

Launch Academy Pitch Day Celebrates Year of Canadian Startup Success

by **Sumari MacLeod** on Mar 26, 2013 | **Startups**

The Vancouver Public Library's Alice MacKay Room was the host of **Launch Academy's** Pitch Day on Monday night, an event meant to foster the local startup community and provide the entrepreneurs under their umbrella with an opportunity to practice pitching, and compete for high-level mentorship and public exposure.



Twenty startups had a minute each to pitch the bare bones of their project; after all of the startups had pitched, the evening's 250 attendees had a chance to mingle and submit their votes via text. Pitches were flying, but it was up to the judges to decide which had the potential to become home runs. The judges' panel was comprised of Jason Bailey (CEO of East Side Games, Founder of GrowLab), Meredith Powell (three-time serial entrepreneur and Launch Academy mentor), Peter Smymiotis, (Enterprise IT Sales Director at ARP Technologies), Igor Faletski (CEO at Mobify), and Tomica Divic (Development Manager at BCIC.)

The five finalists contained a broad range of viable business models. **A few of the finalists had been finalists before.**

Monday night was not the first rodeo for Thinkific, myBestHelper, or WealthBar—in fact, this was the third time that Thinkific had taken part. Neither Mobipay nor Change Heroes had taken part before. And not only did they make the finals, but the winners' circle too.

The lack of philanthropic rivals in the finals all but guaranteed Change Heroes' victory; Change Heroes' combination of practical thinking and humanitarian vision made it something of a ringer. Thinkific made second place, winning a prize at long last. Mobipay landed itself in third.

Each of the winners will be heading to metabridge, one of the most anticipated tech events of the year. Metabridge is an annual retreat in Kelowna, BC that connects senior tech leaders from the Silicon Valley with leading Canadian startups.

The night was significant for the contestants, but Launch Academy had—and still has—some celebrating of its own to do. April 1 marks the first anniversary of Launch Academy itself; whether or not Launch Academy intends to have a proper anniversary bash is still undecided.

Monday also marked the first public screening of GROW Inc., a locally produced documentary which highlighted many startups featured in the room. Director Bradley Shende was on hand to present, but the presentation of the film itself left something to be desired. The timing of the documentary coincided with the cellular voting time—the lights were on, and the din of eager voters enjoying pizza and beer made for a distracting screening environment.

At the end of the night, Ray Walia stood proud of both the winners and Launch Academy itself.

"The final results represent what Launch Academy is all about," he said. "You have Change Heroes, really trying to change the world, being progressive but still looking from a business perspective. You have Thinkific, and while it's their third time presenting they've demonstrated real growth each time. And then we have Mobipay, which is at the heart of Launch Academy: collaboration and joining forces and making each other better."

"And here we are," he continued. "We didn't know if we'd make it past month two, and we've just been growing and growing. At the end of the day, Launch Academy is about the community, and it's the community that's grown Launch Academy. It's not the management, or the sponsors: if it wasn't for the community that kept building upon itself, we'd be nothing. Thankfully, the community's just growing and growing, and now we've got 70 companies helping us grow. It's been amazing."

The next Pitch Day hasn't been posted to the calendar. One hopes that a new year will bring new talent, or at least the subject of the evening's opening toast: "To \$#!%-tons of money!"

Sumari MacLeod

Sumari MacLeod debuted from Humber's postgraduate Advertising and Copywriting program with an Applied Arts Student Competition win under her belt, and after interning at both a traditional agency and a PR firm, has found herself at home as a writer for TV and web. She graduated from UBC with a B.A. in English Literature and History, and previously covered video game news for The Village Gamer... » **more**



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Company:
myBestHelper
Location:
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

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Company:
Thinkific
Location:
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

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Company:
WealthBar
Location:
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

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Company:
Launch Academy
Location:
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Launch Academy is a pre-accelerator program that helps entrepreneurs execute on their startups through education, mentorship, lean metrics and networking opportunities. Launch Academy has established an environment where ideas are vetted, business models are tested and successes are celebrated. Founded on the values of innovation, opportunities and accountability, Launch Academy addresses the...
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Thank you Sumari for capturing so well the event and most importantly, writing about the value Launch Academy has brought to our tech scenes and to our beautiful city.
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Huge thanks to Launch Academy, Coast Capital Innovation Hub, Accelerate Tectoria, Institute B and the Vancouver Tech community for all the support for Change Heroes last night and over the last 8 months!

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Fun night.

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Congrats all! Look forward to seeing the film.

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