

PyCon Startup Row Pitch Events

Local pitch events are one of the primary ways that Python-using startups make it on to Startup Row. Over the past several years, we've hosted events throughout the United States and Canada at venues ranging from co-working spaces to big corporate headquarters.

Event Checklist

Here are some of the things that need to be in place for hosting a successful event:

- ▶ A venue that can accommodate the audience, and has some way for companies to present a pitch deck, like a projector or large screen television
- ▶ Food and beverages for event attendees. (Most of the time, venue providers help with this.)
- ▶ 4-8 early-stage startups that use Python. (We've found that 6 is a good size.)
- ▶ A way to pick winners. Typically we have judging panels of 3-6 people, but we've also used social media voting in the past
- ▶ A way to publicize the event and get people to register to pitch, or be part of the audience

Identifying And Sourcing Companies

In order to participate in Startup Row, companies must meet all of the following criteria:

- ▶ Companies must be less than 2 years old and have 15 or fewer people on the team, including founders
- ▶ They must use Python somewhere in their stack (back-end, front-end, testing, etc.)
- ▶ Winning companies must be able to attend PyCon North America to present their companies. (There is financial aid available through the Python Software Foundation.)

We also encourage event organizers to pre-screen startups prior to giving them a spot on the pitching roster. This helps to filter out idea-stage projects, non-technical solo founders, and companies that don't use Python.

We recommend sourcing companies from your local Python user group, accelerator/incubator programs, and from early stage investors in your area. You can also identify startups that use Python by looking through technical job listings on sites like AngelList.

Drawing an Audience

Startup Row pitch events present a great opportunity to gather members of your city's software engineering and entrepreneurial communities together. Here are some strategies for drawing an audience to your pitch event:

- ▶ Startup Row's organizing team will help you set up an Eventbrite page (or equivalent) for your event. This will help you manage the ticketing process.
- ▶ If a Startup Row pitch event has been hosted in your city before, there may be a mailing list of previous attendees. Ask the Startup Row organizing team.
- ▶ Since this is an event featuring Python-using startups, invite members of your local Python user group(s).
- ▶ Distribute the event link on social media and on startup-focused forums and community sites.
- ▶ Reach out to local accelerators/incubators to offer their members early access to tickets.
- ▶ Enlist the help of your judging panel to distribute the event link to their colleagues
- ▶ Encourage the startups that sign up to invite their friends.

Sample Event Format

Usually, Startup Row pitch events are hosted in the evening, and they don't last longer than two hours. So, if you scheduled your event for 6:30 in the evening, everything should be done by 8:30 or 9:00 at the latest.

Typically, events proceed in the following order:

- ▶ Audience checks in and proceeds to get food and drinks. (Typically it takes between 30-45 minutes for everyone to filter in.)
- ▶ Event organizers encourage everyone to find their seats.
- ▶ Event organizers thank the venue and any sponsors of food and beverages.
- ▶ Event organizers briefly explain what Startup Row is.
- ▶ Sometimes there is a guest speaker, usually from the venue or one of the local user groups.
- ▶ Then we get into the pitches: 10 minutes per company, on average. (You get to decide how much time is devoted to each company and how much of that time is spent pitching vs. answering questions from judges. If possible, try to keep the total time spent on pitches and Q&A to around an hour.)
- ▶ After all the pitches, convene the judging panel or commence audience voting to choose the winner.
- ▶ Winner is announced.
- ▶ Audience is then free to get more food and beverages, or leave.
- ▶ If the event is hosted earlier in the evening, and there is time afterward, organizers may want to find a nearby bar or restaurant for a post-event gathering.