

Promoting startups



Joe Kline / The Bulletin

Perfect Menu team members Colton Fent, from left, Lorenzo Aiello, Rob Walker, Aviv Hadar and Carter Miller, all of Bend, make some final adjustments to their business startup pitch prior to the final presentation during the Startup Weekend event Sunday at G5 Search Marketing in Bend. Perfect Menu went on to win the audience favorite prize and a free class at Founders Pad, which assists entrepreneurs.

•Entrepreneurs perfect their product pitches during 54-hour Startup Weekend

By Hillary Borrud
The Bulletin

By Sunday evening, Lorenzo Aiello's eyes were bloodshot and he was ready for a full night's sleep.

Aiello got four hours of sleep Friday night and three hours Saturday, as he and a team of hopeful

entrepreneurs worked all weekend to perfect their pitch for a startup company called Perfect Menu.

"I have no voice, obviously, and I haven't eaten dinner," Aiello said. Nonetheless, Aiello and his group were full of enthusiasm, as they pitched their product and cheered on

other groups.

The Perfect Menu group was one of seven that participated in a 54-hour event called Startup Weekend in Bend. The event was one of 125 startup weekends taking place around the world this month. The local winner will go on to compete in a Global Startup Weekend. Startup Weekend is supported by sponsors, including the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, a Kansas City, Mo.,

nonprofit that promotes entrepreneurship.

The goal of the event was to promote innovation, entrepreneurship and collaboration in Bend, according to the event website.

Aviv Hadar presented the business plan for Perfect Menu. Many restaurants post their menus as PDF files, which Hadar referred to as "a mess." Perfect Menu would streamline the process.

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"Updating your menu, sharing it online, currently it's a messy experience," Hadar said. "Specials are extremely hard to share across social networks. Search engines can't read your menus ... Yelp sucks. Reviews suck. They muddy up the user experience.

"We've built everything, we can handle everything," Hadar said. All the group needed was help marketing and selling the product.

Perfect Menu went on to win a free class at Founders Pad, which assists entrepreneurs, and the audience favorite prize, a \$200 gift certificate to the Crux Fermentation Project brewery. The overall Startup Weekend winner was H2O Photo, a startup company whose founders want to manufacture a new type of camera housing for underwater photography.

Judges included a local business consultant, a patent attorney, an adjunct professor and one of the co-founders of Founders Pad.

The business ideas that people pitched Sunday evening included a new shared workspace for people who would otherwise work from home, and survey software to help doctors at small medical practices gauge patient satisfaction. There was also an artisanal chocolate maker trying to expand, developers of a website that will allow people to adapt recipes for specialized diets and developers of a software application for carpet cleaners and other service industries.

Troy Smith, of H2O Photo, said the company's innovative underwater camera housing would rely on a USB cord to control camera functions and would fit many different cameras. Existing models fit only certain cameras, so photographers must purchase new underwater equipment to fit every new camera, Smith said.

"They have to buy one of these for every camera," Smith said. "Usually these are one-and-a-half times the cost of the camera. Every couple of years, they come out with more models, and these guys have to stay up-to-date."

Chris Kraybill, chief technology officer at G5 Search Marketing and one of the organizers of the Startup Weekend in Bend, said participants will get a chance to continue refining their ideas with additional coaching at Startup Weekend Next, a three-week program that will follow.

"It's probably not time for you to quit your day jobs," Kraybill said. "But in another three weeks, it might be."

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