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Chris Valentine on Microsoft BizSpark Accelerator at SXSW

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SXSWI 2010

We're live at SXSWi 2010. Use this site to follow all the action. We've been posting panel previews, and we'll be updating the site during the event. Your comments and participation are appreciated! Thanks for checking in.

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- [o sxtxstate: don't forget - you can check out all the content we've worked on over the past five days at sxtxstate.com. plenty of pages to scroll through](#)
- [o sxtxstate: and that is officially a wrap.](#)

Chris Valentine, the momentum behind [Microsoft BizSpark Accelerator at SXSW](#), recently blessed me with a precious ten minutes of his time to shed some light on one of this year's newest and most exciting events at SXSWi. For the uninformed (that being most of us as this is the debut year for this event), Accelerator is an event designed to be a platform for early stage interactive services, ideas, or technologies.

In Valentine's own words, "What was happening is we had a lot of responses in the past with regards to 'Hey we have this new product or services and we want to be involved with SXSW but we don't really know the best way of doing that,' and that's the reason Accelerator was created."

He elaborates, "It's your chance to see where technology's going to be over the next three to five years. We're dealing with a lot of innovative ideas and when you see them it's just like 'Oh why didn't I think of that?'"

How about an example from last year, Chris?

"In an example within last year, even though Accelerator was not here, the company that would have fit within the formatting...would have been [Twitter](#). Last year Twitter really exploded and SXSW really had a huge part of that."

Valentine explained that what started as a "low key" event really blew up in scope.

"The reality is that we expected 50 companies to apply. We were going to keep it really low key. Expectations were very low. We were going to allow it grow very slowly and very organically... what has happened was we had 250 companies apply," said Valentine. "Our expectations have continued to exceed what we had thought what they would be. Which is a great thing and then it also causes problems itself cause we don't know what to expect."

Of those original ~250 applicants, Valentine and a team of judges whittled the list down to 20 [finalists](#) in Online Music-Related Technologies, Online Video-Related Technologies, Social Networking Applications and Innovative Web Technologies.

"Twenty were chosen out of the 200 plus applicants," Valentine said. "We basically had a judging session where we broke out every company, looked at the different companies, looked at the different products and services they were offering and chose them based on innovation, based on relevancy and based on scalability."

Before the selection process even began, Valentine and the Accelerator team recruited the [Advisory Board](#) to help get the ball rolling.

He explained that the Advisory Board is made up of "industry experts who could share their knowledge and wisdom to help us with this event, which is a new format for Southby, and they helped us in the sense of creating awareness of who are the new companies out there that we wanted to approach or they wanted to approach on our behalf to say 'hey you need to submit an application to this event, I think it would be a good thing for you guys to do.'"

At this point in the SXSWi timeline Valentine and his team are busy dotting all their 'I's and crossing all their 'T's.

"Most of the things I'm dealing with are all of the little details," he said. "In the sense of making sure we are able to implement what we are committed to. This is a first year event, so what details could we be missing that we haven't thought about or that might catch us off guard."

The Accelerator has the potential to be a very popular and influential event. In essence, it puts a microscope up to the heart of SXSWi, future innovation and technology trends, and, as the name implies, fast-forwards the progress and awareness of these new services and technologies. Or we can view it like what [Ed McMahon's Star Search](#) was to blossoming jugglers and interpretive dancers, Accelerator is to innovative web developers and technology entrepreneurs.



thanks to everyone who took time to comment, RT and talk about the topics at #sxswwi. it's been a blast.

- o sxtxstate: alright, final post but its a good one. finally uploaded the interviews with @tuckermax and @drewcurtis. <http://bit.ly/9tUj6F> #sxtxstate
- o sxtxstate: another new #sxswwi post up: the effects of twitter on news <http://bit.ly/cJWtDg> #sxtxstate

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