

StartupWeekend Toronto recap - 200 people, 13 ideas and 5 winners

by [Jevon MacDonald](#) on September 28th, 2010 in [Canada](#), [Events](#), [Ontario](#), [Toronto](#)

This is a guest post by [Chris Eben](#) who, along with [Karthik Soravanahalli](#) and [Ahmed Badruddin](#), organized StartupWeekend Toronto.



[Startup Weekend Toronto](#) ended late Sunday night. While I'm still going to need a few days to reflect on the weekend, I thought I'd take a few minutes to jot down some thoughts...

Given my initial apprehension about taking on the organization of this event, I couldn't be happier with the way things turned out. What an amazing community of startup and tech professionals and enthusiasts we have in Toronto. Starting with the buzz that began weeks before the event, it was clear that Startup Weekend needed to come to Toronto.

Friday night was quite something. A capacity crowd of over 200 people gathered at Ryerson's amazing Atrium. I kicked things off briefly and explained how I got involved and what Startup Weekend is all about, immediately sensing the excitement from the crowd to start pitching and building new startups. But first we heard from [Mike McDerment](#) of Freshbooks about truly understanding the benefit you provide with your startup. Mike was followed by a great panel made up of [Leila Boujnane](#), [April Dunford](#) and [Sarah Prevette](#), moderated by [Dan Martell](#) who came in from San Francisco to help out. Mike sat on the panel as well. Lots of great stuff here - we'll be posting the videos of the entire weekend when they're ready.

And then onto the pitches... We had 38 people come up and give 60-90s pitches. This was amazing. I was so impressed with the level of participation and the great ideas. At this point, I had no doubt the weekend would be a success. Then came what I like to call "organized chaos." Voting on ideas followed by team formation. After the top 20 ideas were selected teams started forming over the rest of the night and following morning, resulting in 13 great ideas and teams, ready to get working.

Now the whiteboarding, coding, strategy discussions, business model validations, etc started in full swing with mentors wandering around helping out the teams and some great insights from our Saturday night speakers ([Mark Ruddock](#), [Tim Smith](#) and [James Lanthier](#)). After many all nighters, lots of food and coffee, and some beers, the teams were ready to start pitching on Sunday at 4pm.

The pitching is where it all comes together. What a site to see 13 teams come up and show what can really be accomplished in a weekend- often from ideas barely conceived until the Saturday morning, and with teams made of people who just met. Most teams actually had mockups or working code and even a few live demos. [TadWanna](#) even had 2 paying customers. While there were officially 5 winners (the top 3 as voted by the community and the judges, and 2 categories for honourable mention and the startup most likely to change the world) all 13 teams did something special.

Congratulations to our winners! [Task Ave.](#) took 1st place and upwards of \$25k in prizes. [Schedify](#) took 2nd, winning some great prizes and is already invited to pitch to the Ryerson Angel Network. In 3rd, [RateHub](#) is well on its way and has a complete new set of features for an already great web app. In our other 2 categories, [Stylist](#) got honourable mention with a really cool and working demonstration and [N2O](#) showed us how they will change the world with a Facetime app bringing doctors together from around the world.

There were so many other great ideas and startups that I truly hope will keep going. This is an amazing time in Toronto - the community is vibrant and something is in the air. We've already seen the talent this city and country has to offer and I know that there is so much more to come.

With such great feedback after the weekend, we're going to do it again in April 2011. Mark your calendars and come out to build something amazing.

A special thanks to my co-organizers. [Ahmed Badruddin](#) is the founder of [Simpleafy](#), a GreenTech startup helping home owners track and better understand their energy consumption and discover ways to reduce it. He's passionate about energy efficiency - check out his [blog](#). [Karthik Soravanahalli](#) brought together the SIFE Ryerson team to make this event work. He's killing it for Tim Smith at Gridcentric and finishing off his degree at Ryerson. And of course, thanks to all our amazing SIFE Ryerson volunteers!

Thanks of course to [Marc Nager](#) from [Startup Weekend](#) headquarters in Seattle. He's one of the guys responsible for bringing these awesome events to cities all over the world!

If you want to talk to me about Startup Weekend Toronto, get in touch. I blog at [The Low Post](#) and am on twitter - [@ceben](#) and [@startupwkndTO](#).

Thanks to all our sponsors and to everyone who took part!

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