

Honours Shared in Close Industry 4.0 Hackathon

Young innovator teams impress industrial giants in Linz

Vienna, 09.11.2017 - Hackathon first-timers Fronius, Wienerberger and KEBA were delighted with the outcome of the 3 day event focused on rapid prototyping, resulting in both a startup and freelance developer receiving awards from event partners, a Pioneers consulting package and tickets to Pioneers'18.

A hackathon is an intense and competitive session, most typically lasting 48 hours, in which carefully-selected startups (and sometimes single developers or students) work on solutions to real-world challenges. This week's Industry 4.0 Hackathon, co-organized by Startup300, focused on industry-focused problems issued to 20 innovator teams by corporate partners Fronius, Wienerberger and KEBA.

Hackathons, which effectively give partners hundreds of hours of R&D time from hand-picked innovators spurred on by an element of competition, are gaining momentum on a global scale. During the Industry 4.0 Hackathon, over 60 people from 6 nationalities programmed for 3 days, all the while consuming more than 350 coffees. We asked the three hackathon partners we worked with in Linz - all of whom were getting involved in a hackathon for the very first time - for their first impressions.

"It went far beyond our expectations," said Gerald Aigner, R&D Innovation Manager at Fronius, a global industry leader in the fields of welding technology, photovoltaics and battery charging tech. "Not only were the outcomes great for us, but also the way the outcomes were reached.

"We really learned a lot and we are excited to have found out what was possible in 48 hours," added Thomas Linde, Executive Vice President of Industrial Automation at international automation solutions company KEBA, whose challenge winner Craftworks also shared overall startup honours at the hackathon. "Normally we would spend as much time as that just talking about how to set up a project!"

"To work in this strict timeline with a real challenge, towards a prototype in the end, is something we could do ourselves. But to have five teams at the same time working on it, and giving you five interesting and different solutions? That would be impossible within the company. And if you can take the best of them and put them into one solution, it's a big win."

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“I was really surprised with the good results we saw within just a few hours here,” said Marion Heinzlmann, Head of Innovation at Wienerberger, the global supplier of sustainable, outstanding building and infrastructure solutions, which has also asked Pioneers Discover to help run its Wienerberger Innovation Day in January. “It was really close between the top three in our category, and choosing the winner was difficult.

“There’s so much to learn, it’s really good to look outside the usual places to find it. A hackathon gives a really good overview of what possibilities are on the market. There is so much potential, and in order to create the future we need to access all of it. That’s the reason why every company should join a hackathon.”

In the end, Wienerberger actually went for one of the single developers we had invited when they chose their favourite solution in Linz, with hackathon regular Sarah Steininger then also sharing the overall prize with Craftworks. The winner of the challenge for Fronius was digitalization startup iTiZZiMo.

Time-limited hackathons are of course the perfect stage for innovators to prove they’ve got the speed attractive to large companies. Hackathons give them the chance for their creative solutions to take center stage in front of decision-makers in their specific industry, as well as great networking and one-on-one mentoring with the same. For a startup, a hackathon is also an excellent opportunity to see how their ideas or technologies work with respect to real-world use cases.

Finally, bear in mind that hackathons are just one possible form a startup-corporate collaboration event can take. Another of our partners, Booking.com, for example, has asked us to run a series of weekend mentorship programs with sustainable tourism startups we’ve scouted. While these aren’t classic ‘solve-a-problem-fast’ hackathons, they are another great way for collaborations and even investments to develop.

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Note to the Editors:

About Pioneers:

Pioneers establishes and facilitates direct, meaningful business relationships between leading tech innovators, including startups, corporate executives, and investors. Established in 2009 in Vienna, Pioneers helps redefine industries by creating various platforms to help develop future technologies and introduce cutting-edge solutions. Pioneers Discover, its consultancy services arm that was founded in 2013 shapes the future of corporates and the public sector by introducing them entrepreneurial tools, methods, and innovation driven corporate culture. Its investment arm Pioneers Ventures, which was founded in 2015, advances the growth of early-stage startups.

