

SILICON VALLEY OF THE SOUTH

Six local startups could become the next darlings of the tech world

STORY: Sarah Gleim | PHOTOS: Sara Hanna



Just 10 years ago, Buckhead—and Atlanta for that matter—would hardly have been considered one of the key technology hubs in the country. But that's changing. And fast. Today, thanks to special tax incentives, an influx of cash from venture capitalists and angel investors such as software entrepreneur David Cummings, and impressive startup incubators such as Buckhead's Atlanta Tech Village and Tech Square Labs, Atlanta is making a name for itself as the Silicon Valley of the South.

And the blueprint is working. The city has already seen a wealth of startup stories that end with huge acquisitions: Oracle purchased Atlanta social media marketer Vitruve in 2012; Pardot, which specializes in online leads, was sold to ExactTarget (now Salesforce Marketing Cloud) for just under \$100 million in 2012; and VMWare acquired AirWatch for \$1.54 billion in 2014.

Those kinds of numbers, while impressive, still don't quite compete with the kind of cash thrown around in San Francisco, but that doesn't seem to deter startups in the slightest—and definitely not the six companies we talk to here that are continuing to help put Atlanta—and Buckhead—on the technology map.

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OF THE SOUTH

KEYVY *keyvy.com*

Brooke Beach

For any business, nothing is more important than getting leads. But for small businesses focussed on e-commerce, new leads can mean the difference between staying open or closing down. Knowing what your customers' wants and needs are—and being able to pinpoint marketing specifically to them—is invaluable to driving revenue.

At least that's what the Keyvy team at Atlanta's Tech Village has learned since its initial launch in 2013. Keyvy's original objective was creating a cloud-based application that synced data among a variety of programs commonly used by e-commerce businesses.

"What we learned, though," says 27-year-old Keyvy CEO and co-founder Brooke Beach, "is that the bottom line is our customers are online retailers. What they want is marketing automation—something to help drive revenue."

That's when the next generation of Keyvy was born in November 2015.

Today, Keyvy focuses on business-to-business marketing automation for online retailers. Think of it as email marketing on steroids. Online retailers use Keyvy to do everything from sending emails with specific discounts to specific buyers on their client lists, to creating dynamic pop-up offers to website visitors based on those customers' past buying preferences. There's even an option to target customers living in a precise area, i.e. a 20-mile radius of the storefront.

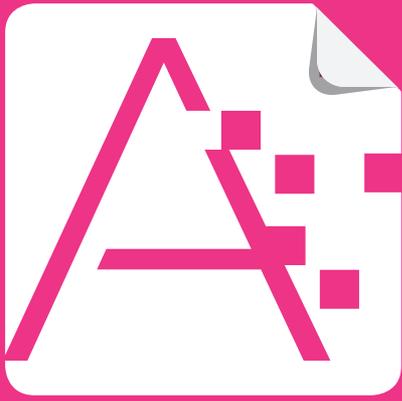
While other digital marketing platforms such as MailChimp are popular with online retailers, Beach says Keyvy offers something they don't.

"Our wow factor is that we can tie back to the penny how much revenue each campaign brought in for the store, so a retailer knows if one works and one doesn't," she says.

So far, Keyvy is targeting mid-market businesses such as Stupid Cancer, Blinc Makeup and Go2 Outfitters, and customers pay a monthly fee based on their number of contacts. But Beach says they have plans to bring in big enterprise customers such as local Atlanta companies Spanx and Carter's. "We can handle them," she says. "It's more about getting in front of them." And considering online retail sales were estimated at only

about 7 percent of all sales this year, Beach says, Keyvy is very well positioned to increase its customer base in the future.

