

Inside the Big Top Bash: Profiling the 5 presenters, from stealth to scaling up

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by Chantal Allam — October 23, 2018

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RALEIGH – It didn't matter if some were still in stealth mode, or others were already fully scaled. Startups of all sizes took center stage at the Big Top Bash on Monday night, reflecting on both their achievements as well as their ongoing needs.

“We picked a really interesting range of companies to feature, spanning the spectrum of Triangle startups: from health tech, to furniture, to AR, to blockchain, you [see] it all,” said Big Top’s director Molly Demarest.

Against the backdrop of CAM Raleigh’s current exhibition *Above the Rim*, more than 350 people packed into the flashy main gallery to listen to five startups share their stories and pitches.

At one end of the scale was Viyb, a mental health virtual hub, barely out of stealth mode, still building their product and looking for a technical lead to join their team.

At the other end was Cloud Factory, scaled and delivering a solution globally from several hubs, but primarily based out of Durham.

“We chose this broad range to highlight the spectrum of companies comprising the Triangle startup community, and to emphasize that despite their different growth stages, every startup needs something,” said Demarest.

“Many people are intimidated by the startup scene and for good reason. It’s a network that historically favors alumni, which to newcomers can be discouraging at best and prohibitive at worst.

“As the Triangle continues to top national lists for being the place to launch and grow a company or career, our goal is to support that growth by creating infrastructure for a barrier-free Triangle startup community.”

Here’s a look at the Big Top Bash’s featured startups:



Viyb cofounders Mary Margaret Milley and Rachael Paolino.

Viyb Health

Website: www.viybhealth.com

Year founded: 2017

Founders: Mary Margaret Milley and Rachael Paolino

Current job: Currently both are UNC Kenan-Flagler business students, graduating this May.

Company mission: To revolutionize mental health by providing a holistic and individualized online ecosystem where all people can access all desired mental health resources to empower personal growth, eradicate stigma, ensure nobody suffers alone, and create a compassionate world. The duo is building Viyb Health's foundation by first focusing on connecting individuals who have experienced trauma in their lifetimes to mental health clinicians that specialize in treating trauma patients, and then will build from there.

What makes product/service unique: "Our focus on trauma is very unique and will allow us to achieve the level of personalization we believe is necessary for the industry. Our approach to building the product is also unique. Both founders have direct experience with trauma and direct experience with how difficult it is to find a mental health clinician, which creates a level of empathy with our users that others do not have. We have a trauma clinician committee as well as a patient committee that give us constant user feedback as we develop our MVP. Our business model is unique. We are going direct to the patient and clinician. We believe this is essential to create the best product possible for trauma patients."

Number of employees: two full-time employees (including co-founders). They also have an advisory board, outside consultants and technical teammates that contribute time each week.

Funding sources: With the exception of a few small grants, they are self-funded.



MicMagbyMe founder Kerri Hall with daughters — the 'Mic' (Micaela on left) and the 'Mag' (Maggie on right) in MicMag.

MicMagbyMe

Website: www.micmagbyme.com

Year founded: 2017

Founder: Kerri Hall

Previous job: Previous founder and owner MicMag Unlimited, LLC, a design-driven sourcing and marketing import company, with \$7 million in original equipment manufacturer sales at exit.

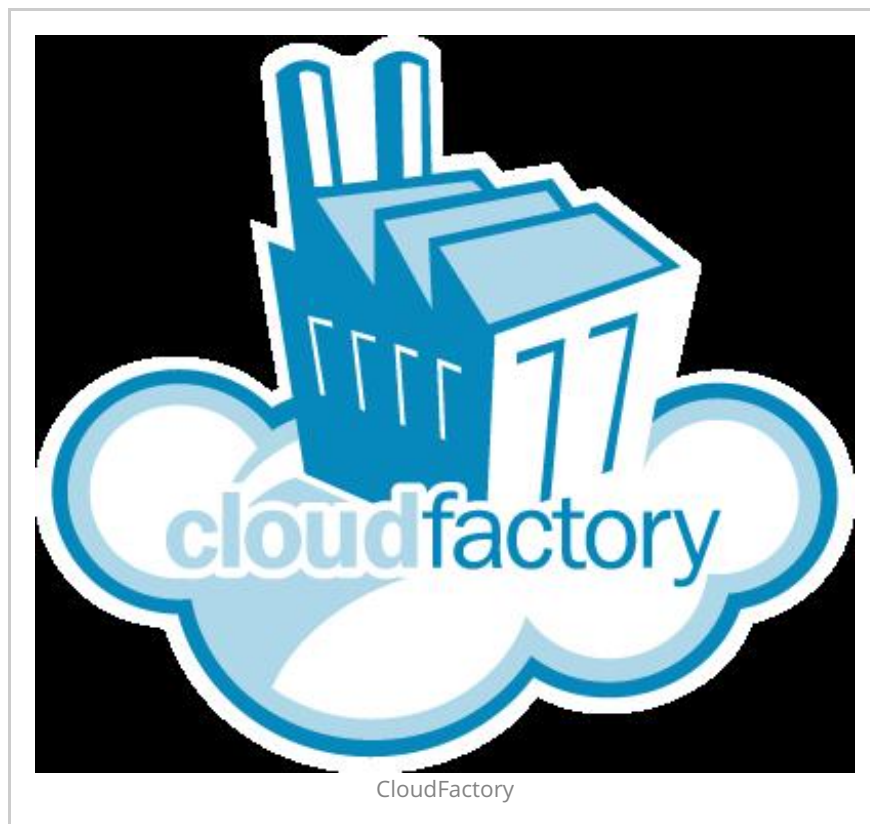
Company mission: MicMagbyme.com sells heirloom quality, trend-forward, customizable upholstered furniture designed in North Carolina, shipped to your home in days and assembled in minutes by anyone with our patent pending technology. They are also filing to become a certified B Corporation, which adheres to strict environmental and social practices.

