



Chi Yau with a Fuel Rod kiosk for exchanging cell phone batteries. (Photo by Chris Jennewein)

## San Diego Isn't Silicon Valley, But That's an Advantage for Startups

Times of San Diego

San Diego may be a “secondary market” for technology startups from the towering perspective of Silicon Valley, but one venture capitalist sees this as an important advantage.



Dave Twining, co-founder of Planck Aerosystemes, with one of the company's drones. (Photo by Chris Jennewein)

“Outside of Silicon Valley there's great talent and great firms to be built,” said Fred Wang, a general partner at Trinity Ventures, a venture-capital firm located on Silicon Valley's fabled Sand Hill Road.

He said San Diego's advantages include great weather, expertise at UC San Diego, military spending and established tech companies like Qualcomm. For startups, there's less competition for funding, and lower costs that give a new company a longer “runway” to take off.

“Most importantly, you're outside of this echo chamber that is Silicon Valley,” he added, making it easier for a new company to stand out.

Wang spoke to a crowd of 600 people Friday at the **San Diego Venture Group's 13th annual Venture Summit** at the Manchester Grand Hyatt downtown.

Outside the ballroom, more than 35 of the venture group's “cool companies” of 2015 were displaying their technology and business plans for potential investors.

Among them:

- Planck Aerosystems is using drones to find fish at sea, saving fuel for commercial fisherman and helping sport fisherman make their prize catch.
- Dermal, a spinoff from UC San Diego, is investigating the use of microbes commonly found on human skin to develop new medicines.
- Fuel Rod, has placed 129 kiosks at airports where road warriors can exchange exhausted cell phone batteries for fully charged ones. “Someday we'd like to be in every Starbucks,” said Kendall Yeagley.

San Diego may lag some other regions in total venture funding, but Wang said it's well placed for the future.

“The good news is that you're in California, and California owns the lion's share of venture dollars,” he said.