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Demo at 20 still full of tech ideas

September 15, 2010 10:43pm by [Chris Nuttall](#) | [Share](#)



[Demo](#), a kind of *Britain/America's Got Talent* for technology startups, is celebrating its 20th anniversary with its first conference in Silicon Valley.

The 66 companies showing their wares here are restricted to six minutes to make their pitches to an audience of VCs and media, with those only at the "alpha" stage of development limited to just 90 seconds.

It can be hard to pick out the winners from the crowd, but my "judges notes" from the Wednesday morning session featuring 17 consumer technologies are after the jump.

[Pechora's GoToCamera](#) is similar to Vitamin D's product I reviewed in November. It adds motion detection software to your webcam allowing you to remotely monitor your home and be alerted to any events in various ways. A premium version, currently costing \$30 a year, allows monitoring of up to four cameras and actual streaming of the webcams to a website.

[Health in Reach](#) showed how it ranks doctors and gives detailed listings of their services on its website. Special offers and savings for particular treatment can be chosen and patients can book their own appointments and pay for treatment online.

[Independa](#) introduced an Android-based tablet called Angela for monitoring the well being of elderly relatives. Angela sends data on factors such as blood pressure, the room temperature and whether the front door has been left open or not. It has a simple touch interface and carers can add medication and appointment reminders to its calendar. Alerts can be easily sent to call a list of people. This looks similar to devices Intel and Qualcomm have helped to develop and faces a lot of competition in this area.

E-Fuel, which says its petrol-pump-style Microfueler is the world's first home ethanol system, [introduced its MicroFusion Reactor](#). Tom Quinn, chief executive, said the long cylinder was "the most significant advancement in fuel in our history". It takes organic material and turns it into sugar water, the key ingredient for ethanol fuel, in just two minutes compared to the usual long process of fermentation needed to break down organic materials. This sounds revolutionary, but it's hard to take in from this sneak peek and I'd like to see it in action and fully tested.

[Primal Pages for Publishers from Primal](#) allows users to input simple ideas into a search box which takes them and populates a website based on them with information grabbed from the web. The website example looked a little too generic to me, so the simplicity of the initial setup would need to be followed up with a lot of tweaks to personalise the site. I can see businesses using this to automatically increase their search engine relevance by adding more depth to their sites.

[Semantifi](#) can show charts and tables from the data found through searches. In some graphic examples we saw a "California population by race" query instantly appear as a chart. "Amazon Best Buy sales income" does not produce anything in the search box on Yahoo Finance but Semantifi has extracted the financial data from the site to produce charts from the same query. Very useful for business journalists!

[TuneUp from TuneUp Media](#) cleans up your music collection finding missing cover art and song information. I have used this plugin for iTunes in the past and found it a little buggy and not all that effective. But perhaps this new version is worth a try. It references the Gracenote database and replaces those Track 1, Track 2 titles with full information. The interface looks much improved with a sidebar in iTunes also showing relevant YouTube videos, bios and concert information. The new features will launch in the next 60-90 days and will include the ability to attach lyrics to your song information.

[Uvisor](#) is aimed at helping jobseekers - it matches up users' attributes with suitable careers, helps with resumes and offers tips for getting hired. Relocation information and cost of living comparisons can help decide whether to make a geographic career move. There is also a jobs database that matches users' abilities to suitable jobs and offers links to recruitment executives at companies.

[Veebeam](#) showed a box costing \$100 for standard definition and \$140 for high-definition that streams PC content to the TV using a USB antenna on the PC/laptop end. This doesn't seem to provide much more than Slingcatcher and other media players already offer, and its main selling point seems to be the ability to offer 1080p. However, the USB antenna could make this a useful retrofit for those with laptops that do not support Intel's WiDi technology for beaming content to the TV.

[VoiceBase](#) allows you to search through recorded conversations just like you can through text-based material. Type in a word or collection of words and coloured icons will highlight where it can be found on an audio timeline. A transcription also appears below the audio with highlighted words. I like this. I can imagine uploading my audio interviews and getting instant transcriptions of them, although I'm uncertain of the accuracy of the free version - it seems you can pay for two levels of premium service to improve accuracy. There is also an iPhone app that allows you to record a meeting and then share it with audio and a transcript with the participants.

After the six-minute demos, we moved to the 90-second "Alpha" ones, which [Moonjee's TryItOn](#) for fashion retailers failed to negotiate - I have no idea how this works.

[Browsemob](#) is about shopping for deals though, and sounds like a Priceline for store bargains - you find an item on a store's website, make an offer for it and it's up to the retailer whether to accept.

[Digital Lifestyle Solutions' FitLab](#) is a web-based health club and smart personal fitness system. It promises to work you out in more than 1m ways on any device that has a screen. Sounds painful.

[The Q from Ether2](#) is a new network technology. Americans only get 53 per cent of the internet they pay for, it says, because we are still using the same dial-up technology of Ethernet, which is fundamentally flawed. The Q eliminates routers and can be used on wired or wireless networks. Should Cisco be worried? Not yet. The Q is currently an open source project mainly involving academic institutions and is focusing initially on networks of sensors and the low-cost, low-power [ZigBee](#) wireless technology.

Finally, I'll be looking out at the Consumer Electronics Show for Seeport Virtual Windows, who sound like a video version of the best Wi-Fi photo frames. A simple concept and easy setup means your grandmother could have one of these frames in her kitchen and be constantly connected over the web for easy video calling. Seeport said they were working with an imaging company (Kodak??) on a CES product.

To sum up, the winners for me from this session were [E-Fuel's Microfusion Reactor](#) and [VoiceBase's transcriptions](#).

Apologies to Capture-ID Mobile Scanner and Card 2.0 from Dynamics Inc for arriving too late for their demos.

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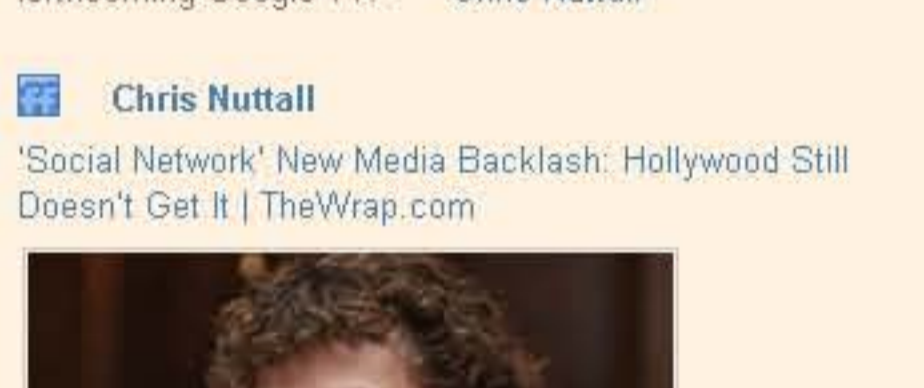
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