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Summit: Marine tech industry thriving in San Diego

By **ERIN BRIDGES**, The Daily Transcript
Wednesday, November 18, 2009

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San Diego is a perfect home for the growing marine technology industry, panelists said Wednesday during the Maritime Collaboration Summit.

Representatives from four local small businesses discussed how the industry is evolving, gaining momentum and finding a comfortable home in San Diego.

"San Diego is a phenomenal place to do maritime business," said Brad Fisher, western regional sales manager for **Sea Con Brantner & Associates**.

Sean Newsome, sales manager for **SeaBotix Inc.**, said his company's location on San Diego Bay allows staff to train customers on-site, deploying their product into the water off the company's pier.

While there are some challenges to operating a small business in San Diego, the location, weather and other positive aspects make it worth setting up shop, said Leonard Pool, president of **SIDUS Solutions**.

Unlike some products, marine technologies are best made near the water where developers can test products without traveling great distances.

San Diego's location on the West Coast provides ideal access to the Pacific. It often is called the gateway to the Pacific Rim.

For **SonTek/YSI**, the Pacific Ocean is a prime candidate for their products.

Chris Ward, director of sales and marketing for SonTek/YSI, said the company's products are used to monitor water in the Pacific, which drives the global climate.

The location also offers easy access to international customers in Asia, which represents a large portion of San Diego companies' sales.

"We participate in a lot of different industries," Fisher said. "As a result of that, we end up shipping internationally more than we do domestically."

Newsome and Ward both said at least half their sales are outside the United States.

They also said San Diego Mayor Jerry Sanders told them this week that he did not previously know the extent of the maritime technology industry in San Diego.

All companies on the panel said their business had grown significantly in recent years, resulting in more money in the local economy.

Ward said he talked to the mayor about the economic benefit the industry brings to San Diego, especially the export factor.

"Even though we are small businesses, cluster a bunch together and you have a pretty big export block," he said.

Send your comments to Erin.Bridges@sddt.com

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