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/peak pitch

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PHOTO: JORDAN SILVERMAN

BOLTON VALLEY RESORT, 9 A.M., FRIDAY, MARCH 3.

The first things I noticed were the ski vests. "Green for those with dough," explained Charlie Kireker of FreshTracks Capital, "and blue for those *looking* for dough."

For two hours, blue vests would ride up the chairlift making sales pitches to green vests. After a lunchtime speech by Senate-hopeful Rich Tarrant, the three best pitchers would "pitch-off" in front of the entire group, which would select a winner. "Anyone can make a pitch in an elevator, a Starbucks or a conference room," said Phil Ferneau of Borealis Ventures, which co-hosted the event with Fresh Tracks Capital. "To make a pitch on a chairlift when the wind chill dips below zero, well, *that's* a hardy company. So get out there and start pitching!"

As the howling wind shook the lodge and sent snow swirling across the slopes, 30 entrepreneurs and start-up business-owners, and 30 venture capitalists and financial advisors, crammed their feet into cold ski boots and covered exposed skin with balaclavas.

The networking began even before the chairlift rides. "Mark Baker," said a man clad in head-to-toe flannel pajamas, handing me his business card. "The Vermont Flannel Clothing Company. Do you have a card?"

He had to ask. I searched my pockets, then changed the subject. "Are you going to be warm enough?" I asked. He showed me his thick flannel top and launched into his company's plan to promote Internet sales. "We'll need funding and infrastructure to handle that," Baker said. "Because when it happens, we have to be ready."

At the table next to me, Alex Wolff was having problems with his palm pilot. A sports writer pitching his plan to bring a professional basketball team to Vermont, Wolff told me he hadn't skied "since the early '70s." But he was determined to make his pitch. So determined that he'd brought his own personal ski instructor.

Wolff seemed in capable hands, so I headed for the chairlift, where I sat in on several chilly sales pitches -- including one about Ipod accessories and one by the publisher of a fledgling ski magazine -- before heading off on my own to ski some gladed woods, where it was less windy than on the open trails and nobody there asked for my card.

MARK AIKEN

/weekly highlights



PEKING ACROBATS, FRI.10



CRAOBH RUA, SAT.11