One of the most powerful things the SBDC offers its clients is a strong network based on great partnerships. One of those partnerships is the relationship between the SBDC and Boise State. Boise State offers critical infrastructure and resources and the SBDC brings real-world experiences to the students and faculty by connecting them to growing companies.

SBDC Connections stories highlight the structured and organic relationships between the SBDC and its most valuable partners. This issue is focused on the relationship between an SBDC company named The House of Design and its connection to Boise State.

*These entrepreneurs who eagerly educate themselves, and take advantage of local resources and connections are finding themselves a step (or two) ahead of everyone else.*

The House of Design became an SBDC client in 2012 when they moved into the SBDC Business Accelerator in Nampa. The House of Design is an engineering firm that partners with ABB Robotics to deliver automated solutions to manufacturers. Since becoming a client, the company has seen steady growth and is beginning to make a strong impact on the local economy.

**Profile of House of Design**
House of Design is currently operated by two founding partners, Ryan Okelberry, and Shane Dittrich. Both of the founders are engineers by education and trade. Shane has taken the role of CEO in the company, while Ryan heads up operations. Over the past five years, the company has grown from the founders doing everything, to a group of roughly 20 employees, many of which are engineers.

**Connecting to Boise State**
While the SBDC has a strong partnership with Boise State, House of Design planted strong roots within College of Engineering. Okelberry taught an engineering design class as an adjunct professor in the Engineering program for three years. That being said, the company has leveraged many of the resources available through the SBDC, including ongoing one-on-one consulting, a DISC profile workshop, the Lean Essentials Sprint, and structured quarterly growth meetings. The connections between Boise State and SBDC has been instrumental in its current success.
Currently the company employs four full time engineers who are either Boise State graduates, or current students working and studying simultaneously. The jobs provided by The House of Design are competitive with market rates and include 100% for employee medical insurance premiums. In order to stay plugged into the talent pipeline of Boise State, the founders maintain personal contacts with Engineering Professors and have been very happy with the results.

Recruiting talent is not the company’s only connection to Boise State. Ryan and Shane are constantly leveraging the services of Boise State Tech Help, New Product Development Lab on an ongoing basis. Okelberry estimates they spend at least $5,000 on prototyping services through Tech Help, if not more.

**Conduit for growth**
The House of Design is an example of how a company can take advantage of the many resources offered through the SBDC. The founders of the company have been located at the Nampa Business Accelerator, utilizing the coaching from our on-site lead consultants. The company has also participated in the Marketing 425 class project, offered through the College of Business and Economics (COBE), and facilitated by an SBDC consultant. The Marketing 425 class resulted in a well thought out marketing plan that the company values. The company also participated in another highly useful COBE class project through the Human Resources 305 class project. This class project resulted in the employee handbook The House of Design is currently using.

Additionally, in 2015, The House of Design was featured as an SBDC Company of the Year and went with the SBDC State Director to Washington DC to visit with congressional leaders and talk about small business needs in Idaho. Lastly, in 2016 Shane Dittrich, the company’s CEO, was recommended by the SBDC to apply for and was chosen for the SBA Emerging Leaders Program. It’s no wonder these entrepreneurs are experiencing success. Our data shows that clients who utilize the SBDC outperform their peers (who do not utilize the SBDC) by almost 10% in job growth, and almost 20% revenue growth. These entrepreneurs who eagerly educate themselves, and take advantage of local resources and connections are finding themselves a step (or two) ahead of everyone else.

**About the SBDC**
The Idaho SBDC offers local businesses no cost, confidential, professional one-on-one consulting. The organization exists to help businesses grow and thrive in Idaho. With six office locations throughout the state, each affiliated with one of Idaho’s colleges or universities, the Idaho SBDC is uniquely positioned to serve as a focal point for linking together our partners from higher education,