

“How BarCamp Cambodia Mobilized 21,000 Tech Fans”

By Chantra BE

Chantra Be was the Social Networking Manager at [Development Innovations](#) from 2014 to 2016 and is now the Managing Partner at [EmeraldHUB](#) Co-Working and Office Space.



Mr. Chantra Be gives his speech in [BarCamp Ratanakiri](#) in April 2016

[BarCamp Phnom Penh](#) was first organized in 2008 by a team of like-minded people led by Mr. Bun Tharum and Mr. Hor Virak, two Phnom Penh “geeks” (a word used to describe people who are fascinated with and love using technology). The event gathered geeks from around the south-east asia region to come and talk about tech in Phnom Penh. I was a lead volunteer the first year, and in 2009 I took the lead organizer role to run BarCamp Phnom Penh and received help from the previous lead organizers.

The first three years were a challenge, especially to find sponsors, and team didn't have enough time during the day. In the third year, we nearly stopped doing it. I was the Marketing Manager at [Sabay Company](#), and didn't have time to find a lead organizer to make it all happen. But because of people's interest and encouragement to continue, and friends volunteering to team up to help, we kept the events going. In 2012, I joined [Open Institute](#), who agreed to host and bring the [BarCamp](#) spirit to the provinces in Cambodia. This was funded by [USAID Cambodia](#) for 2013 and 2014. After the project at Open Institute finished, USAID's Development Innovations helped support BarCamp to grow and reach more Cambodians in the provinces in 2015 and 2016. From mid-2016, our activities are funded by the private sector - specifically [Cellcard](#) and [EZECOM](#) - who see us as a key platform to reach out to engage with their customers.



Mr. Chantra Be and [BarCamp Kampongcham](#) Volunteers in 2013

Over nine years, we engaged more than 21,000 participants across 10 provinces and cities in Cambodia. We brought together hundreds of speakers from the private sector, civil society organizations, universities and tech-interested geeks from around the region. We made our own tech 'magic' over 30 times in Phnom Penh, Battambang, Kampong Cham, Siem Reap, Takeo, Kampot, Ratanakiri, Steung Treng, Banteay Meanchey and Sihanoukville.

I've spent so much time with BarCamp now some people call me Father BarCamp. My own kids know that whenever I am traveling, I am on the road to BarCamp, somewhere, and when I pack up, they say "Papa go BarCamp again!". My family often comes with me when I am coordinating these events, and I like seeing events through their eyes, especially my daughters. The whole BarCamp community is very committed, relying on a base of local organizers and partner universities, speakers and volunteers to fundraise, publicize, organize and deliver great tech expos to bring more tech innovations to more Cambodians. We use Facebook to connect to our community, and rely on volunteers and past attendees to help market events. We think they tell the story best of all.

Today, BarCamp in Cambodia is a platform where people come to meet, talk and share experiences around technology, business startups, career development, social impact and inspiration. [BarCamp ASEAN](#) will be happening in Phnom Peng in November 2016. Are you coming to this big event? Follow us on Facebook - [BarCamp Cambodia](#) is for everyone!

BarCamp Cambodia Event Map: 2008 to 2015

