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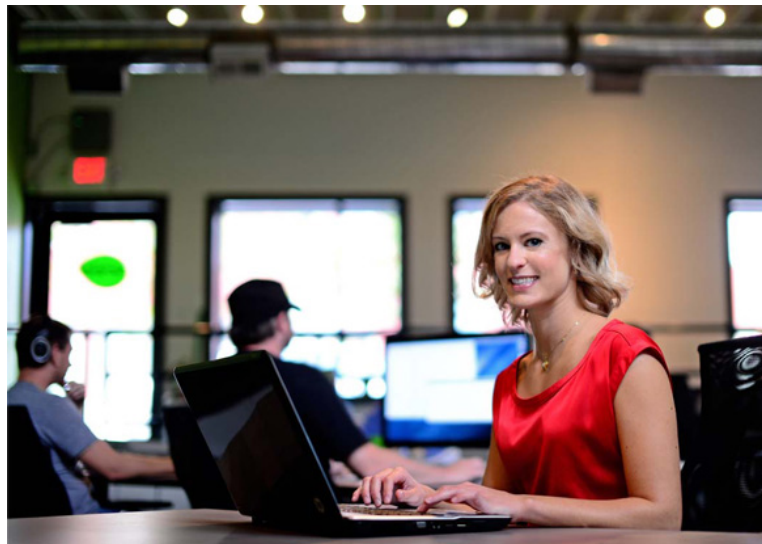


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Features

creation and collaboration: how ohio's startup weekends can bolster local economies

JOE BAUR | THURSDAY, OCTOBER 04, 2012



LINDSEY DANFORTH, LEAD ORGANIZER AT STARTUP WEEKEND TOLEDO. - SUBMITTED

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If you've ever had an idea for a startup business, then [Startup Weekend](#) -- a 54-hour marathon for aspiring entrepreneurs -- will allow you to collaborate with others in your community and put it to the test.

James Lu is co-creator of [Fueled](#), an app that helps create good fitness habits. Despite not knowing any of his four collaborators before the event, he came out of the inaugural [Startup Weekend Toledo](#) event a winner. "We were all strangers with a passion for

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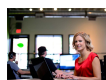
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creation and collaboration: how ohio's startup weekends can bolster local economies

Startup Weekends are intensive, 54-hour events for aspiring entrepreneurs. Fueled by passion, the presence of other innovators and plenty of coffee, would-be founders work in teams to develop their ideas, incorporate feedback from mentors and bring home prizes. Across Ohio, Startup Weekend events are taking hold and



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entrepreneurship." That passion resulted in an idea.

Startup Weekends, which are springing up across Ohio, are molding the next generation of innovators into entrepreneurs. Local economies stand to benefit.



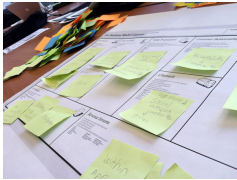
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Danielle Reyes, Regional Operations Manager at Startup Weekend headquarters in Seattle, calls the events "places of creation and collaboration" where people combine their skills and ideas to potentially create new businesses. They are opportunities to "walk through the door of entrepreneurship," she says, and the events have caught on worldwide.



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In 2011, there were over 400 Startup Weekend events in 100 countries. Six Ohio cities, [Cleveland](#), [Columbus](#), [Cincinnati](#), Toledo, [Athens](#) and Oxford (Miami University), participated in the trend.



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Since it launched in 2007 above a bike shop in Boulder, Colorado, Startup Weekend has exploded. Today, 724 events have been held in 333 cities and 66 countries from Iran to Australia, helping to create more than 5,000 startups around the world.

Building An Entrepreneurial Network



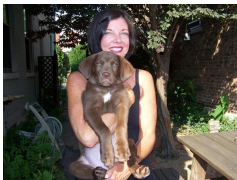
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Startup Weekend Toledo, which was held from September 14th-16th on the University of Toledo campus, attracted 70 aspiring entrepreneurs. Seven teams presented their ideas to a panel of judges following an exhausting 54-hour weekend.



