

# Best Small Business

## Polytorx, LLC

Luke Pinkerton's business Polytorx, LLC produces Helix Fiber, a concrete additive made of one-inch strands of twisted, coated steel that increases strength while reducing cracks and costs. Luke came to the Washtenaw

Community College MI-SBTDC because he needed to ramp up quickly to meet customer demands. Polytorx, LLC had already secured dozens of advance orders from Michigan customers and the technology itself was well developed by the University of Michigan. However, cost-effective means of manufacturing had yet to be discovered.

At the time, Luke was using a machine that he developed as a graduate student to create the Helix Fiber. This machine was capable of yielding one fiber per second, but in order to be a successful business, a production method capable of making 500 to 1,000 fibers per second was necessary. Business Consultant, Veronica Weaver connected Polytorx to several machine builders in the Jackson area, continuously helping them locate vendors who could contribute to the development process. After a year of hard work, Polytorx had a low-cost, reliable machine capable of completing the job as well as a facility in Jackson by which to launch their operation. Technology Business Consultant, Anna Bier, assisted Polytorx, LLC as well by helping them obtain a Phase I SBIR grant used to develop an extensive performance database needed for providing customer design and support.

As a result, Polytorx, LLC has received \$250,000 in angel funding, \$500,000 in loans from the MEDC and \$100,000 in SBIR grant funding. Along with opening



the manufacturing facility in Jackson, they have added one full-time salesperson, five manufacturing employees and 20 machines to keep up with demand. Polytorx is now selling the Helix Fiber in ten countries. In 2006 they expect to triple their capacity and increase their staff to 15 employees.

Luke Pinkerton