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## 'Computer nerds' log 48 hours at First National Bank hackathon

By Kevin Cole // World-Herald staff writer Sep 29, 2013



The Omega Ortega team from the Phoenix area liked First National Bank's "Code 1" challenge of doing a job in 48 hours that usually takes weeks. From left are Tom Ortega, Chris Eggleston and Rance Patterson.

KEVIN COLE

Empty energy drink cans piled almost as high as Internet app ideas as First National Bank's "Code 1" computer hackathon drew to a close.

Internet developers from as far away as Brazil descended on the Omaha bank's glass-enclosed Winter Garden to spend 48 hours working on a new banking app. A \$10,000 prize will be awarded Oct. 10 to one of the 12 three-person teams in the competition.

Angie Garrett, the bank's vice president for technology, said the teams were asked to build customer-friendly apps, beginning their work at 6 p.m. Friday and ending Sunday at 6 p.m.

“Rather than (bank employees) sitting in a room trying to brainstorm what customers want, we decided to get some input from outside the box,” Garrett said. “We're asking all these smart creative people to use their powers for good.”

The second-place team will receive \$2,000. The third-place team will get a \$1,000 prize.

Tom Ortega of Team Omega Ortega, based in the Phoenix area, said such hackathons are happening nationwide.

His team recently won the \$40,000 grand prize at a hackathon sponsored by Sears in San Francisco. Omega Ortega's entry was the Chore Score app, a fun way to get children to do their chores and earn rewards that can be redeemed online or in stores.

“We came to the Sears (event) with a desire to build something that successfully drives engagement and sales for Sears,” Ortega said. “After hearing from the Sears team on a Friday evening, we came up with the app idea on Saturday morning.”

Ortega, 38, Rance Patterson, 39, and Chris Eggleston, 30, didn't want to share their bank app ideas, but they did say they liked the challenge of doing a job in 48 hours that usually takes weeks. Ortega is president of Omega Ortega app development, where the others and Anthony Tanaka also work.

“We literally are going from nothing to a fully working app in about two days,” Ortega said. “We'd like to work like this every day, but, unfortunately, with companies there are a lot of meetings and discussions.”

Hackathons also are good ways to build teamwork and have fun socializing with other “computer nerds,” Ortega said. Omega Ortega team members got about three hours of sleep Friday and Saturday nights but also found time to attend the River City Rodeo.

“It’s just exciting to be in a new environment and doing something different,” Eggleston said. “We still come up with ideas and then argue about them.”

Garrett said Straight Shot, an Omaha company that supports rapidly developing technology startups, assisted in setting up the hackathon. The bank expects to reap a cool, customer-friendly app from the competition.

“We are looking for a fresh perspective and see where these designers can take it at the end of the day,” Garrett said. “We also want young people to realize that you don’t have to leave Omaha to find new opportunities and great challenges.”