Keyvy's future is also well positioned thanks to its team of successful leaders such as CEO Beach and co-founder David Cummings, who also steered the prosperous sale of his startup, Pardot. So far, Keyvy has raised \$400,000 in a seed round. Being in Buckhead and Atlanta Tech Village also doesn't hurt. "It's fantastic here. We are all in the startup scene together," Beach says. "It's a close-knit community. In some sense, we all act as one." ■



ATOMIZED

atomized.com

Chris Gomersall

Atomized CEO Chris Gomersall is used to working with creatives. His resume includes some of the biggest brands in marketing and advertising. He was a creative strategist at both Instagram and Facebook, and during his tenure as executive vice president of creative at Atlanta-based Moxie, he worked with global companies such as Verizon, Coca-Cola, L'Oréal and Disney, among others.

While at Facebook and Instagram in both Los Angeles and Atlanta, part of his job was teaching brand leaders how to best utilize the products so their advertising would look clean and slick. "I kept seeing the same problem over and over," he says. "None of them had a way to organize their creative for meetings. They had folders full of papers and art on walls and hard drives, even in emails." That's when he says a light bulb went off, and the idea for Buckhead-based Atomized was born.

Gomersall says he envisioned a calendar-like, digital application that would display a view of a company's creative across all media—social, print, TV and online. But more than that, the calendar view would be real time, with a live view of how their photos, videos and ads look, how long they run, and how they compare to others running at the same time, allowing the marketing and ad teams to make changes if necessary.

"Don Draper had it easy," Gomersall says. "Now we have all of these different distribution methods that can't be copies of each other. Facebook and Instagram might look similar, but just a slight tweak to an ad on those platforms can make a huge difference in its results."

Gomersall began working on Atomized while at Facebook and officially launched the company in January 2015 after two rounds of seed funding, one in February 2014 that raised \$600,000 and a second in October that year raising another \$855,000. A third round this past October raised an additional \$2 million. Most investors are from the Atlanta area, and some include investors from Twitter and Facebook, Gomersall says.

Atomized charges companies a licensing fee for use of its cloud-based software that's compatible on everything from a tablet to a large screen. The company is currently partnering with CineMassive, an Atlanta-based company that developed a high-resolution, touchscreen video wall. "We loaded our software onto the video wall, and it was just larger than life," Gomersall says.

In the next six months, the Atomized team, which now includes 10 full-time and 20 part-time employees, will focus on growing its technology, sales and account management teams. "Once you get good clients, you have to keep them," he says. "Our clients have wish lists, so we have to continue building features they want."

And good clients Atomized has: Companies such as Arby's, Adult Swim, The Home Depot, Cartoon Network, Warner Brothers and more have jumped on board after realizing how it can transform their creative teams. "The cost of hardware is plummeting, but the cost of marketing is skyrocketing," Gomersall says. "Big companies can afford a war-room that includes all of their marketing in one place, and this essentially takes all of the creative paperwork and digitalizes it." ■





FITTERY

fittery.com

Catherine Iger
and Greg Vilines



Ordering clothes online may seem super-convenient, until you actually get them, and they don't fit. Then you have to pack them back up and return them. What's convenient about that? Nothing. And if you're a guy with a difficult-to-fit body type, forget about ordering anything online, right?

Well, not if Brookhaven resident Catherine Iger and her business partner Greg Vilines have anything to say about it. They are the founders of Atlanta-based Fittery, an e-commerce site that's doing something no other is doing: helping men buy clothes online that actually fit your body type.

How? It's pretty simple, with a complicated algorithm behind it. All users have to do is fill out a profile and answer some questions about their body measurements—height, weight, shirt size, collar size, etc. Then clothes are rated

based on what will fit that user best. And it's free.

"Each item has a rating for how well it's going to fit you after you fill out the profile," Iger explains. "Shirts from different brands might fit differently, so the star rating will change."

Iger and Vilines, who worked together at Auto-trader from 2008 to 2014, decided to create Fittery because they were interested in solving problems in e-commerce (and both also have difficult body types to fit). "The clothing return rate for online purchases is 30 to 40 percent," Iger says. "It's a huge problem that nobody was resolving. But it's a symptom of larger problem and that is the people who are shopping just want clothes that fit."

Fittery, which launched in August of 2015 and is closing on its second round of seed funding, is keeping things small. Currently, its focus is on men's dress and casual shirts, but the plan is to expand to a full line of menswear, and eventually

to include women's fashion as well. "We wanted to start off slowly to make sure the algorithm is accurate," Iger says.

