

CONNECTICUT MENTOR ENCOURAGES ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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Connecticut mentor Dave Menard is passionate about fostering entrepreneurship. He has years of experience working with entrepreneurs from many industries. Dave is a partner at the law firm of [Murtha Cullina](#) and one of the hosts of the [CTStartup Podcast](#).

Innovation Destination Hartford Website Curator Nan Price met with Dave in October 2015, soon after the CTStartup Podcast had launched. (Read: [Community Support for Connecticut Entrepreneurs](#).) She recently caught up with Dave to see what's new.

CTSTARTUP PODCAST

The CTStartup Podcast is currently in Season 4 and records every other Friday morning at [District New Haven](#), where Murtha Cullina has a satellite office. IDH Website Curator Nan Price was recently a guest on the podcast; the episode should air in early December.

The CTStartup Podcast crew has evolved over time. Two people left and two have joined the podcast which, Dave points out, offers different affiliations and perspectives. "We knew we needed to professionalize the podcast more, so we brought on an official paid intern to produce the show."



Murtha Cullina's Innovation Team won a 2017 CT Entrepreneur Award for the community favorite "Corporate/Institutional" category. Dave Menard. center.

The podcast is getting good reception with about 1,000 downloads a month and many listeners tuning in from outside the state. “It’s great to make other states aware of the entrepreneurial and startup activity happening throughout Connecticut,” notes Dave.

Like IDH, Dave confirms there is never a shortage of content. “We have a bunch of podcasts in the bank,” he says.

Entrepreneurism has become a big topic—larger than it ever was—it used to be a fallback career, now it’s a major. There’s been a huge shift,” Dave underscores.

As far as content, some podcasts feature the hosts sharing their experiences and some are recorded at live events. Many feature interviews with guests.

“There are always Connecticut companies to feature. I don’t think people realize how many companies are built here, trying to start here, or looking for support,” says Dave.

As far as growth, “the podcast has a good following, but we feel it could go up a level,” he admits. “We give it so much time, we want it to succeed. Our goal is to reach 2,500 to 5,000 listeners a month. We’re exploring ways to do that with ideas about sponsorship.”

HOW IS MURTHA CULLINA HELPING ENTREPRENEURS?

Murtha Cullina has several initiatives in place to help foster entrepreneurship in Connecticut.

The Murtha Cullina [Emerging Companies Practice Group](#) started as just Dave in 2011. It really took hold in 2013, after he became partner.

“The goal is to build entrepreneurial communities, and then we mentor and provide support for those communities. By helping people succeed, the communities become bigger and stronger,” he says.

The Murtha Cullina Emerging Companies Practice Group, which is connected to the larger firm, now includes 13 attorneys who focus on business, intellectual property (IP), employment, and immigration law.

“Seeing the group grow has been an exciting transformation,” says Dave. “People are enthusiastic about the work they’re doing, which is reaffirming.”

Murtha Cullina has also gained an entire [Intellectual Property Practice Group](#), which has five full-time patent attorneys. “We’re helping companies file patents and get their feet wet,” Dave explains.

The firm encourages collaboration with other entrepreneurial resources. “The law only encompasses a portion of what entrepreneurs need,” he acknowledges. “Entrepreneurs need the most amount of advice when they’re least able to afford it, and sometimes they just want to know someone who knows someone. Part of our job as mentors is to try and connect people with best contact for need they have.”

To that end, Dave works closely with [reSET](#), [The Connecticut Small Business Development Center \(CT SBDC\)](#), [CTNext](#), [Crossroads Venture Group](#), and local accountants and insurance providers.

In other news, Murtha Cullina opened a satellite office at District New Haven.

“We call it [The Law Lab](#). It’s designed differently than a law firm—90% of the space is collaboration work space,” describes Dave. “The whole point was to try doing something different. The space is staffed full-time, so people can stop by, talk to a lawyer, get instant feedback, and work out of the space,” he adds. “We want to make it as interactive and community-based as possible.”

Now through June, the Law Lab offers a [monthly business lunch series](#) covering a variety of topics including website privacy policies, intellectual property law, and equity financing.

WORKING WITH THE ENTREPRENEUR COMMUNITY

Dave is very immersed in Connecticut’s entrepreneurial and startup community. And he’s very community-focused. “The best thing we can do for ourselves, both business-wise and personal health-wise, is to build a community,” he emphasizes.

Dave is on the board of directors at reSET. “I’ve really enjoyed working with them and met many interesting companies, such as [Noteworthy Chocolates](#).”

He notes that innovation and entrepreneurship are arising from many fields—some unexpected.

As another example, Dave shares that he’s recently met three companies in the firefighting space. “That’s an area you don’t think of as innovative,” he acknowledges. “But they’re all taking different approaches, which shows innovation is being implemented in all different industries.”

Dave has also worked with startups coming out of [University of Connecticut School of Nursing](#), including [Brittany Molkenthin, who founded Lactation Innovations](#). “She isn’t someone you’d see as a typical entrepreneur,” Dave clarifies. “It verifies that entrepreneurship comes from all areas at UConn—not just the engineering and the high-tech areas.”

Dave’s advice for those starting out?

“No person is an island. Find and build a network of people you trust. Getting advice, referrals, and mentorship are invaluable in a company’s development,” he advises.

“As a corporate attorney working with entrepreneurs I feel good about what I’m contributing to the society. I like being able to say I’ve helped. The question is: How can I take what I’m good at doing and focus it into a better space—that’s always been the goal for me,” he adds.

“I’m really excited about the entrepreneurial environment in Connecticut right now,” emphasizes Dave. “There’s more going on than I can possibly keep in touch with. Every week I hear about something new. I cannot encompass all the entrepreneurs in Connecticut.”

Learn more about Murtha Cullina LLP

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