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Press Release

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**PIVOT East Announces Key Sponsorships and Alumni Success Stories As It Launches Its Fourth Edition And Returns To Nairobi.**

*The 2014 edition of PIVOT East promises to be a hotly contested competition from start to finish as 25 exceptional mobile startups are set to fight it out to win market recognition and investor interest for the fourth year running within a fast paced and high output activity schedule.*

**March 2014 -** PIVOT East is East Africa’s premier mobile startups pitching competition and conference held annually since 2011. PIVOT East is comprised of a series of activities that culminate in the finalists conference. It is organised by m:lab East Africa - a consortium comprising iHub, eMobilis, University of Nairobi and the World Wide Web Foundation. This year’s finalists conference will be held on the 24th and 25th June 2014 in Nairobi, Kenya after a successful event in Kampala Uganda in 2013.

In the past three editions, PIVOT East has drawn applicants from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi and The DRC. This year the competition has expanded the scope of applicants to include Ethiopia. The call for applications is currently open at [www.pivoteast.com](http://www.pivoteast.com) till the 11th of April 2014. Applicants can apply in five distinct categories which are Mobile Enterprise, Mobile Finance, Mobile Entertainment, Mobile Society and Mobile Utilities.

PIVOT East is much more than just a mobile apps competition - it is a holistic platform for mobile startup organizational development and business model refinement . The competition has seen mobile startups from across the region that made it to the finals grow their businesses in terms of revenue growth and access to funding among other enterprise growth indicators.

**Past Finalists**

Finalists of the competition, usually 25 each year, receive training, coaching and mentorship in the weeks preceding the pitching conference. These pre-conference activities assist the finalists to improve key elements of their business models and the positioning of their startups to the rich audience at the conference. Attendance at the conference is 300-400 people including investors, industry players, government players and development partners at the finalists conference.

A study by University of Nairobi study on the outcomes of PIVOT East among finalists of the 2011 and 2012 editions was published in June 2012. The study indicated that visibility to the industry was the most valuable benefit among finalists (at 74%). The training and coaching sessions were rated second most valuable (at 68%) while mentorship provided was third at 62% of the study respondents

Since 2011, the competition has identified and supported 75 mobile startups as finalists of the competition. The m:lab has funded 15 of these startups through PIVOT East to the tune of US$120,000 thus far. The funding awarded through the competition aside, over 15 (20%) of the 75 previous finalists have raised additional funding from angel investors, venture capital firms and impact funds after the competition worth over US$4.7 million. At least 5 of the finalists from last year’s competition have reported to be currently courting serious investors among them local angel investors and foreign venture capital firms.

The past finalists have so far had varied experiences and benefits of being at PIVOT East. Asked to summarize the advantages being at PIVOT gave them, some of them had the following to say :- “Visibility and networking opportunities that come with PIVOT East is key. We acquired 50,000 new users as a result of the partnership we made during PIVOT East which was 90% of our traction last year” Said Waliaula Makokha the founder of Jooist from Kenya which was in the finals in 2013 in the entertainment category. Additional sentiments expressed by finalists of the 2011, 2012 and the 2013 competition may be found in the appendix.

**PIVOT East in 2014**

The objectives of PIVOT East in 2014 are:

* To facilitate discovery and nurturing of the next wave of high potential mobile innovations into sustainable businesses
* To ensure mobile innovations are high on the agenda of regional governments, corporates and development agencies for amplified development impact
* To raise the quality of mobile startups in the region and to improve their investability

This year the competition will emphasize for competitors to persuade active investors to provide funding. Organizers of PIVOT East have also partnered with a local bank, Chase Bank Kenya whose experts will help vet investability of the competing startups. Others who will be in the judging panels across the competition stages are Angel Investors, and representatives from Venture Capital Firms and Impact Funds. Included in the panels will also be Investment Officers from selected local investment clubs (also known as Chamas).

To help leverage a growing trend in the region where enterprise applications are often more viable than consumer applications, PIVOT East this year has the support of Motorola Solutions. The communications and telecommunications equipment provider will be providing mentorship and corporate connections for startups with serious enterprise grade applications.

**Chase Bank Sponsorship**

Chase Bank is this year’s Gold Sponsor for PIVOT East. For Chase Bank, innovation is a crucial strand in their DNA. The bank was recognized as an innovative partner that meets the needs of SMEs in the Annual Banking Awards in 2011.

According to Chase Bank Head of Marketing & Communications Magdalene Mulandi, “Sponsoring PIVOT East 2014 and having the chance to see our youth, particularly those with entrepreneurial skills, showcase their mobile solutions and innovations and their potential in the emerging business is exciting. We at Chase Bank are dedicated to serving the SME sector in all avenues and we strive to meet this goal by engaging in initiatives such as this. We continue to gain stature and focus our business on the SME sector”.

