



For 54 short hours during the weekend of November 21st, 55 programmers, software designers, students, business people and others came together to “start-up” a company or viable product. This international event is called Startup Weekend and is the brainchild of Andrew Hyde of Boulder, Colorado. Hyde wanted to see what could happen if you brought really smart and talented people together for one weekend and turned them loose to brainstorm, build, tinker and hopefully launch a successful project.

The weekend in Lexington was brought here via collaboration between the [Kentucky Startup Blog](#), [Young Entrepreneurs of Lexington](#) and the [University of Kentucky Entrepreneur club](#) and was sponsored by the [Bluegrass Business Development Partnership](#) and the [Kentucky Science & Technology Corporation](#). Scholarships were provided by [Stoll, Keenon, & Ogden](#) and [Stites & Harbison](#), PLLC.

People ranged in age from nineteen to over fifty years old. In addition to students from the University of Kentucky; Western Kentucky, Eastern Kentucky, and the University of Cincinnati were represented. John Cullum, from Columbus, was attending his third Startup Weekend, having attended previous weekends in Columbus and Nashville.

The event kicked off Friday night with brainstorming ideas for businesses. Pitches for everything from new software startups to a video game center were considered. After several rounds of voting, eight projects were selected:

- **International Microfinance** - A for-profit business to help entrepreneurs in other countries through small loans.
- **Audio Interview / Career Answers** - A site that offers job interview questions and reasonable answers in audio form to help job seekers.
- **Twitter News** - A headline only news service built on the Twitter API.
- **Service / Volunteer Network** - Aims to connect those who want to volunteer to those who need volunteer work.
- **Video Game Theater** - Changed focus from converting an old Lexington theater for video game tournaments to planning an event for a single weekend.
- **Mobile Assassin** - Assassins (Tag meets secret Santa) on your mobile phone.
- **Mobile Mutiny** - Is creating a cleaner mobile interface for MLS Real Estate listings of investment properties.
- **Show Finder** - Add underground / live music to a local calendar so your friends can know where the party's at.

After the projects were selected, attendees voted with their feet and joined the project that they wanted to work on over the weekend. The remainder of the weekend was used to try and build a working version of their product/concept. As the weekend progressed, some teams found the feasibility of their project in question and shifted to new ideas. Mobile Assassin's team realized a similar game existed and with few hours left to build out the project, they switched to a new concept, the Dream/Fear Project. The idea was a fusion between attendee/co-organizer Luke Murray's idea to dream big and another attendee, John Mueller's real life near family tragedy.

Show Finder was the brainchild of Adam Tanner from ECU. He and buddy Blake Hall from UK recruited Dalton Rowe from WKU and Steven Pritchett from UK to build on his idea over the weekend. In addition to working 12 hour days at Startup Weekend, they all stayed in Blake's dorm room coding and working through the night to build the product. Eventually named Holwyn, the product allows promoters to promote local shows and attendees to purchase tickets for these shows which are too small for the major players in this market. This team plans to continue to build their project to an immediate launch.

With the clock ticking, a couple of brave souls branched off from their main project to pitch a variation that they thought should stand on its own. David Laurenvil, a member of the international micro-lending team sensed an opportunity to provide this service to college students, and launched MycroAid, a micro lending service aimed at helping students make it through the lean times.

As Sunday night approached and the time to demo their project neared, the hardcore attendees worked tirelessly putting final touches on the technology and presentations. A total of ten projects were pitched Sunday night. Several were essentially complete with a few minor tweaks; others were just a PowerPoint and idea.

The point of the weekend was to build community, camaraderie and connections. While most of the teams committed to continuing to build on their ideas in the coming weeks, it is unknown how successful their ventures will become, but the opportunity to know and work with so many talented people is sure to pay dividends down the road for all who participated.

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