

Social online TV and invisible speakers among 'DEMOgods'

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Two days of rapid-fire pitches by 70 young technology firms with new ideas ended late Wednesday with revered "DEMOgod" awards bestowed on firms considered exceptional.

"It's just possible that these companies are going to be stronger, bigger and more successful because they are launching in this economy," said Chris Shipley, who has reigned over more than a decade of DEMO conferences.

"Right now is the best time to be innovating; there is so much opportunity while a lot of people are scrambling for the hills."

A star of the show was Emo Labs, which unveiled a clear film that produces high-quality stereo sound.

The US-based firm is in talks with major electronics makers interested in layering the Invisible Speaker System on flat panel televisions to turn screens into giant speakers, Emo chief executive Jason Carlson told AFP.

Along with becoming a DEMOgod, Emo won a People's Choice Award and an International Data Group (IDG) advertising campaign valued at 500,000 dollars.

[Silicon Valley](#) firm Liaise won the second People's Choice Award, and an equally valued IDG ad campaign for software that enables workers to easily organize and prioritize email.

"We are about turning words into actions" said Alon Novy of Liaise. "The success of managers and teams depends on delegated work being done, and this is a great tool for keeping track of that."

LocalDirt.com was chosen as a DEMOgod for creating an online hub where farmers or ranchers can connect with markets, schools, buying clubs, restaurants, or individuals in nearby communities.

"Demand for local food is rocketing," said Local Dirt founder Heather Hilleren. "Local food demand is outpacing demand for organic food."

Local Dirt hopes to help family farms survive, stimulate local economies, and enhance access to fresher food.

TwirlTV, which combines on-demand Internet television with online social networking, won DEMOgod status, as did a Zorap service that lets friends easily share audio and video in "virtual gathering places."

Background-check titan Intelius was chosen a DEMOgod for a DateCheck service that lets people use smart phones as "sleaze detectors" to quickly check whether aspiring mates are creeps or gems.

DateCheck users armed with names and telephone numbers can mine the gargantuan Intelius database to uncover whether people seeking their affections fail to mention unflattering facts such as criminal pasts or current spouses.

"I am encouraged and inspired by the dynamic, exceptional group of companies debuting here, despite the range of economic challenges we are facing on a global scale," said Matt Marshall, who co-produced DEMO with outgoing conference queen Shipley.

Other DEMOgods were Pinyadda and ShareGrove. Pinyadda was billed as a next step in the evolution of online social networking for providing a way to personalize and aggregate content from online haunts.

ShareGrove is an online tool for creating "private conversations" with family, friends and other people culled from the tidal waves of email, social network contacts, "tweeters" and others on the "Social Web."

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