Brands available through the site include J.Crew, Boden, Brooks Brothers, Lands' End, Monaco and more. Once a user finds the shirt tailored for his body type, the purchase takes place on the brand's site, something Iger says they hope to change in the future by adding a universal cart on *fittery.com*. So far, brands have been receptive to the concept and have seen a reduction in their return rates on purchases through Fittery to 25 percent.

Another perk for brands is the data they can receive from using the service. "When brands design clothing, they have no idea what consumers look like. What we can now tell them is 'This is how your cut looks compared to competitors,'" Iger says. "Having that insight is huge for them." ■

We've all had to schedule conference calls for multiple teams. And that almost always leads to email after email to coordinate schedules—just call it email tag. This was a frustration Calendly's 34-year-old CEO Tope Awotona knew all too well while working in enterprise software sales.

"I sold software to big organizations like AFLAC, Blue Cross Blue Shield and other Fortune 500 companies and was always arranging meetings," he says. "There was so much back and forth. It would take more time to schedule the meeting than the actual meeting itself."

That's when he thought there had to be a better way. But after doing research, he realized few solid solutions existed. "There were appointment scheduling tools for the health and beauty industry, but there weren't a lot of other good options available," Awotona says. "Those out there were too expensive and didn't work well." The more he tried to find a solution, the more he discovered a big opening in the marketplace. So he threw caution to the wind and decided to launch one himself. What he created is Calendly, an online calendar tool that links to your Outlook, Office 365 and Google+ account(s). Users create rules around availability and then send invitees a URL with specific

appointment times. You can designate 15-, 30- and 60-minute intervals to make scheduling simple, but Calendly can be customized for more specific times, as well.

The cloud-based app took Awotona and his team about six months to build in 2013, and by 2015 Calendly had more than 2 million subscribers with that customer base growing every month. Two options are available: a free and a premium subscription, which costs between \$8 per user (billed annually) and \$10 (billed monthly). "The premium subscription gives you more ways to customize and funnel people into different buckets," Awotona says. "Clients love it because it saves everybody time."

Revenue and the team of 10 at Calendly also are growing. "This time last year we had \$100,000 in revenue," Awotona says. "Now we have \$1 million."

Like so many others, Calendly is based in Buckhead's Atlanta Tech Village. "When I was looking for office space, I knew I wanted to be

here because it's full of very passionate people working on groundbreaking stuff," he says. "What's made me even happier is the community and the way it attracts very talented people." Atlanta Tech Village now uses Calendly to schedule tours for its facility.

So what's the 2016 goal for Calendly and Awotona? He says it's to continue adding clients in custom-

er-facing roles—sales people, recruiters, financial services and customer service. Those are the ones scheduling the most meetings with two people in two organizations. But he also plans to continue expanding the product and mastering its marketing.

"We know there are still many millions who don't know we are here," he says. "We are anxious to find those people." ■