**Motorola Solutions Foundation Sponsorship**

Motorola Solutions foundation is a silver sponsor for PIVOT East this year. Being the charitable and philanthropic arm of Motorola Solutions, they seek to benefit the communities where it operates.

Commenting on this partnership, James Kamweti, the Motorola Solutions East Africa Account Manager noted, “Motorola Solutions is a company committed to advancing innovation and has a history of technological innovation and partnering with the cities and states where we live and work, we are thrilled to take part and support project such as Pivot East 2014.”

**About m:lab East Africa**

m:lab East Africa is a regional mobile applications laboratory for East Africa. Its services to mobile entrepreneurs in the region include business incubation, developer training, application testing, ecosystem building and market research.

m:lab East Africa’s mission is “to facilitate demand-driven innovation by regional entrepreneurs, ensuring that breakthrough low-cost, high-value mobile solutions can be developed and scaled-up into sustainable businesses that address social and economic needs”.

m:lab East Africa was founded late 2010 as a consortium of four organizations namely; eMobilis, World Wide Web Foundation, The University of Nairobi School of Computing and Informatics and iHub. It was officially launched in June 2011 with support from a World Bank (infoDev) seed grant. For more information on the m:lab visit [www.mlab.co.ke](http://www.mlab.co.ke)

**About Chase Bank Kenya Limited**

Chase Bank (K) Ltd was incorporated in 1995. The Bank received awards for being the Best SME Bank 2013, Fastest Growing Bank in Kenya in 2009 and 2010, as well as a special award for product innovation, at the Banking awards 2011 and 2013 in recognition for their role in creating innovative products for the SME market.

Chase Bank places a keen focus on the SME and the provision of innovative products for this ever growing market. The Bank, modeled around relationship banking provides its customers with value added services like Bank Assurance, Bank Brokerage, and off shore investment opportunities with the aim of improving their overall customer experience. For more information on Chase Bank visit [www.chasebankkenya.co.ke](http://www.chasebankkenya.co.ke/)

**About Motorola Solutions Foundation**

The Motorola Solutions Foundation is the charitable and philanthropic arm of Motorola Solutions. With employees located around the globe, Motorola Solutions seeks to benefit the communities where it operates. The company achieves this by making strategic grants, forging strong community partnerships and fostering innovation.

The Motorola Solutions Foundation focuses its funding on public safety, disaster relief, employee programs and education, especially science, technology, engineering and math programming. For more information on Motorola Solutions Corporate and Foundation visit [www.motorolasolutions.com](http://www.motorolasolutions.com/giving)

*Appendix 1: Sentiments shared by past PIVOT competition finalists*

*“Basically we entered the competition with just an idea and it helped us to build a product ... from the connections we got just by being finalists, a number of partnerships are underway and they are very promising.”*  - Josephat Mandara the CEO of Dephics systems from Tanzania which whose TiMe product was a finalist in 2013.

“*Winning PIVOT East drove visibility to us. We got featured greatly in global media like Bloomberg and Polygon (gaming magazine).*” - Mwaura Kirore from Planet Rackus whose Ma3Racer game was the overall winner of the 2012 competition.

*“It (PIVOT East) gives you practice to pitch your business concept in front of an ideal audience. The training really helped. It was very high level. How to pitch was most important.”* Mikul Shah - CEO of Eatout Mobile which was a finalist in 2011

*"For us access to the m:lab incubation program was the biggest benefit of being at PIVOT. The exposure and validation to the industry was another benefit that came to us courtesy of being finalists at PIVOT"* - Alloys Mechack, CEO of Mshop Limited which was a finalist in 2011 and also won the mobile payments and commerce category.

“*Before getting into PIVOT finals, Ma3route was an just app by individual. Thanks to the trainings and sensitization during the competition, we are now running Ma3route as a serious high growth enterprise*” - Laban Okune, the founder of Ma3Route which won the utilities category in 2013.

*“The mock pitching sessions with the PIVOT team was instrumental in raising our ambition. From the event we got to learn that opportunity is unprecedented; always come prepared” -* Gideon Kyalo, Co-founder of iDaktari which was a finalist in 2013

*“Due to PIVOT East there was exposure that meant we had paying customers when we launched via our mailing list. Early adopters.”* - Michael Pedersen, CEO of Uhasibu which was a finalist in 2011 and won the Business / Enterprise Category.

*“Anyone involved in a start up should definitely enter the Pivot East competition not only for the prize but also the coaching and training offered to the finalists.“ -* [Kinyanjui Njonde](https://infra.crowdvalley.com/networks/pivot-east-entries/startups/92428), founder of GigWapi which did not make it to the finals received coaching and training as they were in the finalists waiting list in 2013.

"*Pivot 25 was a great platform for drumming up awareness and support for Kopo Kopo.*" - Ben Lyon, Founder of Kopokopo which was a finalist in 2011