

## Around Town

BY WJN Staff Writers

### Menlo Innovations

Menlo Innovations was established in 2001. Through their career experiences in information technology, the company's four partners noticed that there was a gigantic business opportunity available in the computer industry, but it was disguised as a problem. Business executives were wasting \$55 billion dollars per year on software projects, which were never completed successfully, said Richard Sheridan, president and CEO of Menlo. Those projects that were finished failed to deliver the business results the project's executive sponsors had expected.

"We recognized what was missing," Sheridan said. Menlo focuses its attention on the missing link in almost all software development efforts. That missing link is what exists between the typical users of the software and the technical team creating that software. Often these two groups lack a shared technical vocabulary and therefore require a team of translators.

"We refer to this team as High-tech Anthropologist," Sheridan said. Their mission is "eliminating human suffering as it relates to technology."

Why the name Menlo? Menlo is a tribute to Thomas Edison and his positive impact on the world. In 1876 Edison created an innovative environment called the "Invention Factory," which was located in Menlo Park, New Jersey. Today Menlo has emulated Edison's factory with their very own workshop located in the heart of Kerrytown. Menlo employs the same open and collaborative research and development techniques Edison successfully pioneered 130 years ago. The environment is creative, noisy and high-energy. There are no walls, cubes or offices.

Edison's goal was to create a minor invention every two weeks and a major one every six months. Using interactive and incremental software development techniques, Menlo creates minor improvements in its software projects every ten days and releases a major version of its software projects at least twice per year. Minor software inventions might include adding one or two small features to an existing product to elicit quick feedback from the user community. Major software inventions can include the whole-scale delivery of a new software product. Just like Edison, the driving force behind everything Menlo does is to create useful and marketable software that makes a difference of the everyday lives of people in business.

Menlo works with companies to produce products which include software as an integral component, and that depends upon widespread adoption of that software for the success of their business. Their expertise is in the domain of designing and building software and as such, they do not focus on a particular industry. Customers include companies in retail, food, healthcare, local government, internet service, wireless communications, electronic publishing and book manufacturing to name just a few.

*Menlo Innovations is located at 212 N. Fourth Ave. Interested parties may contact Richard Sheridan by phone (734) 665-1847 or email [rsheridan@menloinnovations.com](mailto:rsheridan@menloinnovations.com) ■*