

# Explosive collaboration.

By Charles Proctor

Publication: [Los Angeles Business Journal](#)

Date: [Monday, April 6 2009](#)

Mix 10 venture capitalists, 10 experienced entrepreneurs and 10 startup chief executives, and what do you get? Launchpad LA.

That's the name of a new mentoring group aimed at the L.A.-area tech community. Its goal: help guide a select group of chief executives at promising startups, then turn those CEOs into mentors for the next generation of startups.

At Launchpad LA's first meeting two weeks ago, each of the startup executives presented his or her company to the venture capitalists and experienced entrepreneurs. They were then matched with two mentors, a venture capitalist and an experienced entrepreneur. The groups will meet about every two months to talk about issues facing the startup.

Launchpad LA will also organize workshops for the startup executives to teach them about timely topics such as mergers and acquisitions, recruiting, fundraising and business development. The program lasts six months, when Launchpad LA plans to select a new group of 10 chief executives from L.A.-area startups.

Meanwhile, any startup executive who graduates from Launchpad LA has to agree to take the phone calls of any member from future Launchpad LA classes looking for advice.

Mark Suster, a partner at venture capital firm GRP Partners in Century City and a Launchpad LA participant, said the idea for the group sprang from a noticeable void here in Los Angeles.

"The local tech community's done a good job of running cocktail parties," said Suster, who co-founded Launchpad LA with John Morris of GKM Ventures in West

Los Angeles. "But we need a community that helps each other, and helps create and foster startups."

Ryan Born, chief executive of AudioMicro Inc., a Sherman Oaks-based startup that sells film sound effects and musical cues, and who is part of Launchpad LA's inaugural class, said his mentors have already put him in touch with industry players, including an executive at a top four record label.

"I have a big meeting tomorrow, a big one," Born said. "And it's all from this."

Other members of the current Launchpad LA class include ElephantDrive Inc., a Westwood Village-based cloud competing company, and Sometrics Inc., a downtown L.A. company that measures Web traffic on social networking sites.