

The Next Big Thing?

It was about three years ago when Karl Susman started sketching out his idea on a cocktail napkin. The longtime insurance man and his wife of 21 years were having what he calls “a friendly debate” (about what, he can’t remember anymore). But what did stick with this entrepreneur was the “aha” moment that resulted from this conversation. He would use the personal experience to help forge a foundation for the website now known as YouAskAnyone.com.

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY GEOFF GRAHAM



Eureka Park

Inside Innovation

“It’s not an Ask.com,” says Susman. “It’s not a Yahoo Answers either.” He describes the concept behind YouAskAnyone.com a little like Digg, “but hopefully,” he adds, “with better results.” Users who sign up will have the opportunity to vote (and comment) on each point of view presented by two other users. Within 36 hours of posing a question, the dilemma will be voted on and solved, social media-style.

Susman, who lives in Los Angeles with his family, has the energy and enthusiasm of a teenager when he talks about the website, which officially launches during the 2014 International CES (Jan. 7–10) in Las Vegas. His will be one of 200 startups featured at Eureka Park, a special 21,500-square-foot TechZone designed for new companies looking to get their foot in the CE door, literally and figuratively, with unique exhibits at The Venetian.

While some startups are hoping to be scooped up by one of the big dogs in the industry, other entrepreneurs are looking for additional funding, crowdsourcing and support from the media and CE trendsetters who could turn them into the next Snapchat or Twitter success story. In many ways, Eureka Park points to what could be the future of the industry thanks to its novel ideas and products—everything from websites to apps to gadgets designed to revolutionize the way consumers work and play.

“Everyone thinks they have the next great idea,” says Susman. “But the potential for something like this is very big.”

Once he got past the initial investment stage (a world he knew quite well), he found himself ensconced with designers and IT specialists, learning about cloud servers, Google AdWords and market research that could make or break his investment. And while he’s the first to admit that the beta site lacked the sharp design of the site that’s being unveiled at CES, users have already signed up and chimed in on several debates, like who should pay the dinner bill on a date and which movie is worth seeing—with each trending issue presented in real time in 140 characters or less.

Susman, like every other exhibitor at Eureka Park, has a very specific and lofty goal in mind—to make his concept a reality and to eventually make it financially viable. “I want it to appeal to everyone from teenagers (who may be looking for dating etiquette) to my dad (an avid golfer),” he says, “and to show that their side of the argument is correct.”

Track It

GPS is a familiar concept to tech enthusiasts and novices alike, but Be-Spoon, a semiconductor company from France, wants to take the technology into new territory with its latest development—a precise distance measurement chip created with CEA-Leti that could allow smartphone users to track and find precious cargo, like kids at the mall.

5 TO WATCH:

94Fifty is the first smart sensor basketball that works with a smartphone app. Developed by InfoMotion Sports Technologies Inc., in Dublin, Ohio, the ball helps measure muscle memory to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of players on the court. Not only is it poised to build better overall ball handling, it's like having one of the best coaches in the palm of your hand.

shop.94fifty.com

Thirsty? **Little Luxury** from South Africa is previewing one of the first-ever mini desktop water cooler and filtration systems. The company has already developed millions of water systems throughout its native Africa, but the new Mini-Desktop Water Cooler filters tap water using an anti-bacterial filter while cooling it down via a small energy-saving system to quench thirst just about anywhere.

littlexury.co.za

Israel's **Comigo** has developed a smart set-top box that enables consumers to personalize their in-home and mobile entertainment experience with social media interactions, device tracking and content management that customizes how, where and what is being downloaded. It's currently based on the Android platform. **Comigo.com**

Doorbot is a doorbell for smartphones. Consumers got their first glimpse of the technology on ABC's *Shark Tank* as a way to monitor how users respond to visitors at their door. Created in Santa Monica, Calif., the app allows users to leverage smartphone mobility to essentially answer the door or a phone call from any location.

Getdoorbot.com

Picture it: a wearable camera that allows users to capture every aspect of their lives. That's the picture **Lifelogger Corp.** in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., had in mind when they developed its most advanced camera yet. Durable and portable, the camera can become an accessory to ensure that would-be photographers never miss a moment. **Lifelogger.com**

Must-See Innovations at Eureka Park



"On top of that, we are convinced that some creative guys will come up with crazy applications that will quickly become hits—stuff that we have not even considered because our imagination does not match the imaginations of hundreds of developers," says Jean-Marie Andre, BeSpoon's co-founder and CEO. "We provide the tool that will help bring their bright idea to life."

The tool is a development kit that will allow innovators to play with the technology. "It will be compact and affordable," explains Andre, "in order to allow anybody to prototype applications and build games. We want to deliver a powerful tool that helps people leverage our technology."

With GPS already in use by the military, automotive and consumer electronics (CE) industries, BeSpoon wants to change the way consumers use this technology on their smartphones. Andre has been designing GSM phones since



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1994, and is the former co-founder of Purple Labs (which was acquired by Myriad in 2009). He came up with the idea for this chip after years of experimenting with mobile technology and delving deep into market research.

According to Strategy Analytics, people spend 80 percent of their time outside of GPS coverage—places like car tunnels and indoors. While GPS may be effective enough to locate, for example, a car on the road, when it comes to actual people, better precision is required (which can take its toll on a phone's battery life). Andre says that BeSpoon's solution not only increases GPS' efficiency for finding virtually anything that's GPS-enabled, but does so at speeds that have not yet been seen on the consumer level.

