

Hack Day 2017 – An Engineering Odyssey

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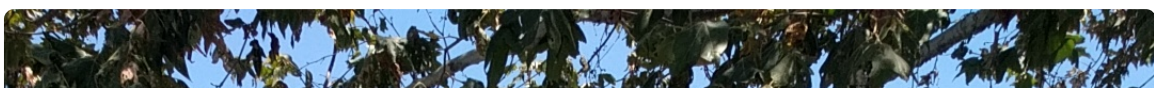
AppFolio's biannual Hack Day is back and this year it took on planetary proportions with "Cosmos – Hack Day Odyssey."



(<https://blog.appfolio.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Hack-day-2017-cosmos.jpg>)

The 24-hour product development Hack Day in the Santa Barbara and San Diego offices started last Thursday morning and ended Friday at noon, when participating teams were asked to present their projects to a room full of engineers, the latest class of interns, and other curious AppFolians.

Some light-hearted projects from the celestial celebration included the creation of a mobile device charging and storage station made from a portable cabinet, and Cornholio!, AppFolio's first official custom bean bag toss set.





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HACK DAY ODYSSEY

Other Hack Day projects were geared more toward software functionality and usability. One team dedicated their 24 hours toward successfully extracting data from only a picture of an invoice. They explained that this capability could help property managers and accountants process vendor information faster by pulling the necessary information from the image alone. There was also a “Just Pay It!” button, developed by Polo Li, software engineer. Motivated to improve the customer experience, he created an easy solution for property managers looking to pay a single bill quicker than ever, with just one click. The culmination of his successful demo was met with widespread applause and cheers.

One project, a crowd favorite, utilized smart technology – along with a camera and a water balloon – to modernize an age-old contest.

“I was at the NAA conference recently and noticed a lot of vendors advertising “smart home” products. Most of the devices were powered by computers the size of a business card that you can buy for 20 bucks,” said John Yoder, Vice President of Engineering. “So I got to thinking, “why not build my own smart device?”



(https://blog.appfolio.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/cosmos-IMG_1271.jpg)

Dubbed The Smile Machine, Yoder’s team created a helmet outfitted with a camera that streams video of your face to a tiny computer that analyzes your facial expressions. If the computer detects a smile, a servo is activated and pops the water balloon sitting in a chamber on top of the helmet.

“We built two of these helmets so that two people could face-off in a high stakes staring contest,” said Yoder. “It’s not everyday you get to pop a water balloon on top of the founder’s head!”





(<https://blog.appfolio.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Hack-day.jpg>) *A smiling Klaus Schauser, Chief Strategist, milliseconds away from getting drenched.*

The demos continued throughout the afternoon as engineers proudly displayed their ingenious innovations.

“I love seeing my friends unleash their creativity on solving crazy problems and being amazed by what they can accomplish in 24 hours,” said Yoder. “It’s chaotic, hilarious, and wonderful. It’s a bonding experience.”

This year’s highly anticipated and well-celebrated event once again solidified Hack Day as a beloved AppFolio tradition.

“It’s all about innovation,” said Yoder. “Real innovation requires three ingredients: a deep knowledge of the customer’s problem, a thorough understanding of the technological landscape, and the freedom to explore the connections between the two... Regardless of what happens, we always have a lot of fun. And these are all things we carry forward into our day-to-day work.”

For more on Hack Day and a peek into last year’s projects, check out the links below:

Eat. Sleep. Hack. Repeat. AppFolio Gets Back to Basics.

(<https://www.appfolio.com/blog/2017/03/spring-2017-hack-day/>)

Everyone Wins at the 10th AppFolio Hack Day Games

(<https://www.appfolio.com/blog/2016/07/hack-day-olympics/>)

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