

INNOVATIVE IDEAS AT ILA BERLIN HACKATHON

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The Airbus hackathon at ILA Berlin 2018 brought together a diverse mix of competitors to develop innovative aviation ideas – with successful results

Scattered around the conference room, six teams of two to six people each are huddled around clusters of tables, animatedly discussing ideas, making notes on laptops or sketching out their thoughts on paper. Time is of the essence: they've been given access to unique sets of aviation data courtesy of global flight tracking service FlightRadar24 and have just five hours to develop an innovative idea, anything from a disruptive travel app to new ways of enhancing flight efficiency.

The teams are taking part in Airbus' hackathon at Germany's premier air show, ILA Berlin 2018, which has brought together participants from around the world with a diverse range of backgrounds, from aerospace engineering students to data science professionals.

“It can certainly feel a little stressful, but it’s also a lot of fun,” said Jasper from Delft University of Technology in Holland Borghart during a short ‘hacking’ break. His team is working on a solution for airlines to monitor pilot performance and improve their skills. “Having the chance to interact with so many people from different sectors, ask questions, pitch ideas and get expert feedback – how often do you get the chance to do that?”

Inspirational insights

One of the main organisers of the hackathon is Airbus data scientist Heiko Udluft. “We had several aims with this event, but really the main goal was to generate inspiration and gain different insights and viewpoints for the sort of problems we are trying to solve. It’s also a great way to meet talented new people.”

Working with Udluft on the organisation as well as the judging panel was Vincent Chartier, cloud solution architect at Microsoft. “I was very impressed at what the teams did in such a short space of time. And they stood out in different ways – some were particularly strong in product design, for example, while others were more business-savvy. I also think an event like this shows that topics like big data or AI aren’t just buzzwords at Airbus, but a key part of the business.”

Surprising ideas

At the end of the five hours, each team pitched their idea to a jury and faced questions from their fellow competitors. “There were some ideas that really made me stop and think ‘Oh, I hadn’t actually thought about it in that way,’” Udluft said. “Overall, we’re very happy with the outcomes and certainly plan to do more events like this. Watch this space!”



With just five hours to develop an innovative idea based on aviation data provided by global flight tracking service FlightRadar24, participants in Airbus' hackathon at ILA Berlin 2018 prepare their pitches that will be given to a panel of judges

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