

Elite Eight Atlanta Startups Advance to TAG Finals

On St. Patrick's Day, twenty Atlanta startups gathered in midtown to deliver their three-minute pitches to a panel of judges and an audience of 200 people who gathered with Chick-Fil-A coffee and breakfast.

The format was very straight forward: each startup has three minutes to deliver its pitch to the judges and audience. There was no Q&A on each pitch, so all twenty pitches were done in less than two hours. Similar to the NCAA Basketball March Madness tournament, a guaranteed bid into the "Elite 8" was granted to the audience choice. Anyone present at the event could register their phone, and then vote via text message (one vote per attendee) for their favorite startup.

As the judges exited the room to determine the other seven finalists, the crowd texted in their votes for the audience choice. The clear winner of the audience choice was Gimme Vending, a provider of hardware and software for vending machine owners that noted a long time Coca-Cola executive on its board of advisors. In the video below, Cory Hewett (Co-Founder, CEO), shares his thoughts on Gimme Vending being chosen as the crowd favorite.



<iframe width="640" height="360" src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/ZwL1HTnQhsc" frameborder="0" allowfullscreen></iframe>

When the judges returned, they announced the Elite 8 startups, who will pitch again in a different format for the final competition to be held on May 11, 2015, at the [SCAD Show](#) (formerly 14th Street Playhouse) at 7pm. The TAG Business Launch Competition Elite 8 include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gimme Vending• HUX• Local Roots• Synapse Software	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• TekWear• Terminus• Uniquely Virtual• ZeeZor
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Borrowed by Design Co-Founder Kat Ewing on what she enjoyed most about the competition.

The panel of judges included:

- **Evelyn Bolden**, Corporate Development, Cox Enterprises, Inc.
- **Joan Herbig**, CEO, ControlScan
- **Melanie Leeth**, President, Imlay Investments
- **Keith McGreggor**, Director, VentureLab
- **Blake Patton**, Managing Partner, Tech Square Ventures
- **Michael Price**, General Partner, CEO Ventures
- **Martin Tilson**, Chair, Southeast Investor Group (SIG)
- **Jeff McConnell**, CEO, Whisper Communications LLC