

Transcript for video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m-Qvfz8qefw>

Financial Times (FT) Interview with US e-Chromic CEO and Founder Loren Burnett

November 27, 2012

For over 10 years, the U.S. Department of Energy has been playing a bit of a match-maker.

Each year, in an effort to find suitors for a growing roster of new clean energy technologies, the Department's National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) throws a 2-day networking gala in Denver, CO. The annual *Industry Growth Forum*, a collection of scientists, VCs, and entrepreneurs, is sold as the premier event for clean energy startups.

Today, US e-Chromic CEO and Founder **Loren Burnett** is looking to raise more capital for the expansion of his energy efficiency company.

Loren: "...we are creating energy efficiency through retro-fitting windows..."

Loren's presence at the annual courtship ball represents not only an interesting corner of U.S. energy innovation, but provides striking insight into the evolution of research and development within America.

Starting in the late 1970s, under then U.S. President Jimmy Carter, the National Renewable Energy Laboratory in Golden, CO is the only federally-funded facility dedicated to the research of renewable and energy efficiencies. Basically charged with 2 tasks, the facility not only locates the energy technologies of tomorrow, but finds the most efficient ways to implement them into the commercial marketplace.

Loren: "Well, we wouldn't be in existence without NREL, first of all... because they were the ones that came up with this invention and that have the patents, and we've licensed the patents from NREL."

After a 10-week courtship, Loren's company was able to secure one of the 186 cooperative and research development agreements (CRADAs) with the national laboratory. Basically, US e-Chromic has signed a lease with NREL, to further develop and commercialize a window efficiency technology invented in the federally-funded laboratory.

Loren: "For a startup-company like us, it just wouldn't be feasible to be able to (in a startup mode) have access to this type of lab equipment, and to be able to have that at a national lab like this is just invaluable."

But while NREL has been developing new energy technologies for over 30 years, this match-making role is fairly new, and was born out of a rather sizeable change in research and development.

William Farris, Associate Laboratory Director, NREL:

"If you look back 50 years ago, the research and development was done by these corporate R&D shops, and that has gone by the wayside, for the most part because it's incredibly expensive and you're taking away from money that could otherwise be going to the bottom line. And so where now does innovation come from?"

The answer to that question is as complicated as to be expected, but for those on the quest, whether the entrepreneur or the VC, an integral part would be the establishment of a long-term energy policy from the U.S. government.

Gerd Goette is the Vice president of Siemens Venture Capital, and sits on the VC advisory board for NREL: "What I'm concerned about is that we actually establish an energy policy, and whatever party or president will establish that, just establish it and stick to it and execute on it. Whatever the policy is, as soon as they have certainty, investors will figure out how to deal with that and move forward."

But for those already on the hunt, NREL's Industry Growth Forum is by far the best place to find a possible suitor, for at least the immediate future.

Loren: "The key for us is investment. We need to, as most clean tech companies and clean energy companies do, we need to get that outside investment into the company so that we can even accelerate the research development that is going on right now."

Farris: "The long-term trends for renewable energy technologies are quite good. The question is, can they make it? Can a company who is in the marketplace now be there in 3 years when their product is finally competitive? That's the tricky question."

Loren: "...our go to market strategy, as I mentioned, is to initially we will sell direct to commercial building owners..."

While it can be hard to chart a course under such U.S. uncertainties, regardless of whichever way the political winds may blow... Whomever finds the most efficient way to harness this energy, whether public or private, will most likely find themselves the recipient of a sizable windfall.

Christopher Booker, Financial Times, Golden, CO.