

# High pressure US roadtrip sparks start-up innovation

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Australian entrepreneur Mick Johnson is a firm believer in the principle that pressure gets people to focus.

That is among the reasons he joined two dozen strangers on a "start-up bus" with the challenge of conceiving, building and launching technology firms by the time they made it from San Francisco to Austin, Texas.

"There was not much sleep," Johnson told AFP on Sunday at a South By South West Interactive (SXSWi) gathering that was the destination for the busload of hard-core entrepreneurs from an array of countries.

"I've done a few quite intense high-pressure entrepreneurial activities and this really pushed it to another level."

Elias Bizannes, the Australian native who came up with the road trip idea, had the strangers on the bus divide into five teams.

Motivational sessions conducted by Bizannes included stopping in Los Angeles to have team members pitch their ideas to people on the street.

"The idea of the bus was similar to a hackathon or a hackers workshop except it was on a bus," Johnson said. "Most of the time you were cramped in a tiny space coding away."

Johnson and his team built a start-up dubbed [dormdorm.com](http://dormdorm.com), a website where travelers can connect with universities to rent dorm rooms during

summers when students are gone from campuses.

"Our team hit deploy as we pulled into Austin and stopped," Johnson said. "It was intense."

Another team created DateBrowsr.com, an online service that amasses pictures from various major dating websites then lets people click through if they see someone of interest.

A Stalk Box startup spawned on the bus "allows you to create and share groups of friends, celebrities, or absolute strangers to see where they are," according to a description at [thestartupbus.com](http://thestartupbus.com).

"Stalk Box was real-time celebrity stalking," Johnson said.

Followers could track the bus online, including via blogs and [Twitter](https://twitter.com), and sponsors eStrategy Group and Australian software tools giant Atlassian, provided money and equipment.

A condition of taking part in the journey was that the start-ups had to be auctioned off at the end of the trip.

People from Britain, Australia and other countries have expressed interest in the bus idea, according to Johnson.

"I would do it again in a heartbeat," Johnson said. "I'm a big believer in creating high-pressure scenarios to really force you to focus and I think the bus did that very effectively."

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