozzoli and other New York staff members will attend Sept. 11 Ground Zero ceremonies, but the organization did not plan a special ceremony.

Instead, on June 12 World Trade Centers around the world celebrated the first "World Trade Centers Association Day."

The World Trade Centers Association is based on peace and stability through trade, said Tozzoli, who called for a convention center and "worldwide statement" memorial at the World Trade Center site.

"We have got to get back to business because people need jobs," he said. "All of Manhattan is only coming back if you bring economic vitality to it."

Tozzoli sends a global message to Tampa Bay area business and civic leaders, including those who criticized the recent Cuba trip led by Tampa Mayor Dick Greco.

"We are going to devote ourselves more than ever to this business of peace and stability through trade," Tozzoli said. "There is not a single type of government that's not part of our association — North Korea, China, Cuba. We don't concentrate on political philosophy. We concentrate on doing business together. That's the greatest thing you can do to help underdeveloped parts of the world."

FORM AND FUNCTION

Meanwhile, the World Trade Center Tampa Bay concentrates on facility expansion plans and programming.

Parker and Toner hosted an "Information Technology Global CyberCrime" seminar in August, and future projects include an "Encryption for Global Competition" seminar, and trade mission visits from Britain, France, China, Germany, Mexico, Brazil and Canada.

The World Trade Centers Association and the World Trade Center Tampa Bay didn't lose a business step following the Sept. 11 attacks, Toner said.

"When the towers went down, we refocused on the program side in terms of what we offer around the world and through the headquarters in New York."

Tech business invited to fill space with NASA contracts

Tampa Bay Business Journal - by [Pamela Griner Leavy](#) Staff Writer

Related News

"Found in Space" rather than "Lost in Space" could be a 2003 theme for **Tampa Bay** area technology companies seeking government contracts.

"Advancing the State of Space: High-Technology Opportunities with NASA" is the subject of a Florida Space Authority and World Trade Center Tampa Bay presentation, planned for 5 p.m., Jan. 23, in the Port Authority board room, 1101 Channelside Drive in Tampa.

Speakers include Edmond Gormel, executive director of the Florida Space Authority, and Ken Haiko, Space Authority vice chairman.

All business owners and information technology managers interested in contacts with NASA and its international partners are invited to attend.

Steve Toner, World Trade Center Tampa Bay chief operating officer, predicts the evening event will offer an international flair.

"I ran into these two gentlemen while on a trade mission in London with Gov. (Jeb) Bush, and their program is really international in nature," said Toner.

"They assist companies in getting contracts with NASA, and because of the international aspect of the space station, numerous countries are involved."

Space Authority officials want to make contact with Bay area high-tech firms interested in working with NASA and high-tech firms around the world, Toner said.

For more information regarding attendance and sponsorships, contact Toner at (813) 864-6506 or stoner@WTC-Tampa.com.

Deadlines near for Tampa-Toronto IT trade mission

Tampa Bay Business Journal - by [Alexis Muellner](#)

Deadlines are fast approaching for applicants wishing to take part in a scheduled information technology in trade mission between Tampa and Toronto.

The mission is scheduled for Dec. 1-3. Registration deadlines are set for Nov. 1.

Those deadlines are designed to help participants take part in the U.S. Dept. of Commerce's Gold Key program in which research is done ahead of trade missions so that one-on-one appointments can be established during the visit, said **Steve Toner, president of the World Trade Center in Tampa.**

Nearly two-dozen local companies have expressed an interest in the trip with almost a dozen participating in some way so far, he said.

To go on the trip and participate in all services would cost attendees \$1,296 not including air and hotel. For those who want to send materials along with delegation, the cost is \$195.

The mission will participate in the IT Partnering Forum in Toronto, one of Canada's largest economic regional and high-tech centers. The plan is for participants to meet with companies focused on information technology.

Enterprise Florida helped organize a program to focus on opportunities for Florida delegates.

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, some of the best opportunities in Canada are software and services for Information Technology in:

- Computers, Peripherals and Software
- Commercial Security Equipment
- Medical Software / Services & Equipment
- Drugs, Pharmaceuticals and Biotechnology
- Financial Services Industry
- Government Applications.

