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Posted on 06/07/2015

StartupBus day 2

My last post ended with us flying from Las Vegas to Atlanta. We arrived at 6am, tired after the flight. Compared to teams on the other buses, we had “lost” 6 hours of potential work and progress on our products, so the pressure was on to make things happen.

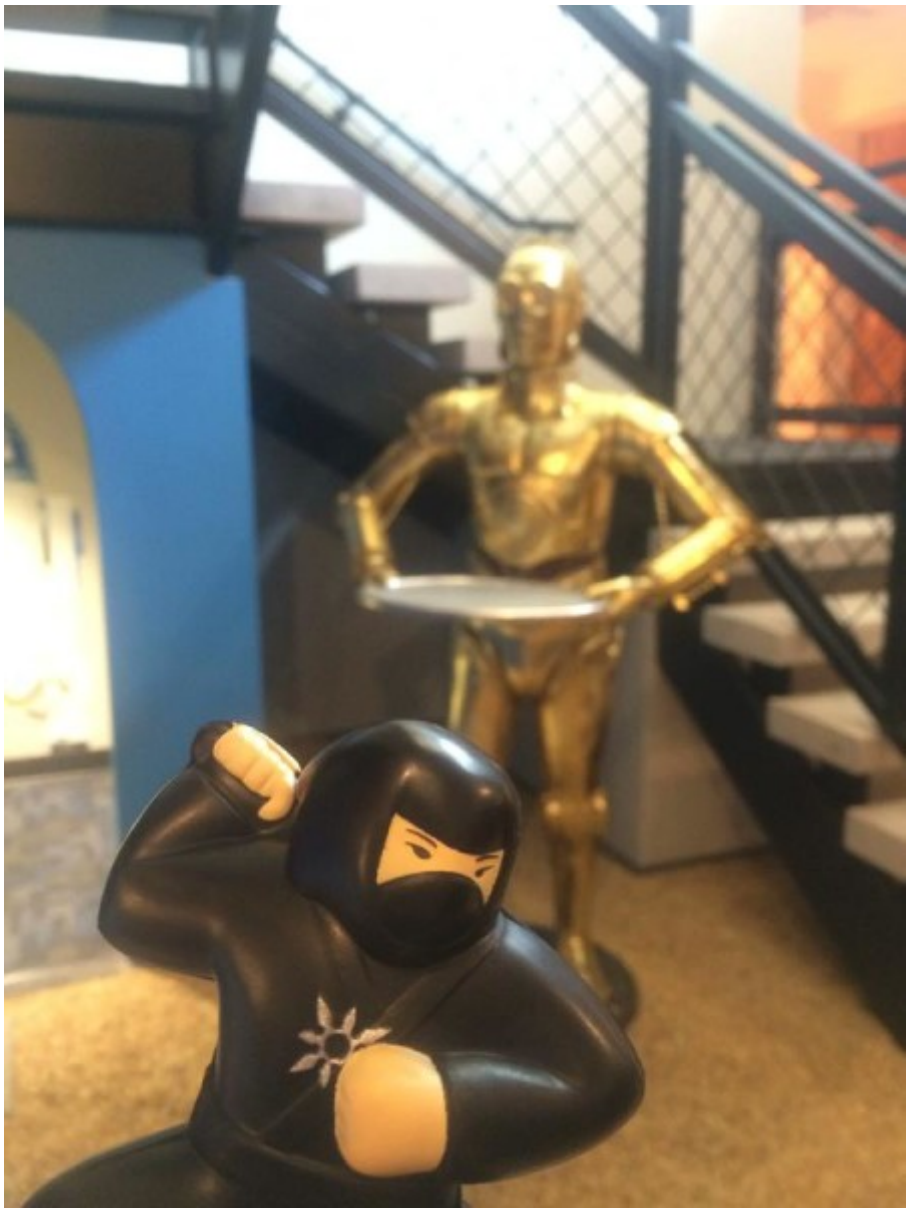
Just after we landed, we went to the hotel where our buspreneur buddies from Florida were staying. Combining the two buses had been a great surprise for all of us. Now we were part of a SuperBus with two great new projects and teams from Florida: BlockMafia and Ambulo. The merge really helped us focus on what we were doing by giving us insight into how other teams were performing. For example, BlockMafia managed to be the first of any team on StartupBus to get coverage in the news, on the Tampa Bay Business Journal, and Ambulo launched an Indiegogo campaign.

On our way to Durham, NC, our final stop for the night, we were welcomed by the awesome community of the Mojo coworking space in Asheville. I would never have imagined that there would be such a thriving coworking space with so many people working on startups in a city of 80k inhabitants in the middle of North Carolina. It totally fits one of the ideas we want to support on StartupBus and here at 3scale – that innovation can come from anywhere.

After this quick stop, we were back on the road. By this time in the competition, most of the teams had a working prototype that they could show people and get feedback on, but ours was coming together slowly. I was the only developer working on the app, while my teammates Theresa and Graham were hacking on our landing page, and Teria was creating a survey to get feedback from potential users. For the app, we decided to use a Meteor + Ionic stack. This would allow us to create a web app that could easily be released on all the major app stores as well as on the web. By the time we reached Durham, we had only a part of the prototype done. We wanted to have it finished by day 3 so we could focus the last day of the competition on reach and customer validation.

In Durham we were welcomed by Greg Svitak, an alumnus of the StartupBus community and buspreneur on the Cleveland bus in 2011. He told us how StartupBus changed his life and showed us the Durham startup community. The triangle between Durham, Raleigh, and Chapel Hill seems very active with a couple of exits and millions in funding for local startups. Durham was ranked number 6 of the best cities in the US to start a business. I learned that the Durham economy used to be mainly one tobacco factory, and today the old factory is part of a new downtown Renaissance for the city.

Then we got to visit American Underground, a 4-story building for startups of all size. Our little #apininja found some geek friends there.



At the end of the visit, we had the privilege of spending some time with Chris Heivly, co-founder of MapQuest. He shared his story and vision of entrepreneurship – really inspiring. He also gave us advice on some business-related problems we were facing with our projects like how to meet a cofounder or how to address a certain market.

This awesome day concluded with some local beers on a patio. Well deserved by the all entrepreneurs! But the night was not over for our team… more to come tomorrow ;)