



INNOVATION EXPERT — Praveen Gupta, president of Accelper Consulting and an expert in the area of innovation, speaks to those gathered for the SEK Innovation Summit

Wednesday evening at ICC West in Independence. The two-day summit concluded today.

(AP Wirephoto)

Featured at ICC's Innovation Summit

Gupta relates keys to business success

by ALLEN SMITH
Staff Writer

The featured speaker closing out the first day of the SEK Innovation Summit told his audience creativity is one of the keys to business success in times of recession.

Praveen Gupta, an internationally renowned thought leader in the world of innovation, spoke to the participants in the first-ever business summit being conducted Wednesday and today at the Independence Community College West Campus.

"You must be creative in order to help your business grow," Gupta told the group of business owners convened for the workshop.

Gupta is the founding president of Accelper Consulting and teaches business innovation at Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago, Ill.

He offered up three steps to creativity: decide to be creative; innovate and create from the bottom up; and be good at combining thoughts.

"Being creative is a choice you make," Gupta said. "Create your thoughts, combine two or more thoughts together and hopefully you can start growing your business."

"Innovate from the bottom up," Gupta said. "Innovation is only possible if you enjoy it, and every company consists of innovators. There is always a place for innovation in every company."

"Everyone here is innovative, or you wouldn't be in business, but you must learn how to do it faster

in order to sustain profitable growth," he said.

He said companies in other countries are much better at innovating than we are in the United States.

"Indonesia, Thailand, China ... those countries and several others are much more hungry for innovation than we are in the United States," Gupta said.

"The third step is being good at combining ideas, and fast at putting them together in order to innovate your business," Gupta said.

"Learn to ask questions ... think of good ideas," he added. "You know it takes longer to think of stupid ideas than it takes to think of good ideas."

Gupta said the United States has the highest debt, \$13 trillion, in the world, and pays out \$5 billion annually in interest payments.

"The United States economy ranks 190th in the world," Gupta said. "We should be better than that, and we could be by putting some of these strategies in place ... it's not that hard," Gupta said.

Gupta spoke Tuesday in Wheaton, Ill., a city of 60,000 people, where he challenged the Wheaton Chamber of Commerce to help create 100 new businesses in the coming year.

"That should be doable in a community with 60,000 people," he said. "Surely 100 people out of 60,000 would be interested in opening up a new business."

Knowing Independence Chamber of Commerce

Director Owen Wilburn was in the room. Gupta said the chamber should set a goal of helping to create business in Independence.

"The chamber should drive the goal of creating new business and jobs in the community," he said.

"Innovation applies to creating new business and jobs, and keeping existing businesses and jobs in our communities," Gupta said.

Jim Correll, the director of ICC's Successful Entrepreneur Program, was pleased with the results of the first day of the summit.

"I think everybody felt like they got their money's worth in terms of the presentations on Wednesday," Correll said.

Correll said Montie Coffman, executive director of Windsor Place in Colleyville, outlined the facility's Age to Age Program where kindergarten students interact with Windsor Place residents.

"The video he showed nearly brought people to tears Wednesday," Correll said. "It is hard to talk about it, or explain it now."

"The interaction between those children and the residents is so great the parents have to set activities during Christmas break and summer vacation because the children miss those residents so much. That was a neat presentation," Correll said. "All in all I was pretty pleased with the turnout we had throughout the day, on Wednesday night ... especially for the first time we've ever tried this."