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By Marilyn Haigh

Robert Vogt, CTO of Voyomotive, won the Young Executive Network Launch Pad competition at the 2015 SEMA Show. He thinks his product VOYO, a connected car technology program, stood out with the Launch Pad competition judges for the hard work that went into its development.

VOYO is a plug-in connected car platform that links the driver's car to the cloud using their cellphone. VOYO collects data produced by vehicles to monitor fuel efficiency, increase vehicle safety and perform diagnostic tests.

"We're exacting about 100 advanced, interesting parameters per model and nobody else is doing this," he said. "That's the unique part; we're able to access all that information."

Those parameters, which are collected from cars made after 1996, add convenience for drivers with features like automatic unlocking doors and vehicle diagnostics. VOYO also has the first aftermarket start/stop system function.

The Launch Pad competition, hosted by SEMA's Young Executive Network, gives entrepreneurs under 40 the opportunity to jump start their business. All YEN members are invited to submit a business plan. This year, dozens of innovators entered plans, which were narrowed down to five finalists through social media voting.

SEMA Director of Networks Bryan Harrison said the Launch Pad competition is a tangible return on investment for young innovators to become part of the SEMA community.



Robert Vogt, CTO of Voyomotive, won the Young Executive Network Launch Pad competition at the 2015 SEMA Show.



On stage with Launch Pad winner Robert Vogt are Dan Kahn (left) of Kahn Media and SEMA's Bryan Harrison.

"It's important that as a trade association we create as many of these tangible opportunities as possible to help these entrepreneurs join the community and excel in the industry," Harrison said.

During the competition, five industry experts listened to a five-minute pitch from each of the five competitors and asked them questions about their product. After deliberations, the judges offered advice to each entrepreneur and chose Vogt as the winner.

Judge Myles Kovacs, co-founder of DUB magazine, said VOYO's fresh perspective and simplicity appealed to him.

"In aftermarket, everybody thinks they need to fight against the OEMs to be successful," Kovacs said. "(Voyomotive) is collaborating and understanding how their system works so you're not just hacking their system, you're enhancing their system. It's pretty simple; that's what I love about it."

Vogt said he received useful feedback from the judges about messaging the product in a way consumers will understand.

"It probably takes a good two minutes to go through enough of the features to convince somebody that this is awesome," he said. "... The real problem is getting that message out in the five seconds you have to get somebody interested."

VOYO will begin shipping in February and will continue to add new features as more data is collected. Vogt said the company will begin collecting data in Europe and Canada in 2016 to make the technology compatible with more users.

For now, Voyomotive is targeting the SEMA market with their first booth at the 2015 Show. Vogt said Show attendees are a great market for their product.

“The foot traffic is awesome and the qualification of the people who are here is great,” he said. “I haven’t talked to anyone here I felt I shouldn’t have been wasting my time talking to.”

Next year, Voyomotive is planning to reserve an even larger booth of 40x20 ft., four times the size of its 2015 10x20 ft. booth in the Westgate First-Time and Featured Exhibitors section.

In addition to the Launch Pad award, Voyomotive will take a Global Media Award, an Aftermarket Telematics Challenge Award and runner up in the Best Packaging category of the New Products showcase back to its home base in San Francisco.

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