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College of Business students make strong showing at Startup Weekend Tampa

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Startup Weekend Tampa team (l-r) left to right: Amanda Diccico, Lazar Anderson, Chris Carpentier, Chris Mcelveen, Todd Broyles.

A team that included three USF St. Petersburg students made a strong showing at the recent [Startup Weekend Tampa](#) event with their idea for a mobile app to buy distinctively local products.

USFSP College of Business students Lazar Anderson and Chris Carpentier pitched the initial idea, called Localmark.it, and were soon joined by three others, including USFSP freshman entrepreneurship major Amanda DeCicco. The team

spent the weekend researching and refining the concept before pitching again before judges and the 13 competing teams.

The result: First place in the People's Choice Award, and third place overall.

Startup Weekend Tampa was is part of a global grassroots movement in more than 200 cities around the world. It was held the Nov. 16-18 at Keiser University in Tampa. The idea is to teach would-be entrepreneurs the rigors of starting a business over a 54-hour period.

“It’s a very intense environment,” says Anderson, who with Carpentier was [part of the team of USFSP Entrepreneurship Club members](#) who last year placed first in the national [Collegiate Entrepreneurs Organization](#) Startup Simulation Challenge. “You try to do all these things and you’re not sure you can do them. It builds people as much as ideas. You realize you’re capable of a lot more.”

William Jackson, Ph.D., director of the USFSP Entrepreneurship Program, praised the students for their strong showing. “Start-up Weekend is a great opportunity for students, a chance to share and develop ideas under the same type of pressure most start-ups face,” he said. “Who knows—maybe the next Google was born! Something we are working on is to move these students to the next step of customer development — is there a market for their ideas?”

The idea for Localmark.it grew out of a trip to Chicago in early November. Carpentier, a sophomore entrepreneurship major, Anderson and other members of the Entrepreneurship Club made to accept the Startup Simulation Challenge award. As they prepared to fly home, Anderson went looking for souvenirs at the airport and was disappointed with what he found. Fellow team member Mark Lombardi-Nelson told Anderson he could hear the pain in his voice over spending good money on lousy gifts.

That got Anderson and Carpentier thinking. “In entrepreneurship you’re taught to find whatever pain a customer is experiencing and remove it,” explains Anderson, a senior business management major with an entrepreneurship minor. It would be great, they thought, if there were a mobile app that would sort through the best, locally distinctive products and allow you to buy it and ship it home. “That way you don’t have to cram it into your carry-on luggage,” Anderson said. “It will be waiting for you at home.”

Winning the people’s choice award “felt nice,” Anderson said, because it was validation from their peers and competitors. They hope to take everything they

learned and keep the momentum going. The next challenge: turn the idea into reality — and attract investors.