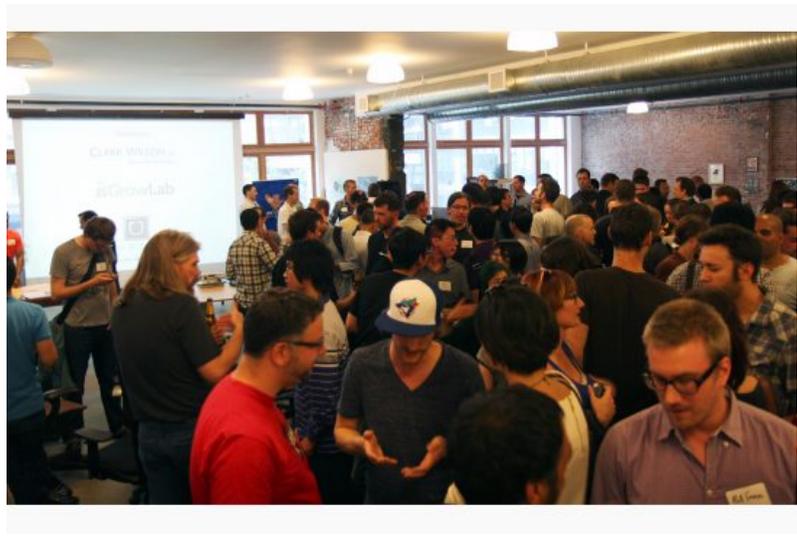


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Start me up! A look inside Vancouver's start-up entrepreneur community

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By: Suzanne Ma Published on Thu Jul 26 2012

When Jason Xu stayed up all night playing Starcraft, shirking his schoolwork and outraging his parents, no one thought that he would one day make a business out of his eGaming passions -- except for Xu himself.

"I kept telling [my parents] how much money you can make from being a gamer," Xu said. "Now, we're going to do something much bigger. We're going to create an industry out of this."

Today, Xu and his friend Justin Wong are co-founders of BattleFy, an online destination for gamers to play and watch e-sports. In North America, 16 million people watch more than two billion minutes of eSports every month. BattleFy launched its beta site four weeks ago and so far they've received more than 26,000 page hits.

"My Asian parents don't want to admit it, but they're starting to believe in what we're doing now," said Xu, who was just one of 30 entrepreneurs pitching his company at an event hosted earlier this week by Launch Academy, a collaborative workspace for tech entrepreneurs who are in their early (typically pre-funding) stages. On Tuesday evening, more than 200 people gathered to watch the pitches at The Hive in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

Not everyone at the event was a gamer or a computer nerd. Alexandra Greenhill is a mother of three young children and a family physician. She's also the co-founder of MyBestHelper.com, a site that helps families and caregivers find each other.

"I wanted a service where you could quickly establish whether you could find help for the day and have faith that this person was available," Greenhill said. "If you go onto Craigslist, you would have to manually go through all the criteria and it takes hours. Having done it many times myself, I just got tired of it."

MyBestHelper also looks out for caregivers as much as the families. "I had a nanny who told me how thankful she was that the children didn't hit her and that she was

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paid on time," Greenhill said. "Caregivers want to find good families, just like families want to find good caregivers."

Xu said Vancouver's start-up community is very tight-knit and supportive. "There's a lot of camaraderie," he said. "It doesn't matter if you're an entrepreneur or just a student, there's a lot of mentorship going on and everyone is willing to help each other in every way they can."

Launch Academy is an organization that aims to provide guidance and mentorship to anyone in Vancouver with passion, creativity and most importantly, a good idea, said director Mike Edwards. We are "a soft landing for those who want to explore entrepreneurship. It's not a straight road and we're here to do anything we can do to make this road a little less windy, curvy, or hilly."

Six cool Vancouver start ups:



KarmaHire

A video interview and interactive skill testing platform that helps companies hire better talent faster and more efficiently. Hiring, interviewing and screening can be done online. "KarmaHire gives companies the opportunity to find the best people. You can see who solves problems faster, who can think faster, who has mastered the tools," said co-founder James Clift. KarmaHire recently organized the B.C. Tech Fair, a virtual career fair with over 35 companies and 2,500 candidates. The first public version of KarmaHire launched two weeks ago.



MyBestHelper

A website that helps families and caregivers find each other. Find the perfect helper based on location, type of care, rates and availability. Other fields also help you find a

match based on personal values, philosophy, work and communication style. You can browse for free, but if you choose to hire a caregiver through the site, it's a \$30 fee.



Battlefy

An online destination for gamers to organize, play, and watch eSports (competitive play of video games). Catered to the 300 million eSport players worldwide, Battlefy gives aspiring gamers a channel to build their resume, challenge their skills, and capture recognition from fans and major leagues.



OfCity Guide

A bilingual English and Chinese iPad relocation guide for the most desirable cities in the world, starting with Vancouver. Future guides in the works: Toronto, New York, London. "Relocating is always a challenge it is especially for someone who knows nothing about the city," said founder Melissa Kwan. "The information is there but it's often outdated and scattered. We want to be that one stop source." OfVancouver will be available for free download at the iTunes store in September.



momojobs

This website sources jobs from company's career websites, providing job seekers an inside look at their future work place. Users can connect with current or past employees of the company, see photos of the work space, and also help their friends find out about new opportunities. Companies can post jobs with referral bonuses and reward you with thousands of dollars for helping the company recruit great talent. The site already has over 400 tech openings from over 150 companies in Vancouver.



Weeve.it

A Kickstarter for nonprofits, Weeve is a crowd funding platform that allows nonprofit organizations to raise money and awareness for their cause. Weeve.it features include social fundraising with integrated social media buttons, project management dashboard, downloadable donor list, blog updates, and community engagement tools.

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