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Space Investment Summit 4: Washington D.C. May 28, 2008

... entrepreneurial fervor and general interest in the commercial and civil space sectors are accelerating...

This summit just gets better and better and is now drawing top tier sponsorships and a sophisticated audience. Designed to promote and support innovation in space commerce worldwide, the twice a year Summits focus on seed and early stage investors, space entrepreneurs, and space commerce professionals from leading aerospace companies, government agencies, academia and non-profit organizations. The Summit was held adjacent to the International Space Development Conference, the annual conference of the National Space Society which served as host. Space Florida served as lead sponsor and was joined by Boeing, EADS Astrium, Honeywell and Lockheed. My three main take-aways were:

1. Excitement Level is High. The magnitude of entrepreneurial fervor and general interest in the commercial and civil space sectors is accelerating not abating during these questionable economic times – and it is a global phenomenon. There is also a growing, if largely unspoken, consensus that business as usual will just not cut it. The private sector will need to play a much larger role and the right blend of international cooperation and competition must be found.
2. Education is Key. If the private sector is to take the lead, a massive Vulcan mind meld needs to occur among entrepreneurs and investors. First, entrepreneurs must stop bad mouthing their competitors and adopt a more supportive posture to the industry as a whole. Second, entrepreneurs need to learn to perceive and analyze risks the way investors do and then focus their business plan execution on mitigating those risks and providing adequate investor returns and a reasonable exit opportunity. While institutional investors certainly need to be educated on new space business opportunities, they have supported new space-related businesses in the past and are willing to do so in the future. They also tend to be very quick learners and pile on quickly once they sense a fair risk/reward opportunity. The key with these investors is hard-nosed analysis versus wide-eyed enthusiasm.
3. Progress is Being Made. Many of the leading new space businesses, some of which were highlighted during the Summit,

Many of the leading new space businesses... have been marching steadily toward their objectives.



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have been marching steadily toward their objectives. There is still a lot of hard work ahead to achieve any of these business plans, but as milestones are achieved the “snickers” get quieter and quieter. Success getting to the next level may be driven largely by their ability to attract sufficient capital from deeper pocketed sources.

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