

System to predict needs of ecommerce shoppers wins GfK's NextGen Data Science Hackathon

New Jersey Institute of Technology team developed predictive analyses to make online shopping more personalized

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, May 3, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A team of four Computer Science majors from New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) has won [GfK's](#) annual NextGen Data Science Hackathon Competition, capturing a \$5,000 grand prize. The NJIT group proposed data-driven systems for making FMCG ecommerce experiences more personalized.

GfK challenged undergraduate students to develop strategic recommendations for new products or services in the shopper insights space. Competitors had access to data from GfK's [National Shopper Lab](#) (NSL) – which captures loyalty card activity from 96 million US shoppers – and other sources. The teams needed to show excellence in data science and analytics above all, while presenting plans for an innovative offering.

Finalist teams from the US and abroad had 5 minutes each to present their ideas to a panel of expert judges that included

- Christine Carlson – Insight & Category Leadership, Pepsico
- Deb Eskra – Measurement & Applied Data Science, Oracle
- Ebiola Folino – CSU Market Test Director, Ferrero

Also evaluating the student presentations were Miix Analytics' Hilary Borndahl (Founder and CEO), and GfK's Stacy Bereck (Managing Director, Consumer Insights & Sales Effectiveness), Neal Heffernan (EVP, Sales Effectiveness), and Rolfe Swinton (Director, Data Assets).

The NJIT team developed "iRecommend," a service that relies on predictive analytics to suggest products to ecommerce shoppers, based on their purchase histories and personal characteristics. The winners were:

- Dang Huynh – Junior; Computer Science
- Xhoa Nguyen – Junior; Computer Science
- Tuan Phan – Junior; Computer Science
- An Tran – Junior; Computer Science

The runner-up team hailed from Indiana University's Kelley School of Business in Indianapolis;

their project – created by a 5-person group of Marketing majors – focused on “eTurn,” a proposed system for recycling ecommerce shipping packages.

“We were beyond pleased with the diversity and high quality of responses to this year’s NextGen challenge,” said Rolfe Swinton, GfK’s Director of Data Assets for North America. “The teams’ knowledge of data science and analytics continues to grow each year, and we were glad to see students from a variety of majors and backgrounds taking part. In 5 minutes, these students – especially the NJIT and Indiana University teams – made strong cases for concepts that have real marketplace value and relevance. We were also especially grateful to the Insights Association for helping us promote the event this year.”

Now in its 11th year, the NextGen Competition gives undergraduates firsthand exposure to solving real-life business problems with consumer insights and data. Four 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 California Polytechnic University (Pomona), 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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