What makes product/service unique: “The construction of our product and assembly technology allows our furniture to be shipped directly from our factory to the consumers home. Our furniture is easily customizable and re-customizable. It travels though life with you.”

Number of employees: two executives and 17 factory workers.

Funding sources: Self-funded.

CloudFactory



Website: www.cloudfactory.com

Year founded: 2010

Founder: Mark Sears

Previous job: Product Manager at Zucatto Wireless.

Company mission: To connect 1 million people in the developing world to meaningful work.

What makes product/service unique: “CloudFactory provides a tech-forward, dedicated workforce solution with all the benefits of a trained internal team. Our teams are agile, scale fast, and process routine, critical data work with high accuracy on virtually any platform. As an impact sourcing service provider (ISSP), we create economic and leadership opportunities for talented people in developing nations. Trusted by over 115 companies, CloudFactory processes millions of tasks a day for companies including Microsoft, Drive.ai, Expensify, Ibotta, and nuTonomy.”

Number of employees: 325 global, 25 in Durham, North Carolina.

Funding sources: Sovereign’s Capital, Dolma Impact Fund, with a total \$13 million raised thus far.



SpokeHub founders (from left): John York, John McAdory, Robert Hartsfield, Richard Berryman and Terry Johnson.

SpokeHub

Website: www.SpokeHub.co

Year founded: 2017

Founders: John York (COO), Robert Hartsfield (CEO), John McAdory (CSO), Terry Johnson (VP of Content) and Richard Berryman (VP of Business Development).

Previous/Current job: Director of Sales for Avalara (Robert Hartsfield).

Company mission: To reignite the pattern of conversation and connect the world through true engagement and enhanced experiences.

What makes your product/service unique: “SpokeHub is the first content delivery platform to use Augmented Reality (AR) to unite people through unique experiences. With SpokeHub, you can immediately activate an aggregate of assets through AR, data capturing, and two-way dialogue all in one place. It allows businesses to make better decisions faster through innovative AR/VR engagement experiences, real-time behavioral/sentiment data and a strategic revenue and sharing model.”

Number of employees: 11 team members (eight full-time).

Funding sources: \$2 million from most African-American angel investors.



Sophia Lopez (Founder and COO) and Steve Cerveny (Founder and CEO).

Kaleido

Website: www.kaleido.io

Year founded: 2017

Founders: Steve Cervený (founder and CEO), Sophia Lopez (founder and COO), Peter Broadhurst (cofounder and head of Protocol), and Jim Zhang (cofounder and head of Engineering).

Previous job: The founders came from IBM where they led Blockchain Product Development and Strategy for several generations of the blockchain platform.

Company mission: Kaleido is a rapidly growing start-up aiming to make blockchain radically simple for organizations to accelerate adoption so that our societies will fully benefit from decentralized models and technologies. As a blockchain pioneer, Kaleido aims to make the adoption of blockchain simple for enterprises and to unlock new possibilities previously out of bounds.

What makes product/service unique: "Kaleido is the first product to bring the dramatic simplicity of a Software-as-a-Service to the blockchain space, going way beyond today's quick-start scripts and templates to truly accelerate 'the entire blockchain journey' from exploratory proof of concepts to pilots and production. It dramatically accelerates and simplifies blockchain network creation and operation with click-button simplicity saving organizations months and millions in the process."

Number of employees: 25 and growing.

Funding sources: Kaleido is a project or spoke within ConsenSys's venture studio incubation model and therefore are backed by a single investor.