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300 attend SATAI tech conference

[By David Saleh Rauf](#) - Express-News

Unlike most of the entrepreneurs attending Tuesday's technology conference at the University of the Incarnate Word's Skyroom, Michael Seringer wasn't looking for investors to drop money into his company.

Seringer, whose company is looking to launch a Web application that allows doctors to access critical patient information outside the office, was more interested in the contacts the "money folks" possess.

"I'm surveying the landscape and looking to network," said Seringer, vice president of operations for Orion Marketing Group, a 15-year-old company trying to reinvent itself. "That can be more important than money in some instances."

Networking was the name of the game Tuesday at the STARs 2009 Technology Innovation Conference, where dozens of entrepreneurs had a prime opportunity to pitch their startup to investors with the capital to get their projects off the ground. About 300 people packed the Skyroom to hear sessions on topics ranging from social media to intellectual property.

The conference also provided a forum for investors to learn about new products and companies.

"Networking goes both ways," said John Adler, a general partner in Dallas-based venture capital company Silver Creek Ventures. "Somebody is going to say, 'I saw this venture capital guy in San Antonio' and give me a call."

For entrepreneurs, the best tips came during talks about "angel" investors and venture capital firms. Adler, who co-hosted a session on the do's and don'ts for startups giving a presentation to a venture capital firm, says investors look for companies with a strong management team and a combination of market, technology and business savvy.

"It always takes that kind of intelligence to get us excited," he said.

But Adler cautioned that of the 500 proposals he reviews each year, he might invest in one or two.

"We say no 99 percent of the time," he said.

The slim chances of landing investor cash didn't deter those who signed up for SATAI's "Elevator Pitch" contest. In all, 19 men with aspirations of landing more than \$12,000 in prizes to help spur their respective startups gave their best 90-second sales pitch.

The winner was Matt Atwood, whose iMedicalConcepts has developed a product that dispenses allergy medicine through an eyedropper. The shot of good news, which includes prizes such as heavily discounted office space at Brooks City-Base to legal consultation to a private meeting with a venture capital firm, comes just two months after Atwood considered quitting his current job.

“I was going to take a job with a competitor,” he said. “We just couldn't get over the next step.”

The daylong conference was hosted by the San Antonio Technology Accelerator Initiative Network, a city-backed organization that promotes high-tech industry.

Tuesday marked the first time SATAI has rolled its annual awards gala honoring San Antonio's most innovative thinkers in science and technology into an interactive conference.

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