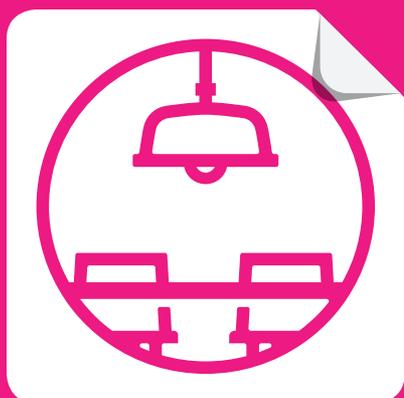


CALENDLY

calendly.com

Tope Awotona

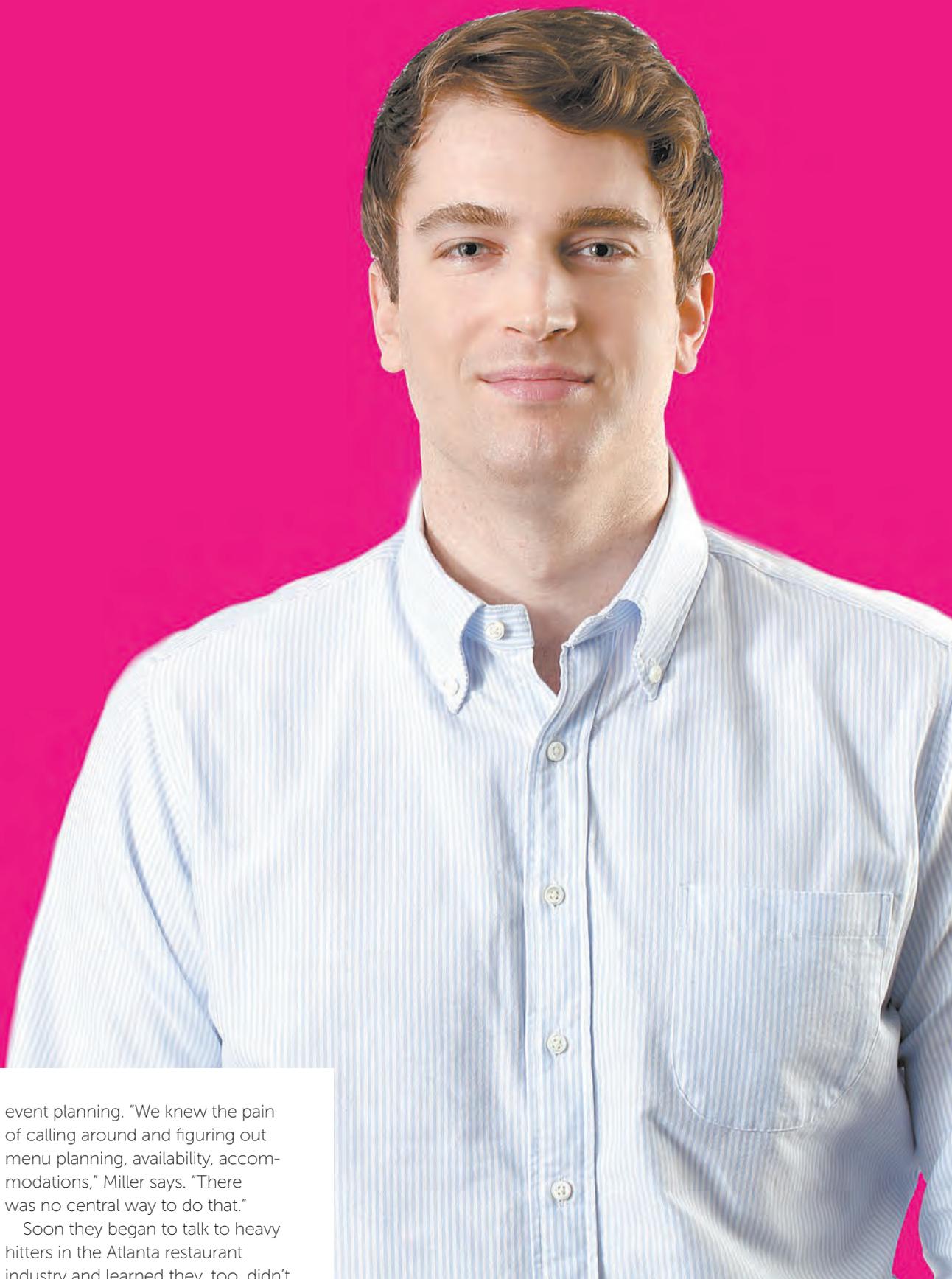




GATHER

gatherhere.com

Nicholas Miller



If you've worked a day in the service industry, you know how tough it can be, and not just for servers and cooks in a restaurant. Event planning is hard work, too, whether it's a team dinner for 10 or a corporate event for 200.

So any way to simplify the process for the venue and event planner is a win-win. That's what 28-year-old CEO Nicholas Miller and 31-year-old Vice President Alex Lassiter set out to do when they launched Gather in 2013. The goal was to simplify event planning for mid-market venues such as restaurants, bowling alleys and wineries.

