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## City selects Hub-based start-up Privy to help businesses boost sales via social media

Posted by Matt Rocheleau July 10, 2012 01:58 PM

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(City of Boston)

At Stone Hearth Pizza in Allston, Mayor Thomas M. Menino and Ben Jabbawy, founder and CEO of Privy, hold up a sample of social media — a tweet sent by Menino's official Twitter account. The tweet reads: "Congrats winner of @BosMainStreets Social Media Challenge! @GetPrivy helps neighborhood biz turn #sm users into customers. #socialmainst"

By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

A start-up based in Boston's Innovation District that aims to offer an alternative to "daily deal" websites like Groupon was selected from more than 60 applicants to partner with the Boston Main Streets program to help businesses covert social media users into measurable in-store sales.

Privy, which launched publicly in early April, offers small businesses the technology to sell deals and other promotional offerings to customers who follow them on Facebook or on Twitter or visit their websites, the [Globe has reported](#).

City leaders announced Monday that Privy beat out seven other finalists to win the Boston Main Streets "Social Media Challenge."

For its triumph, the start-up will receive a \$10,000 prize through a grant from the MacArthur Foundation. To fund the grant, the foundation is using its money from the New Urban Mechanics initiative, a collaboration between

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money from the New Urban Mechanics initiative, a collaboration between Emerson College and the city's Office of New Urban Mechanics.

"Our platform for helping small businesses get the most out of social media was a perfect fit for the 'Social Media Challenge,'" said a statement from Ben Jabbawy founder and CEO of Privy, a finalist in the 2011 MassChallenge competition for start-ups.

"We are thrilled to have won the challenge and are excited to ramp up our efforts to help Boston Main Streets and the thousands of neighborhood businesses throughout Boston create online communities and customers," the statement continued.

The city-led challenge was launched in partnership with another local business, Startup BLVD, which is an online match-making and consulting service that helps connect start-ups, larger companies and municipal governments.

The city used the company's platform for solicit proposals from businesses participating in the challenge.

According to Boston.com's "[Innovation Technology](#)" section, Startup BLVD opened on Monday a new co-working office space in Allston near Harvard Avenue and the Massachusetts Turnpike.

The "Social Media Challenge" was the first in series of challenges launched by the city's Office of Business Development that are designed to address specific needs of Boston's small business community.

This particular challenge launched in January and developed as part of the Main Streets' "Social Media on Main Streets Initiative" after neighborhood businesses expressed interest in exploring ways to boost revenue through social media.

Using Privy, businesses can launch and track deals from their own website, social media channels and e-mail databases. Consumers can purchase the promotions online and redeem the offerings in-store using either a mobile device or a printed coupon.

The company offers businesses a free one-month trial and then charges a flat, monthly fee, which is priced based on the level of service a business needs. Privy

collects an additional 15 percent cut of the purchase price of a coupon each time a customer buys one.

But, because businesses are not charged extra for simply marketing the deals, they can promote their products an unlimited number of times without the up-front costs of traditional advertising.

During its beta period, the company worked with more than 30 clients, who sold about \$40,000 in deals, Privy's CEO told the Globe in April.

On Monday, Mayor Thomas M. Menino and Department of Neighborhood Development director Evelyn Friedman announced the company won the challenge at Stone Hearth Pizza, a current Privy client located in Allston.

"I am proud that our 'Social Media on Main Streets Initiative' is providing Boston's small businesses with new tools to help them compete in today's economy and connect with neighborhood shoppers," Menino said in a statement.

"We are excited to announce Privy as the winner of the 'Social Media Challenge' and to help our neighborhood businesses leverage online tools to increase sales," he added. "This new initiative is an example of how collaboration and innovation can benefit Boston's small businesses."

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