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Success largely boils down to whom you know - in life in general and especially in the high-tech world.

You need to know the people who want to buy your gizmo.

And high-tech companies in Tucson acknowledge they don't know each other very well, as evidenced yesterday at a High-Tech Buyers' and Sellers' Forum put on by the Aerospace, Manufacturing & Information Technology, or AMIT, industry cluster.

"People didn't know we were here - 'You're in Tucson?' - Yeah, we've been here quite a while," said Gary White, a customer service representative at TDI International, a South Side company that distributes technical tools (tweezers, pliers, etc.) to the electronics industry.

John Rix is AMIT's chairman, and even he found a local company at the forum that could solve a challenge for Cybernetic Research Laboratories, where Rix is president. Rix wants to automate the company's plating lines, which coat metal objects in the final preparation for finishing.

Rix encountered people from Adroit Automation, a Tucson company that automates process lines.

"We didn't know about them," Rix said. "Now he's coming down next week to give us a quote."

The forum made a public event out of what the BusinessLINC program does at the Tucson Office of Economic Development - namely, match a company's supply or service needs with a local company that can provide them. BusinessLINC, which has created \$65 million in local-to-local business transactions, jointly organized the forum with the AMIT cluster.

"We're doing everything we can to bring buyers and sellers together," said Gordon Bennett, the cluster's president.

Along with a trade show with more than 40 booths, the forum had workshops throughout the day detailing how to do business with government procurement offices, the military, aircraft service firms and companies in Mexico.

Cupp's Industrial Supply president Linda Stenzel wanted to learn about developing a business relationship with Raytheon Missile Systems. "We've hit a

lot of brick walls," she said. Cupp's makes fluid sealing devices such as gaskets, seals and expansion joints in Phoenix and distributes them from Tucson.

"Much to our surprise, this event has been fabulous exposure for us," Stenzel said. "We've got interest from customers we didn't expect. Potentially, there are some business opportunities for us that we didn't expect."

Republic Plastics, which has foam fabrication plants in San Antonio, Texas, and Knoxville, Tenn., plans to open a facility in San Manuel to make polystyrene foam products such as food storage containers and disposable plates. Operations manager Luis Castro attended the forum to find local electrical, mechanical and pipe fitter contractors.

Castro presented the project to a roomful of companies and found four potential clients.

"This is going to be a fast-track project," Castro said. "The minute we are in the building, we want to open in 45 days."

Geraldo Grijalva drove up from Hermosillo, Son., to find tool shops to repair injection molding equipment and supply parts for molding equipment used at Flex-N-Gate, where Grijalva manages the plastic injection unit.

"I'm looking for supplies we don't have locally," Grijalva said. "We made contact with two tool shops. One is going to visit us next week."

Bennett and officials from Novutek, a university-owned software developer in Ciudad Obregon, Son., jointly unveiled a proposed Tucson/Mexico Software Alliance. Tucson software companies would design the projects and Novutek would do the programming.

Tucson high-tech and manufacturing businesses shopping for supplies or that have supplies and services local business might want may contact Lee Smith, the city's BusinessLINC coordinator, at 791-5093.