"Distances are assessed according to the strength of the signal received," he says. "This is not reliable and not precise. We have designed a radio sys-

tem that does not rely on signal strength, so it's not affected by obstacles (such as walls or people passing by). Our system measures the time of transmission of a radio signal between two chips."

BeSpoon is one of the few labs in the world to build such a system into a single chip. By the time the company is at CES, it will already be in the midst of its fundraising campaign, with products expected to be available on a widespread basis by the second quarter of the year. "Interested people can pre-purchase a kit from late-December onward," he says.

Hear It

The struggle between good music and design has always been integral to the audio world—especially as technology has allowed for some especially eye-catching innovations on the design front. This is particularly true for ClearView Audio in Waltham, Mass., where designers have envisioned a world in which speakers are practically invisible and digital sound clarity challenges even the toughest critics.

"Until now, speakers have always competed with the interior design of their environment," says Gene D'Ovidio, vice president of marketing at ClearView. "Although smaller speakers with more attractive shapes and sizes have reduced visual clutter, the proliferation of conventional speakers has resulted in rooms filled with black boxes. The ultimate, but very expensive, conventional solution is embedded in-wall and in-ceiling speakers. How-

ever, the sound quality of these speaker systems is generally compromised, lacking clarity, while producing poor imaging."

The desire for clear sound in a smaller format drove the company to create an alternative to both the portable wireless speaker systems and custom solutions that dominate audio today. ClearView's own eureka moment comes with EdgeMotion audio system, which uses a novel mechanical approach to generate sound.

"Instead of pushing from behind, like a traditional cone speaker does, EdgeMotion speakers actuate a thin membrane along the side in a manner that creates an extremely efficient, piston-like motion in front," says D'Ovidio. The result? A system that's thin and lightweight—and that produces a rich, full sound. And because of the transparent materials, the speakers are barely visible, which appeals to design enthusiasts, consumers and, ultimately, music lovers.

The company's hope is that the system, a CES Innovations Design and Engineering Awards nominee this year, will get high marks from audio experts in Vegas. "We are thrilled to launch a wireless speaker that will change the way consumers incorporate music into their homes," says Stefan Bokamper, ClearView's president and CEO, "and are eager to gauge the industry's reactions."

Hang It

Jean and Steve Jacobson aren't necessarily who you picture when you think of hot young tech entrepreneurs. Well past



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retirement age, the couple hasn't allowed anything to impede progress on a solution they developed called HangaTablet. In fact, their life experiences—both as computer experts and engineers—have contributed significantly to the new product they're debuting at CES, one that could become a popular accessory for tablet users on the go.

"When the tablet became a commercially viable product, we were very excited," says Jean Jacobson. "We wanted to use the tablet in cars that we rented and in any part of the world we planned to go. Navigation software was already available at the time."

The Florida-based couple knew what they needed to take their tablet with them, but couldn't seem to find anything that worked. "We designed and built out of metal our first prototype holder and applied for a patent," she says. Since then, with patent in hand—the device has been made from plastic parts that are 3D printed—they've even created a second product, one that works for phones.

"These holders are easily and quickly movable and adjustable so you can size them to fit any tablet, phone or e-reader," she explains.

"You can also adjust them so they can be in portrait or landscape mode."

HangaTablet and HangaPhone will both be manufactured in the U.S. this year. "The actual products will be made from polycarbonate plastic and not the ABS that we have to use in these 3D printed prototypes," she says. "Because the cost of the mold is so expensive (and is separate from the manufacturing costs), we want to see how the product is received by the public."

In many ways, their experience in Vegas could either make or break the future of the accessory, one that they agree will appeal to kids and seniors alike.

Picture It

Vlad Tislenko came up with the idea for his invention when he created a smartphone camera lens as a birthday present for a friend. "I gifted it with the words, 'Now you only need a flash to make your smartphone a DSLR,'" says Tislenko, the CEO of iblazr, a Kiev-based startup. "Then it dawned on me, there is no smart flash on the market, so I decided to make one."

The first LED flash concept was designed for Apple devices and had lots of mechanical parts. After experimenting (and considering



cost and other factors), Tislenko simplified the flash by adding an audio jack connector that can now work with iOS, Android and even standard digital cameras.

That was a year ago. Iblazr has since raised enough money through a successful crowd-sourcing campaign on Kickstarter to start manufacturing the new devices.

"CES will be the first place where we will demonstrate our finalized product that will be sent to our Kickstarter backers," he says. "It is very simple. You download the iOS or Android app, connect the iblazr to the audio jack of your smartphone or tablet and it's ready to go. It flashes simply by pressing the button." Users can also adjust the brightness of the flash.

"The iblazr significantly enhances the possibilities of any smartphone camera," says Tislenko. "It provides much more light,



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doesn't have a red-eye effect, works with front and back cameras and provides up to 12 times more constant light for video. We are using the best LEDs, so it outperforms constant light systems that are 10 to 20 times bigger than iblazr. Moreover, we made our own optics that provide a 60-degree beam, ideal for smartphones." The device also has a built-in battery, which won't drain the juice of the smartphone, tablet or digital camera.

Currently, iblazr is embarking on mass production of the mobile photo accessory with hopes of connecting with current and future investors in Las Vegas. "We believe CES will lead us into the next stage of the business development," says Tislenko. "Last year when we were trying to solve the smartphone synchronization problem, we could only dream to be a part of it." ❌