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McCain, Romney talk small business and innovation at Infusionsoft HQ

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Arizona Sen. John McCain and former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney talked Friday morning with **Infusionsoft** CEO Clate Mask about small business, innovation and entrepreneurship.

The three gathered at Infusionsoft's Chandler headquarters in front of hundreds of people, with both McCain and Romney calling the fast-growing small business sales and marketing software company one of the "great American success stories." The panel was moderated by Glenn Hamer, president and CEO of the **Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry**.

"This is what makes us proud to be Americans," said McCain (R-Ariz.), who is running for re-election Tuesday against Ann Kirkpatrick. "Small businesses, we all know, are the backbone of the American economy."

What began in 2001 with three co-founders, including Mask, has turned into a global software company that has more than 117,000 users, from 35,000 small businesses in 70 countries, and earned more than \$100 million in revenue. The United Kingdom, Australia and Brazil are three of the countries Infusionsoft works with the most, and the company is working on building its software in other languages, Mask said.

"We have 72 software developers, and we're always adding more," Mask said. "When entrepreneurs and engineers come together, it's magic. We have to do a good job teaching math and science. It's critical for us."

However, the business hasn't been without challenges.

"The challenges we've faced were access to capital, access to labor and sales and marketing issues," Mask told the crowd. "We spent three years trying to figure out the way to work."

Infusionsoft has since been able to attract top talent from Silicon Valley, has grown to more than 650 employees and received \$55 million in funding in October 2014. The company has also long been rumored to be seeking to go public.

Mask said regulations, taxes and permits have made it tough to be a small business.

"We have challenges with independent contractor regulations," Mask said. "Taxes are also a big challenge. Taxes cause small businesses to not hire because of the tax structure."



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Infusionsoft CEO Clate Mask (right) gives a company tour to former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney (second from left), Arizona Sen. John McCain (middle), and his wife Cindy McCain.

Mask also talked about the importance of the angel investor tax credit and how it helped his company.

"We would not be here today if it wasn't for that," he said. "It's such a critical piece of legislation, and we would love to see that across the country."

As the co-founder of Boston-based **Bain Capital**, a global investment firm, Romney has long dealt with businesses. He said the most important thing he looks for before investing in a company is "character and integrity" of the leadership team.

"I also look at their team's track record and the things they've done," said Romney, who was in town stumping for McCain. "I look at their experience and their references."

Cybersecurity is a challenging issue McCain sees hitting every business, not just big businesses and government.

Mask said a company security team works every day to prevent attacks, which it gets hit with often.

"They're after personal information to do malicious stuff," he said.

Trade is also a big issue, and something states need to embrace, especially with other countries, McCain said.

"Mexico does more business with Arizona than Spain," he said. "I worry" about what's to come.

"Trade is something we very much want," Romney said. "We're going into a period of unprecedented innovation. The world is going to change in ways we can't imagine. We are an innovative nation, and we will succeed. If we wall ourselves off, we will fall behind. We cannot be fearful of competition."

As two former presidential candidates who were once rivals, Romney and McCain spoke highly of each other and urged everyone to vote in Tuesday's election.

"I believe in America," McCain said. "The world is on fire right now. There is no place in the world where you can find entrepreneur success stories, but this is the slowest growth in our GDP since the Depression."

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