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The final day of StartupBus North America

Five days (and many hours riding a bus) after we left San Francisco, it was time for StartupBus to come to an end. It was a strange mix of feelings and impressions, something in between the last day of summer camp and a graduation ceremony. It was show day! Big time! Your mom would be watching, and it was time to make her proud. But I don't think any of the finalists cared about the results. We lived the experience. We learned and changed – that's all that matters!

The final five teams were kept aside to stay focused on our last push on the product or pitch. We took this opportunity to create a better-designed mobile experience, while another part of the team was trying to expand our vision and get it into the slides. While we were busy working in the finalists' room, our friends from the combined SF/Florida SuperBus came to visit. They were all being supportive and trying to help. Theresa, our designer, broke her laptop the day before, and everybody was trying to help by fixing it or landing another machine to let us keep working. There was a huge sense of community, as it really came down to helping each other :)

We had built up quite a lot of brand momentum for such a new project and tried to make the most of it by taking advantage of interest from the local newspaper and posting on Product Hunt. It felt like the cherry on the cake as we got closer to final pitch time.

We wouldn't know who the judges would be until only a few hours before the finals. They all turned out to be successful buspreneurs: There was Jamie Roth from NYC, who conducted StartupBus Canada 2014 and has a background working at a VC firm. Jorge Rios from Mexico who rode the Mexico bus in 2014 continued his StartupBus project Bridgefy and raised a $100k seed round in 2014. The last judge was Brandon Leonardo, co-founder of Instacart, who is a very active member of StartupBus community. All of them were interviewed on stage by Elias Bizannes, the founder of StartupBus, before finals began and they had some really inspiring things to say about what StartupBus changed in their lives – I highly recommend watching the talks.

After the interviews, we did our final pitches. It was intense as we all concentrated. Then while the judges were deliberating, we had an awesome inspiring moment together where several members of the community got on stage to share their stories. Eme from Mexico, explained the first year he rode StartupBus and how the experience transformed him. He told us how inspired some of the Mexican buspreneurs were and how they brought that energy back to their own communities. He had just launched the fifth class of Dev.f a coding school in Mexico City. Hearing his story, we all got excited to go discover what is happening with the startup community in Mexico. Then, Marianne from Exversion told us about how her StartupBus team got invited to meet YC partners and present at TechCrunch Disrupt in Berlin. She described all the ups and downs she's been through – she's amazing, with lots of positive energy. You can read her story here.

Other alumni came on stage to share their thoughts, to cheer the crowd and tell us how crazy it could be afterwards. You could feel the excitement in the audience. We were completely energized by the amazing stories, both the successes and the failures. It was not your typical tech conference, where successful entrepreneurs teach others what they've done. No, it was more like an intimate family dinner. We were all far-away cousins, but we had this family and this experience in common. I definitely felt it last year too. It might sound silly, like such a "guru" moment. But it felt good to be surrounded by so many like-minded people, crazy enough to get on a bus and

start building something as if your life depends on it. *We did it* – that's all that was going through my mind after this. We didn't change the world, but we got a step closer to meeting the people that we could build something to change the world with.

After a trip like this, you definitely feel that you've changed. You can move mountains with friends and family like this. You know you can move mountains – or even more – because you've done it before. You feel more empowered, capable, confident. You're in charge. You decide, create, build, ask, and you fail. It's an exciting feeling, and it's good to have regular "shots" of it.

I hereby encourage you to be part of this awesome adventure and family. Join a StartupBus journey near you, in North America, Europe, Africa or Australia. You have so much to learn about others and yourself. Take an opportunity like this to start your entrepreneurial journey.