"Our product is cloud-based software that venues across the country use to manage their events," Miller explains. "Anything they need to do related to events, like send proposals or collect payments, they can do through Gather."

Miller and Lassiter got the idea for Gather after working in corporate

event planning. "We knew the pain of calling around and figuring out menu planning, availability, accommodations," Miller says. "There was no central way to do that."

Soon they began to talk to heavy hitters in the Atlanta restaurant industry and learned they, too, didn't have a way to organize the data around their events, which can be upwards of 30 percent of their revenue. Miller and Lassiter got commitments from five initial customers to build a platform and launched Gather with Concentrics Restaurants, Murphy's and Castellucci Hospitality Group in July 2013. Ford Fry Restaurants jumped on board soon after that.

Gather automates event management: New leads that come in via phone, email and the restaurant's website are collected in Gather, which saves time and keeps everything in one place and organized. The entire process is handled through the program, from establishing a quote and developing a menu

to signing the contract.

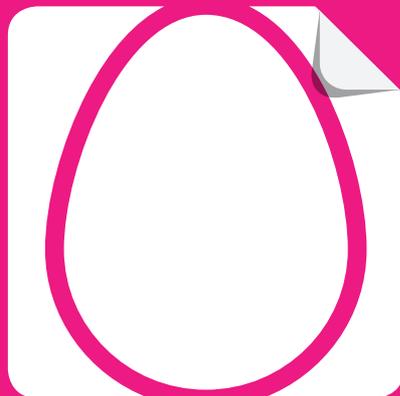
If a venue doesn't have a process in place for handling events, Miller says their main goal is to help that team understand event management and how successful it can be. But it goes a step further than just planning and gives subscribers information and data they didn't have before. "Event planners can log in to the reporting module and create metrics on how many leads have come in, how many events are booked, etc.," Miller says. "It's so useful for venues."

So far, business has been booming. In January, the company raised \$2.5 million in new funding led by Storm Ventures. Miller says they plan

to use the capital for product development, sales and marketing, and to double the size of the team, which now includes 25 employees.

Many of the top restaurants and venues in Buckhead have signed on, including Seven Lamps, Buckhead Life Restaurant Group, Gordon Biersch, The Painted Pin, Southern Gentlemen and Gypsy Kitchen. Swan Coach House and Atlanta Tech Village also are subscribers.

Over the next five years, Miller says they hope to continue to expand their users and help drive more customers to their clients. "We also want to serve the event planners," he says, "and help them find our customers." ■



INCUBATE

myincubate.com

Michael McCluney

Imagine a digital time capsule that lets you send and receive texts, photos, videos and emails—in the future. That's Incubate: The Time Delay Messenger in a nutshell, and it all started when Founder and CEO Michael McCluney's friend had triplets.

"He was losing his mind with 3-month old triplets," McCluney says. "I kept telling him he should capture some of the crazy moments and share them with his kids in the future when they would appreciate them." But the struggling parents' lives were far too crazy to even think about recording the antics of their new babies, let alone breaking the videos out when they were older. So McCluney decided he would create something that could.

The free app, which McCluney and his team launched in Atlanta Tech Village in March of last year, is simple to use and allows anyone to schedule messages up to 25 years in advance. Theoretically, grandparents can send their grandchildren messages for special holidays in case they aren't around. The program works even for those too young to have phones; parents can start an "Incubate Nursery" account for them.

McCluney says it's been particularly well received by members of the military. "They're able to leave messages for their families before they are deployed," he says. "These guys have no idea if they'll have access to communicative devices on holidays, so the app lets them know their families will get messages on these special days. We love this idea."

The only catch is both parties have to download the app. Users always know the total number of messages that are "incubating," but not who sent them or when they'll be delivered, McCluney says.

The app also tested particularly well in the bridal market. "We did a nationwide survey for the concept, and the wedding industry tested stronger than any other," McCluney says. "Brides want to be able to continually relive their wedding date." So the company recently launched a concept tailored just for brides and grooms: IncubateMyWedding.com. It allows them to invite guests to download the app, send them messages, and have guests who choose to download the app to send well wishes via text, voice, pictures or videos to the bride and groom at the date of their choosing.

