

System to recycle Lithium Ion batteries from EVs, hybrids wins GfK NextGen Data Science Hackathon

Experts from Kia, Team One acted as judges for 10-day competition focused on electric vehicle technology

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED KINGDOM, April 6, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Ingeniously leveraging GfK automotive data and connecting the worlds of technology and sustainability, a proposed system for recycling Lithium Ion batteries from electric vehicles (EVs) and hybrids has won GfK's annual NextGen Data Science Hackathon Competition, capturing a \$5,000 grand prize.

GfK challenged undergraduate students to develop strategic recommendations for a new product that would enhance EV and hybrid systems. The teams worked with a variety of GfK data sets to identify and understand unmet consumer needs, articulate new offerings, and outline product launch and marketing plans.

Recently, 10 finalist teams from seven universities – in the US and abroad – had 5 minutes each to present their ideas to a panel of expert judges that included Sharon Kondo (Practice Lead, Enterprise and Digital Analytics, Team One) and Natalie Sneed (Manager, Business Insights and Strategy, Kia).

The winning 5-person team from California State Polytechnic University, Pomona (a.k.a. Cal Poly Pomona), identified a key opportunity in the market: a potential market for lower-cost hybrid cars. Based on that, they devised a service called Ion Upcycle, which would turn used batteries from electric-powered Tesla cars into new HEV and PHEV batteries for hybrid cars. Environmentally, Ion Upcycle would provide a sustainable way to dispose of potentially toxic waste; and the new PHEV batteries would charge more quickly and have a bigger mileage range than current hybrid models.

The winning student team consisted of:

- Illian Munoz (Captain) – Psychology/Marketing (Senior)
- Patrick Ogaz (2nd lead) – Computer Information Systems/Marketing (Senior)
- Grant Chic – Marketing (Junior)
- Sebastian Hernandez – Marketing (Senior)
- Andrea Escobar Vara – Marketing (Senior)

To develop their ideas and strategies, NextGen teams were provided with access to data from unique GfK assets, including MRI's [Survey of the American Consumer](#)[®], GfK [Consumer Life](#), GfK AutoMobility™, and a new AutoMobility-linked behavioral dataset.

Participants were assessed on criteria including data handling skills, analytic abilities, and business intelligence. A second team from Cal Poly Pomona, focusing on a product called ElecTrak – allowing EV battery charging while in motion – were runners-up in the competition.

Both Cal Poly Pomona teams were mentored by leaders from the university's Center for Customer Insights and Digital Marketing – Dr. Jae Min Jung (Director) and Dr. Randy Stein (Advisor and Customer Insights Consulting Program Collaborator).

“Electric vehicles are the most powerful source of innovation – and potential growth – in the auto industry today,” said Rolfe Swinton, GfK's Director of Data Assets for North America. “It was great to see our student teams show a strong command of data science and analysis, identifying the right data and leveraging it to drive insightful decisions. In just 5 minutes, they made compelling cases for ideas that could well have marketplace potential in the immediate future and beyond.”

Now in its 10th year, the NextGen Competition gives undergraduates firsthand exposure to solving real-life business problems with consumer insights and data. Three years ago, GfK North America reimagined the competition as a 10-day hackathon, in which students mine raw data sets for relevant insights and then convert them into business guidance. The change reflects a radical transformation in market research, in which data integration and predictive analysis now play dramatically larger roles. Since then, teams from City University's College of Staten Island and Point Park University have won the hackathon.

In previous years, teams from Aurora University, Chatham University, Loyola University (Chicago), Purdue University (Calumet), and Roosevelt University won top GfK NextGen Competition honors.

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