



[close window](#)

WL firm wins NSF grant, spot at premier technology show

By Max Showalter
mshowalter@journalandcourier.com

August 29, 2006

Additional funding and increased exposure are in the offing for Imaginestics, a nearly four-year-old company at the Purdue Research Park in West Lafayette.

The firm that uses innovative search technology to connect suppliers of manufactured parts or custom services to potential buyers has been awarded a \$500,000 Small Business Innovative Research grant.

It also has been selected to demonstrate its search technology Sept. 25-27 in San Diego at DEMOfall 2006, a premier launch venue for new products, technologies and companies.

"Being chosen as one of the premier companies at DEMOfall 2006 gives (us) an ideal platform to showcase our revolutionary search engine," said Imaginestics president and chief executive officer Nainesh Rathod. "With its reputation for attracting leading technology companies, Imaginestics is proud to be part of DEMOfall 2006, the anticipated products-of-the-future event."

Founded in December 2002, Imaginestics is among 70 emerging technology firms chosen from hundreds under consideration to demonstrate at the San Diego event.

In the past, DEMO conferences have served as launch pads for companies that include Palm, E*Trade, Handspring and U.S.Robotics -- helping them secure venture funding and establish important business relationships.

"Imaginestics has earned a coveted spot at this conference by developing a technology that will change the way industry searches for parts and products globally," said a statement from Chris Ripley, executive producer of DEMOfall 2006.

Securing NSF funds

The \$500,000 SBIR grant awarded by the National Science Foundation will allow Imaginestics to streamline the search and retrieval aspects of the company's technology.

"It further validates the importance of our work in changing the way the industry searches for parts and products," Rathod said. "The work to be performed using this grant will help solve a very difficult problem in extracting the shape of a part or product from an image or picture."

Imaginestics launched the beta release of its 3D-Seek.com online shape search engine in fall 2005. It has more than 3,000 registered suppliers and an index of more than 30,000 products and custom parts.

Through the NSF funding, the company will be able to expand on the earlier work done by Karthik Ramani, a professor in Purdue University's School of Mechanical Engineering and director of the Purdue Research & Education Center for Information Systems in Engineering.

"Since shape is unique to a part or product, 3D-Seek uses shape as a search input to overcome cultural, language and context challenges faced by traditional text based search engines," said NSF program manager Errol Arkilic, in announcing the grant to Imaginestics. "We believe that 3D-Seek has the potential to change the way suppliers market their products or capabilities."