

Sep 2, 2011

Companies Leverage Web, Connectivity in New Ways

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Steven Burhrman's idea could change your entire life — if you want it to.

The CEO and founder of Kahootzz is pitching a product that functions as a Web application for your life, steering resources, organizations and other information straight to your smart phone. It's an app for your career, hobby, city or whatever you like.

"It's the idea that you're missing things," Burhrman said.

Buhrman is among a burgeoning segment of Nashville's entrepreneurial community. Their ideas leverage social media, mobile devices and the power of Web connections in a bid to harness and influence the way consumers behave online.

[Rafe Needleman](#), editor at large of technology website CNET, said there's tremendous potential in such companies, but it's "very difficult to predict" what sort of idea will catch on in the way online ventures must to thrive and grow. In reality, few online companies will become the next Facebook or Groupon.

The Nashville Entrepreneur Center recently churned out three online companies through its accelerator program: Kahootzz, RentStuff.com and Meevl.

The number of such companies applying for the center's program was "disproportionately high," said center CEO [Michael Burcham](#), which exemplifies a trend in the investment world as the explosive potential of online businesses becomes clear.

For these companies, it's all about providing a new way for people to do the most basic of things. Kahootzz, for example, combs the Web and a range of databases to deliver tidbits of information to your smart phone that you should have each day if you want to progress on a particular goal.

RentStuff.com, meanwhile, combines the concept of online classified advertising with the odds-and-ends rental market. Need a pressure washer but don't want to buy one? Own a nice mountain bike you'd be cool with renting out for a little extra cash? Now that

market exists online with RentStuff.com, in a bid to replicate how eBay and Craigslist revolutionized online shopping.

“It’s getting people’s mentality to change,” said [Chris Jaeger](#), CEO and co-founder of RentStuff.com.

Another venture tied to online behavior, Meevl, is hoping to capitalize on something people already are doing, in a smaller way.

The company — started by two Slovaks who came to Nashville solely for the entrepreneur center’s business accelerator program — aims to provide a dashboard that people use for all of their social media outlets, increasing their connectivity in new ways.

While there are programs that help people manage social media, founders [Vladimir Tucek](#) and [Milos Blasko](#) argue nothing enables the level of sharing people want. That function is free for consumers, and Meevl hopes to tie its program to companies’ social media strategies as their employees become more connected.

Needleman said such companies face key tests: Free services need scores of users; paid content must exhibit major value and corporate services require big clients in the door.

Burcham said the center aims to help companies address those challenges by understanding their business models and being prepared to deliver.