

Our “Coming Out” Party for Tech

March 14, 2018

We recently hosted the largest and most exciting technology conference in the history of Reno-Sparks; the VentureBeat BLUEPRINT conference, an event that looked at ways to expand high tech across the country. In attendance were over 300 tech executives and government leaders from over 40 states, many that had never been here before! Tech leaders like Ira Ehrenpreis, founding partner at DBL Partners and Tesla board member, Michael Ronen, founding partner of SoftBank Vision Fund, Kate Behncken, Chief of Staff at Microsoft, and Jesse Haines, Director at Google. They attended BLUEPRINT to discuss how to bring technology to cities in the heartland of America. VentureBeat chose The Biggest Little City over several other locations, to host and showcase the “blueprint” of our recent, and on-going transformation.

Reno-Sparks Blueprint: The growth of technology in our region is no accident. We have been building a foundation for the growth of technology with our success in attracting advanced manufacturing companies and data centers, while developing our entrepreneurial ecosystem, which is primarily tech. The addition of more than 175 new companies to the region generated the need for more technology to support the robots in the manufacturing facilities as well as managing or maintaining the thousands of servers that were not here just five years ago, when Apple announced they were building the first significant data center in our area.

The Addition of Technology Companies is Accelerating: We have come a long way when it comes to technology. The list of new technology companies is long and remarkable for a community our size; one that had very little technology to begin with. The companies we all talk about are impressive, Tesla, Panasonic, Switch, and Apple to name a few. Then we add Clear Capital, Grand Rounds, Koch, Alchemy and now Google and Blockchain LLC to that list, in addition to more than 200 new start-ups, like Flirtey or Bombora, which has grown from two people to almost 50 in just three years. You can see where we are heading!

Why Tech in Reno? A few years ago most people felt we would never become a tech hub. At the time there were just a few technology companies here, and no one was knocking down our door. But with the hard work of a lot of organizations and people, we started the snowball rolling. EDawn launched a campaign to attract advanced manufacturing and data centers to the region while starting up an entrepreneurial development team to develop a supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem. The University made entrepreneurial development a priority with the addition of a Research and Innovation Office and the Innevation Center. The state led the way with regulations to allow for the testing of autonomous vehicles and became one of only six states designated as a test center for drones. The list of partners and believers is long.

A Watershed Event: Having this caliber of Tech CEOs and venture capitalists come to our community, learn about Reno-Sparks, interact with our local entrepreneurs, and experience our start-up scene is priceless. We had a chance to tell them why we love Reno-Sparks: a 15-minute commute; no state income tax; incredible outdoor recreational opportunities; and our proximity to the Bay Area and Lake Tahoe. As one Tech CEO said, "We're burnt out on big cities, the prices and the commute." It truly was our “coming out” party as a growing tech community and a chance for not only the visitors, but also for our locals to believe in the “new” Reno-Sparks!