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Lindsey Danforth, Lead Organizer at Startup Weekend Toledo, says the Toledo event was all about attracting their "community's best makers and do-ers," providing a venue for testing ideas, offering networking opportunities and launching startups.



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"Between the attendees, speakers, coaches, judges and guests who joined us, more than 100 people inspired each other, discussed ideas and helped to build our entrepreneurial network," she says.

Sleep was limited as festivities went until midnight and picked up early the following morning. Some worked through the night at [Seed Coworking](#), a coworking space in downtown Toledo that opened its doors at midnight for "night owls." Local entrepreneurs and university staff served as coaches to the seven teams, providing feedback on ideas. Some participants were forced to "pivot" early on if their idea was invalidated by a panel of judges.

On Sunday, teams presented their plans to a panel of

creating communities of entrepreneurs -- and even successful companies.

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judges made up of founders and CEOs from the area. Judges presented awards to select teams, including Fueled, who won first place for their iOS app that sends exercise alerts to a mobile device. The winnings, which were valued at over \$3,000, included a consulting session with [Rocket Ventures](#), two-hour intellectual property consulting session, lifetime account with [Fluid UI](#), one ticket to [TEDxToledo](#) and a two-month membership at Seed Coworking.

Fueled isn't the only idea to find success thanks to a Startup Weekend. Two hundred miles south on I-75, entrepreneur Carole Feeny is busy advancing her business following a big win at Startup Weekend Cincinnati earlier this year.

Feeny's idea was to create blue dog collars for rescue dogs as a public badge and celebration. Lance Armstrong's "Livestrong" bands played an inspirational role in the design. "Startup Weekend helped give me confidence in my idea," she says.

Yet there were more concrete benefits, too. She was ultimately successful at the event, yet Feeny quickly realized that [Project Blue Collar](#) lacked a "techie" element. Luckily, the contacts she made at Startup Weekend Cincinnati believed in her idea enough to help her create an ecommerce site to sell the product. They're also helping her to increase the company's social media presence.

Now, her business is coming to fruition. "We have just completed designing our marketing materials and did our first production run," she explains, adding that she will be selling within a couple of weeks. She will also be attending the Bark World Conference this month to gain a national platform for her product.

The Ripple Effect

Of course, simply attending a Startup Weekend isn't a failsafe to a fruitful career in entrepreneurship. Only 36 percent of the organization's startups continue after three months. Yet roughly 80 percent of Startup Weekend participants plan on continuing to work with their team or startup after the weekend has ended.

Although their original ideas might not pan out, a majority of attendees are more determined than ever to find success and innovation in their community. That's something that cities like Toledo are paying attention to, says Danforth of Startup Weekend Toledo. "Just by keeping the talent here in Toledo engaged through business creation, we will see a ripple effect throughout our economy."

Startup Weekend is too young to offer quantifiable data of its economic impact. Instead, you have to look for some indication of what the future might hold.

"I think it has had a direct impact on the local economy already," says Cincinnati's Chris Ridenour, Chief Technology Officer at [Lisnr](#), who helped organize the city's first Startup Weekend in July. "I can personally think of 10 of the attendees there who are now working for a startup company or have started one themselves."

Ridenour and his four co-workers developed an app that allows audio to "passively trigger fan interactions during the listening experience." The product, which was created during the 72-hour [Startup Bus](#) competition, was a semi-finalist at SXSW. Lisnr has since received its first investment -- \$50,000 from [CincyTech](#).

Ridenour says that events like Startup Weekend Cincinnati will put Ohio on the map at a national level as an entrepreneurial hub. "This showcase will start garnering more interest from investors and startups outside the region."

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Duane Ramsey · University of Toledo

Excellent report on Startup Weekends in Ohio. I covered the event in Toledo, writing an advance article and a report about the winner team and others who presented concepts for the Toledo Free Press newspaper.

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