While McCluney didn't want to discuss how many subscribers Incubate has so far, he did say the team has been successful in its current round of funding. "We are in a \$500,000 round, and we've raised \$280,000."

And if you're wondering what would happen to messages sent if Incubate ever dissolves, McCluney says they are working on a system with a third party that stores the messages separately so users will continue to receive them in future no matter what. Pretty cool. ■

ATL'S TECH TITAN

STORY: Sarah Gleim

Simply Buckhead chats technology with Buckhead software entrepreneur **David Cummings**, the founder of the 103,000-square-foot **Atlanta Tech Village**, the largest technology entrepreneur center in the Southeast. A partner of technology investment company Atlanta Ventures, this well-known name happens to be an investor in many of the startups we profile in our cover feature, including **Keyv** and **Calendly**. One of his many successful ventures occurred in 2007 when he co-founded **Pardot**, a company he sold in 2012 to ExactTarget for just under \$100 million. ExactTarget was later acquired by Salesforce.com. Today, Cummings is considered one of the leaders in Atlanta's—and the nation's—tech scene.

Where are you originally from?

When did you move to Atlanta?

I was born and raised in Tallahassee, Florida, and went to college at Duke University. I moved to Atlanta after graduation in 2002. Growing up in Tallahassee, Atlanta was always the big city we'd go to for sports, shopping and entertainment so I always liked it. In college, my first company's biggest customer was based in Buckhead so they helped make it easy to move to Atlanta and meet people.

How would you characterize the tech scene when you first moved here? Now?

It was much smaller and less connected when I moved here. Due to Twitter and meetups, the community is more connected now.

What do you think is the driving force behind the growth in the Atlanta tech scene?

Success begets success. More entrepreneurs are building successful companies that then spawn more, and the cycle perpetuates.

In a few sentences, can you describe Pardot and how you came about forming the company?

Pardot helps companies generate and nurture leads online. Back in 2007, most of the digital marketing tools were geared towards the [business-to-customer] marketer and ignored the [business-to-business] marketer.

Tell us about your decision to sell Pardot. What made you finally take the plunge?

We didn't plan on selling the company, but an acquirer came along and made us an offer we couldn't refuse.

What was the driving force behind your founding Atlanta Tech Village?

I always wanted a tighter community



of entrepreneurs who could help each other and increase the likelihood of success. More entrepreneurial density results in more success.

What have been some of the biggest successes at Atlanta Tech Village?

Yik Yak, SalesLoft and Clockwise MD are three Village graduates that are doing great.

What Atlanta companies are you currently most excited about? Why?

I'm partial to ones in the Tech Village like

Terminus (*terminus.com*), Rigor (*rigor.com*), and WideAngle (*wideangle.com*). Those startups are exciting because they have 100-plus customers who love the product, are growing super fast and have great leadership.

What do you see as the necessities for the Atlanta tech community to continue to thrive?

I have no doubt we'll continue to thrive due to the talented people, can-do attitude and great way of life in Atlanta. ■

ATLANTA TECH VILLAGE BY THE NUMBERS



250+ Companies that call ATV home.

30+ Village Mentors and Advisors guiding and counseling ATV members.

20+ Fully equipped conference rooms with large screen TVs, Apple TV and creative white-board walls.

10+ Weekly workshops, lunch and learns and networking events.

5 In-house venture capital groups.

Unlimited: PERKS.

Including free draft beer, coffee, soda and organic snacks; game rooms with Wii, PlayStation, ping-pong and shuffle board; free fitness classes; free lunch every Friday; nap rooms; use of standing/walking treadmill desks; razor scooters, giant bean bags and more.

\$300

Monthly membership fee for a "hot desk" (first come, first serve desks available daily).

\$400

Monthly membership fee for a "reserve desk" (designated desk, reserved parking and mail service).

\$850+

Monthly membership fee for a 2-plus person office (private office space, reserved parking and mail service).