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The App Economy Tour

Developed | The App Economy Tour is a series of events that brings entrepreneurs, business leaders, industry experts, and local, state, and federal officials together for an eye-opening discussion on next-generation apps, game-changing mobile solutions, and innovations driving the app ecosystem. These events are an opportunity for developers and entrepreneurs, at any stage of the development or business cycle, to get more insight into how to build a brand, what rules and regulations they must be mindful of, how to get into app stores quickly and efficiently, and how to figure out what comes next in terms of funding streams and business opportunities.
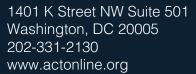
Providence, Rhode Island
Thursday, September 12, 2019

The app economy is a $1.7 trillion ecosystem led by U.S. companies. The app marketplace is growing in areas outside of traditional tech hubs. In the United States, more than 83 percent of app companies are located outside of Silicon Valley, and 13 percent operate in rural or suburban areas.

First stop on Developed | The App Economy Tour: Providence, Rhode Island. Rhode Island may be a small state, but the tech community is mighty and has a profound impact on innovation that reaches far beyond the immediate area. The event on September 12th included a discussion featuring panelists representing the various components of the app ecosystem.

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SEPTEMBER 12   **5:00–8:00 P.M.**

**TECH COLLECTIVE
188 VALLEY STREET
PROVIDENCE, RI 02909**

GUEST SPEAKERS

Jessica Mayernik, Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training
Morgan Reed, ACT | The App Association
Erin Abrams, Tech Collective
Kirsten Maynard, Waxman Strategies
Robert Blackburn, Blackburn Labs
Rhode Island Lt. Govenor Daniel McKee

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1401 K Street NW Suite 501
Washington, DC 20005
202-331-2130
www.actonline.org

Developed | Speakers

Introductory remarks from Lieutenant Governor Dan McKee: As Lt. Governor, Dan works tirelessly to strengthen communities and create a healthy small business climate throughout the state of Rhode Island. In his capacity as the Lt. Governor, Dan has remained dedicated to supporting small business success, and serves as chair of Rhode Island's Small Business Advocacy Council. During his remarks, Dan discussed the work he and the Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce have done to support small businesses in the state and the work he has done to invest in young entrepreneurs by launching Rhode Island's first Lt. Governor's Entrepreneurship Challenge Scholarship Program for high schoolers with a passion for business and innovation.

Developed | Panelists

Robert Blackburn is the CEO of Rhode Island-based Blackburn Labs, a software development company that specializes in software, apps, and process improvement for everything from startups to large enterprises. During the panel, Rob shared his experiences finding talent, funding, and customers, and highlighted the unique nature of small Rhode Island companies and the advantages they can have over larger firms.
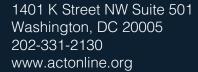
Erin Abrams is Tech Collective's senior marketing manager and coordinates all aspects of the organization's social media, website, branding, and promotion. During the panel, Erin discussed her views on marketing as "building community" and how she brings that approach to Tech Collective. Erin also talked about the work Tech Collective does to help support small businesses in Rhode Island, build a tech-minded workforce, and how companies can get involved in their programs.

Jessica Mayernik is a grant advisor for the Real Jobs Rhode Island (RJRI) program with the Department of Labor and Training. During the panel, Jessica shared her experience engaging with companies across the state, especially in the IT industry, and provided valuable insight into the demand and the skills needed for the Rhode Island workforce and economy.

Kirsten Maynard is a managing director at DC-based Waxman Strategies. She leads the technology communications practice, helping innovators, early stage companies, investors, and corporations introduce technologies to the world. During the panel, Kirsten shared tips and tricks on how companies can develop and communicate their important and unique narratives about their technology and solutions shaping our future.

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Developed | Panel

The panelists shared their experiences as developers or working with developers and answered questions on how increasing attention from policymakers may shape the next 10 years of the app revolution.

The discussion covered a wide range of topics, including workforce development and access to talent, the robust tech community, and resources available to developers and small businesses looking to build or grow their company while staying in Rhode Island. Policymakers in Rhode Island have also worked hard to foster a flourishing environment for small businesses through grant programs, computer science education initiatives, small business support programs, and more.

Spaces like Tech Collective allow small businesses and startups to connect with each other, convene meetings and conversations, and cultivate their community. As Erin explained during the panel, "A strong community creates a strong app economy."
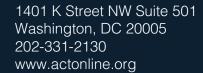
From a small business standpoint, platforms have changed the world. Platforms allow small businesses to move quickly and compete with some of the top technology companies in the world. Robert explained it best, "I recently built an app in three weeks. Not too long ago, that would have taken me three months. The road to market is faster now because of platforms."

As Jessica explained, finding talent is a challenge, but there are ways to help solve the problem. Getting involved in programs like RJRI, attending events that encourage kids to get involved in coding, or supporting programs focused on closing key skill gaps like critical thinking and computer literacy will help to broaden the tech workforce. As Kirstin mentioned, "you can be creative in how you find talent…creative marketing can draw in potential employees, and it can inspire people to get excited about the potential of the tech field."

"My team is focused on encouraging innovation in young Rhode Islanders through our Lt. Governor's Entrepreneurship Challenge - some of our most interesting student ideas have been for app-based businesses" - Lt. Governor Dan McKee

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Developed | Your Backyard

When considering difficult policy issues, the first question you likely ask is, "how will this impact my constituents?" At Developed | Rhode Island, we asked those questions directly to your constituents. During Developed events, Members of Congress and their staffs get to speak directly with small business constituents about the app ecosystem, their relationships with software platforms, and how regulations affect their ability to grow and create jobs. We are happy to facilitate ongoing dialogue between your office and any of our panelists. Let us know if you would like more information on Developed | The App Economy Tour, the panelists from our Rhode Island event, or how you can get more information on policy issues critical to small businesses in Rhode Island.

"There is a common misconception that developers are only in Silicon Valley. That just isn't true! Platforms have allowed for startups to do business and be competitive all over the world."
-Robert Blackburn

If you have any questions or would like more information, please reach out to the App Association's senior director for public policy, Graham Dufault.

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