

Hackathon Takes on Tire Industry to Reinvent the Wheel

Business

CHARLOTTE, N.C.

7 tech-savvy teams, 1 revolutionary problem, 24 hours to solve it

On a Friday night in late March, an empty warehouse in Charlotte, North Carolina became a hub for the disruption of the replacement tire industry, a major part of the \$300 billion automotive aftermarket in the United States. For a city best known for the automotive innovations born on its storied NASCAR speedway, this was a very different scene: the seats were Herman Miller rather than Recaro, the action was in code on screens instead of high-banked concrete, and fueled by energy drinks and gourmet treats. Throughout the ersatz facility, fresh college graduates, young professionals, established data scientists sporting Ph.Ds and experienced developers hacked throughout the night at [Reinvent the Wheel](#) Data Hackathon sponsored by [American Tire Distributors](#) (ATD).

The winner of this intense competition would not be measured in speed and seconds, but in who could best combine vehicle registration data, historical sales figures and demographic data into an algorithm that could alter the way the entire multibillion-dollar industry buys and sells tires. Partnered with ATD resources and support, 85 participants in 17 teams were tasked to build a machine learning model that accurately predicts units of sale for a particular distribution center for a specific tire category.

“This event gave us an opportunity to develop new approaches to old problems, as well as recruit top talent to the Charlotte area,” said Tim Eisenmann, Chief Analytics

Officer and Senior Vice President of Advanced Analytics, ATD. “We are excited to improve upon the best models from the competition and use them to create value for our customers.”

After an overnight marathon powered with caffeine, smoothed by yoga and driven across millions of data points, the top five teams were selected to present their solutions to a panel of judges, including Stuart Schuette, President – CEO of ATD, as well as 200 executives from Charlotte's biggest analytics and technology companies, as well as leading universities in the Southeast.

Team ABC from University North Carolina-Charlotte (UNCC) took home the grand prize of \$3,000. InTIREsting Data from UNC Chapel Hill took second place with a \$1,500 cash prize, and Team Abraca-data, a group of professionals, won third place with a \$500 cash prize. Each of the top three teams also took home a brand new set of tires for their chosen ride, provided by a sponsoring manufacturer every bit as interested as ATD in the outcome of the challenge. Other notable teams include:

- Team Data Modeler from UNCC won the Oracle award for Best Use of Cloud Infrastructure
- TeamMiracle Software, a group of professionals from Miracle Software Solutions, won Best Data Visualization
- Team Will Win Wheels from USC received the award for Bleeding-Edge Technology
- InTIREsting Data also won the Unique Thinker award

“Most people do not corrolate the tire industry with thought provoking data-driven technology,” said Bandhavi Bodduluri, Team ABC. “We are happy that we could deliver insights and solutions focused in data science, and hopefully see our findings change the landscape.”

Data analytics allows ATD, the largest tire distributor in the world, to analyze the industry, giving customers the insights needed to stay ahead of competition. The insights gleaned from the hackathon will go straight into deployment into the field.

“The results of our hackathon event set the bar for ATD’s plans to engage with the data analytics community, both locally and nationally,” said Schuette. “We look forward to continuing our mission to be the most connected and insightful automotive solutions provider in the industry.”

About American Tire Distributors

American Tire Distributors is one of the largest independent suppliers of tires to the replacement tire market. It operates more than 140 distribution centers, including 25 distribution centers in Canada, serving approximately 80,000 customers across the U.S. and Canada. The Company offers an unsurpassed breadth and depth of inventory, frequent delivery and value-added services to tire and automotive service customers. American Tire Distributors employs approximately 5,000 associates across its distribution center network, including approximately 800 associates in Canada.

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