The trip is being organized by World Trade Center/Tampa Bay. It is one of 300 World Trade Centers in over 100 countries worldwide with headquarters in New York. The U.S. Department of Commerce Export Assistance Center assists firms in exporting their goods and services to other countries through a variety of programs.

WTC Tampa Bay parlays offices into component of its mission

Tampa Bay Business Journal - by [Susan Ladika](#) Special to the Business Journal

The World Trade Center may forever be synonymous with Sept. 11, but the New York City office towers were actually the headquarters of the **World Trade Centers Association**, comprised of more than 300 members in 100 countries.

The World Trade Center Tampa Bay is one link in a chain that circles the globe, joined together by the slogan, "Peace and Stability Through Trade."

Following the terrorist attacks, the World Trade Center Tampa Bay would field calls from an indignant public saying, "How dare you use this name!" said **Steve Toner, president of Tampa's World Trade Center.**

In reality, the World Trade Centers Association stretches well beyond 9/11 and was founded in 1970 with centers in New York, New Orleans, Houston and Tokyo.

In the Tampa Bay area it began about a decade ago in St. Petersburg, and the World Trade Center moved to a **Tampa Port Authority** building in 2001.

The Tampa operation has two sides to its mission -- a non-profit side designed to promote international trade and a for-profit arm that rents out executive suites and virtual offices.

Update on the nonprofit side

Early this month, Toner led a group of Florida business representatives to the 2004 IT Partnering Forum in Toronto, following up on a trade mission Gov. Jeb Bush headed this summer to Montreal and Ottawa.

The local World Trade Center's focus has primarily been on high-tech fields, supporting the goals of Enterprise Florida, which heads up the state's economic development efforts, Toner said. "That's the future. Those are the higher-paying jobs."

About 20 Florida businesses and firms joined in the Toronto trade mission, including Ray Smithers, IT services manager for **Byers Engineering Co.** in Jacksonville. The company provides subscription-based IT support for small- and medium-sized businesses.

"Toronto just seemed like such an open market," Smithers said. "I needed some validation."

And he got it during the trade mission. Smithers said he was impressed with presentations by Toronto government officials describing the market, and he plans to return to the city in January to follow up with possible partners.

Smithers said it's unlikely that Byers Engineering, which has 500 employees and about \$30 million in revenue last year, would have taken the step on its own.

"I just don't see how we could get the market research done that was provided in this trade mission," he said.

Before each trade mission, the World Trade Center offers seminars about the country delegates will be visiting. And other monthly seminars cover a wide range of topics, such as international travel security and global cybercrime, drawing about 600 participants each year, Toner said. "The purpose is very much a positive kind of economic development," he said.

Attracting the daring

Steve Toner, owner/broker of United Country Florida Coastal Real Estate in Tampa, has been involved in international developments for 15 years.

He is now involved in a series of developments in Nicaragua. The properties are as gorgeous as the ones in Costa Rica but at a fraction of the price, Toner said.

"Costa Rica has been under development for quite some time, and it's been a favorite for Americans," he said. "But Nicaragua has not experienced that development, so prices are a fraction of those in Costa Rica."

But he warns that Nicaragua is not for everybody. A history of instability could mean more risks for investors.

"It's not for everybody," he said. "If that's your only investment, I wouldn't recommend it. If you are in a position to take some risk, then it might be for you."

For that reason, mainly larger investors are betting on Nicaragua. If things remain calm, they could make big profits thanks to a tremendous appreciation of property values. But if things go sour, they could lose it all, Toner said.

In any case, investors should make sure the titles are clear before buying property down there, Toner said.

The person selling it may not be the real owner, he said. Previous nationalization of land has left some properties in a grey zone.

To give local investors the opportunity to test the water, Toner is planning a mission to Nicaragua.

ALSO PLAYING MUSICAL OFFICES

TonerCom International has moved to Waterford Plaza at 7650 W. Courtney Campbell Parkway, Suite 275, in Tampa. The telephone number is (813) 282-9099.

Steve Toner is principal and senior counselor of the marketing and public relations agency formerly known as Toner Communications Inc. It can be found at <http://www.TonerCom.com>.