Tech4Africa 2013 - Hack is not a four-letter word

Responding to developer conversations, the vast majority of which focused on developers not getting to do "fun stuff at work" or not knowing what "fun stuff to do", Tech4Africa added a day focussed on developers for the 2012 conference programme.

The Tech4Africa 2012 Developer Day, which represented a first for technology conferences in Africa, was so well attended that it overflowed the designated workshop rooms and commandeered the Press Room. Despite the overwhelmingly positive attendance, however, organisers felt that the Developer Day had only been partly executed and they vowed to do a better job for Tech4Africa 2013.

Going above and beyond their initial vision, Tech4Africa's organising team decided that this year they would put together Hackathons in both Johannesburg and Cape Town, where the themes for the technology, speakers and workshops is Johannesburg (using hashtag #Jozi) and Cape Town (using hash tag #Cpt).

According to Gareth Knight, Tech4Africa's founder, the Hackathons will firstly be foccussed on fun for the developers, and then help solve major problems for Johannesburg and Cape Town using readily available data relating to real-time issues such as crime, corruption or traffic control. And that through the deployment of new, different or emerging technologies there will be a positive gain for the people of the two cities.

In order to gather data, the organising teams are in the process of talking to city officials, and by hacking on one of their actual problems and helping to solve it, the Hackathons will have a practical application providing a proof of concept that people can look at.

This year's Hackathon will be free to all participants who will have the benefit of being able to play with new technologies that they don't have exposure to at work. They will be able to meet new people, work on a project which will go live at the Tech4Africa 2013 Conference and which could potentially be used by other cities in Africa. Participants will be able to benefit from interaction with thought and industry leaders. They will also be able to interact with other like-minded people and, above all, have fun.

Anyone interested in exploring new ideas will be able to participate and technologists with any programming experience will be welcome. The Hackathons will have a mobile component and technologies used should be USSD, Android, HTML5, BigData, Geolocation, natural language processing (NLP), MongoDB, different social network APIs, jQuery, node.js and RabbitMQ. Whilst Tech4Africa organisers expect the end result to be a mobile front-end, it will still most likely have a data input interface for all devices and a web back-end for its plumbing.

The Hackathons will open-source the code, and will work with partners to make the Proof of Concepts live for the Tech4Africa event in October.

Dates for the Hackathons are: Cape Town on 16 August, at the Bandwidth Barn, Block B, 3rd Floor, Woodstock Industrial Centre (Woodstock Exchange), 66-68 Albert Road, Woodstock; and Johannesburg on 23 August at JoziHub, 44 Stanley Avenue, Milpark.

For more information go to http://tech4africa.com/ and http://bit.ly/1c8ZBD8 or email Zinnia at zinnia@tech4africa.com.