



This copy is for your personal, noncommercial use only. You can order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers [here](#) or use the "Reprints" tool that appears above any article. [Order a reprint of this article now.](#)

Printed on page A6

Tech Veteran Starting New Venture

By [Kyle Kennedy](#)
THE LEDGER

Published: Sunday, September 5, 2010 at 8:02 p.m.

William Wakeman III has done this kind of thing before - starting and running companies.

A 57-year-old financial planner and president of his own firm, Wakeman almost seems overqualified for Blue Sky West, like a veteran at boot camp.

He's developing a program tailored for nonprofits, an online platform that would allow directors to collaborate with their board members and easily share documents in a secure environment. If successful, Wakeman says the program could be adapted for more lucrative markets, such as financial planning.

"It's just a system where you can get on the same page and do a project together," says Wakeman, president of Diversified Financial Partners in Lakeland and a longtime dabbler in tech projects.

But it's not enough to just have a good idea. Wakeman knows that. He's here at the incubator (under the banner Wakeman Consulting) to avoid a repeat of the past.

A decade ago, Wakeman led a small team of programmers in developing Pizzazz!, a web-based information management program for the financial services industry using the Microsoft Exchange 2000 platform. Pizzazz! had real potential, taking home an award from Microsoft in 2001 in a software development competition that drew more than 700 firms worldwide, including behemoths like IBM and Symantec.

"We slayed the giants," Wakeman told The Ledger in a November 2001 story.



PAUL JOHNSON / THE LEDGER
William Wakeman.



But that was just one step. In the aftermath of the contest, Wakeman said he ran into the enormous challenge of getting Pizzazz! to market.

"It fizzled. I didn't have the money or the resources or the wherewithal to get it off the ground," said Wakeman, an Orlando native who grew up in Lakeland. "I just went broke developing that thing. I couldn't do anything with it. I fell on my face."

His new program, informally called a "fundraiser project management system," is built off Microsoft SharePoint and uses concepts from Pizzazz! Wakeman spent the better part of a year building the "guts" of the fundraiser system with a local programmer, self-funding the effort to the tune of "well over \$100,000."

With Blue Sky's support, things will be different this time, Wakeman says. He's working with USF Poly staff and students on the program's user interface and getting it ready to be a saleable product by early 2011.

If the business is successful, Wakeman anticipates hiring more than 30 people to handle service and support functions.

In addition to the online collaboration system, Wakeman says his program will include a built-in library of fundraising information and access to financial advisers who can help nonprofits plan charitable gifts with donors.

Marketing the program first to nonprofits is part of Wakeman's conservative strategy to avoid becoming overwhelmed.

Compared to Pizzazz!, "What I have now is, I think, a much more manageable business. But it still has a huge potential," Wakeman said. "I'm just a small operation. I don't believe that without the help of this (incubator) system that I would have a very good chance of getting this off the ground. I really believe that."

This story appeared in print on page A6

Copyright © 2010 TheLedger.com — All rights reserved. Restricted use only.