



Tech startup gets lift at conference

Software maker receives a \$200,000 investment

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Imagine being able to create sleek-looking digital media [presentations](#) for the Web without having a background in Internet coding.

A Phoenix technology startup is preparing to roll out a software product that allows people to do just that, and the seasoned entrepreneurs starting the [business](#) received a financial shot in the arm on Thursday that brings them a step closer to releasing their tool to the market.

The company, tentatively called FreshBrew Inc., received a \$200,000 investment Thursday by SCF Arizona, a worker's-compensation provider, during the Invest Southwest Capital Conference at Four Seasons [Resort](#) Scottsdale at Troon North.

The cash endowment replaced the "Best Company Award" that is typically presented at the annual conference, which aims to link startup companies with investors who are seeking the next big thing in technology, bioscience and other industries.

"Our goal is to get investors here to invest in these companies," conference chairman Richard Stagg said.

FreshBrew was one of 14 firms from around the Southwest that were selected to present at this year's conference.

Other companies included Scottsdale-based CareerTours LLC, which enables employers to create online audio and video clips about their companies; Tucson-based LiPoint Inc., which is developing nasally delivered drug products; and Nuvo Technologies Inc., a Tempe-based firm that is selling a software/hardware product that enables bar and restaurant owners to digitally monitor how much liquor they use in cocktails.

Many of the companies received a positive response at the conference, but attendees singled out FreshBrew because of its management team.

The company's beginnings date back a year ago, when it was formed by Don Pierson, who helped start e-learning company Learning-Edge. Pat Sullivan, who founded the successful SalesLogix and ACT! customer management software companies, said at the conference that he has agreed to take on the CEO role for the company.

"I personally believe it's going to be the biggest thing I've done," Sullivan said.

The company plans to officially debut its product at a technology conference next month.

Although \$200,000 would be a significant investment for any of the companies, it is just the beginning for FreshBrew.

Pierson said the company has signed a term sheet to enter in an equity-financing agreement with Menlo Park, Calif.-based venture capital firm Sierra Ventures. Pierson declined to provide additional details about the potential deal, which he said is yet to be finalized.

In a presentation to conference attendees, Sullivan described the product as a software package that would be a "total breakthrough" for users, allowing anyone to create rich media presentations.

The company plans to distribute the product for free and create revenue streams by selling ancillary services for users, creating tutorials for how to create different types of presentations, collecting licensing fees from a professional version of the program and creating presentations with it for other companies, he said.

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