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## Early Stage East conference changes to ClubPitch

Venture event will be in Phila. and include latest in technology, social media

Premium content from Philadelphia Business Journal - by Peter Key, Staff Writer

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WILMINGTON — Venture capitalist **David Freschman** founded **Early Stage East** 13 years ago to boost the Philadelphia area's ecosystem for early-stage companies.

That's still the organization's mission, but little else about it is the same.

Early Stage East announced late last month that it is replacing its two venture conferences and launching a new signature event as part of a makeover that also includes two new top staffers and a new logo.

Early Stage East's event, which it has held in Wilmington in June since its founding, will become ClubPitch Philadelphia. It will be held Oct. 18 at the Down Town Club and feature digital, Web, social-media and mobile companies as presenters.

The organization's Bio-Life-Tech Conference, which it has held in Baltimore each autumn since 2002, will become Bio-Life-Tech ClubPitch Baltimore. It will be held Nov. 17 at the Pier 5 Hotel and feature its predecessor's mix of life-sciences and technology companies as presenters.

In addition to renaming the events, Early Stage East is changing their structures to make them less like traditional venture conferences and more like the events put on by entrepreneurial groups at which companies give short pitches about themselves and their products and services.

There still will be day-long affairs with education sessions and panel discussions, but the shorter pitches will enable more companies to present at them. Early Stage East also will set up one-on-one meetings between the presenting companies and financiers and service providers at the events.

They "should be a lot more fun, a lot more high impact and a lot more productive," Freschman said.

**Ellen Weber**, who heads Robin Hood Ventures, the angel group based in Philadelphia's University City section, said the events put on by entrepreneurial groups are attracting more investors, so copying their formats makes sense.

"I think it's great that Early Stage East is catching this vibe and showing these kinds of companies framed up in a way that's interesting and relevant both for the entrepreneurs and for the investors," Weber said.

Early Stage East's signature event, which will debut next spring in Philadelphia, will be more like a traditional venture conference.

The Global Social Media Investment Summit (GLOSO) will "bring in thought leaders in social media from around the country and hopefully the world," Freschman said, as well as give area social-media companies a forum for pitching to investors.

Early Stage East is getting support on GLOSO from two other organizations that connect early-stage investors and entrepreneurs: New York-based BootStrapper Summit, which holds venture conferences, and **Second Venture Corp.**, the Stratford, Conn., company that runs FundingPost.com.

Early Stage East also will work with New York-based ARC Angel Fund and Freschman hopes it can forge ties with other investors from outside the area as a way of getting them to look at local companies.

"We're going to reach out to the investment community from up and down the East Coast," Freschman said.

Early Stage East's new director, **Marc C. Mathis**, is familiar with reaching out. He's the founder of Wilmington-based Mataron Development Corp. LLC, which helps minority entrepreneurs access venture funding and other business resources.

Mathis has been working with Early Stage East for five years, as has **Erik D. Seel**, its new creative director. Seel is the CEO of Hockessin, Del.-based fashion design firm Uhma Ltd. Inc. and is responsible for Early Stage East's new logo and website.

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