

How to Get the Most Out of Sponsoring a Hackathon.

Looking to get the most out of the hackathon movement but don't know where to start? New to sponsoring hackathons? We're here to help. This guide has been organized based on three major benefits of sponsorship – recruiting, product feedback, and brand recognition.

— RECRUITING —

Hackathons are a great place to find some of the world's best talent, and there are a number of ways to maximize your company's impact. Taking the time to go through resumes in advance gives you a good idea of who you're looking for and the chance to reach out and gauge their interest in a job. Even if you don't get early access to resumes, you can do a lot at PennApps by ensuring that you make your company's presence felt and engage in friendly conversations with hackers. Here are some general tips:

- 1. Bring your star engineers and mentors.** Being a mentor at PennApps is a great way to interact with and get to know the participants one-on-one. Hackers tend to remember the people who were crucial to helping them finish their hack and will associate those positive experiences with your company, keeping you at the top of their minds during their job/internship search. Staying late at night and helping a lot of people out allows you to develop strong relationships with them and a genuine sense of fulfillment.
- 2. Be prepared to "sell" your company and answer questions about internships/jobs.** When you get recruiting-related questions, it's often helpful to share anecdotal experiences and work with the participants, giving them feedback and advice on their hacks to build up a better rapport. Try to strike up conversations with the people that come by your table – or even better, go by theirs!
- 3. Get resumes early and set up interviews in a private lounge.** Our hackers are looking for great jobs and if you get early access to our resume book, you can start the hiring process right at PennApps. While you aren't hosting awesome events, use your private lounge area to conduct interviews and immediately find some amazing talent.

— LIVE API/PRODUCT FEEDBACK —

It's crucial to engage with participants at a hackathon. Asking teams about their hacks, working with them, and convincing them to try your product are all vital to boosting adoption. Offering a prize for the best use of your product is also a great idea from both a branding and a product perspective. Here are some of the most important things to do:

- 1. Bring company engineers and mentors.** If you're interested in getting your product out there, make sure you bring your engineers. We love having engineers around because when hackers are struggling with some obscure aspect of a particular API, they'll have someone to go to for help. Also, engineers who know the product or API well will be able to effectively improve their product's documentation or functionality based on what people tend to find confusing over the course of the weekend.
- 2. Be proactive.** A lot of hackers (especially less experienced ones) might not feel comfortable approaching you to ask for help. Mentors who tend to be most impactful and feel most fulfilled occasionally walk around the venue, asking teams about what they're working on and whether or not they need help. It's also a great way to get to know some of the hackers who are using your API/product and get feedback. Please remember to go back to people you've met and check in with them!

- 3. Incentivize people to use your product.** You can do this in several ways, including an inspiring stage demo or a unique prize. Offering hackers free access to your hardware or paid service is a great hook and will usually convince a lot of hackers to try your product.

— BRAND RECOGNITION —

Here's the key to brand recognition – you want people to see it everywhere and associate it with positive experiences. You also want to be as engaging as possible to show off how stimulating and encouraging your company's culture is. We have a lot of ideas about how best to go about this and we'd love to talk about what specifically works best for you, so start a conversation with us as early as possible and we'll work to give you the best experience possible. Here are some common ideas:

- 1. Bring cool swag/interactive demos/engaging table displays.** Your sponsor table is the face of your company at PennApps. Decking it out with lots of unique giveaways and other items of interest will undoubtedly draw attention to your company. For example, in the past companies have had video-gaming setups, hoodies, and branded backpacks to give out. On the other hand, giving us your swag to put into swag bags ensures that every participant at PennApps gets it – in other words, 2000 people will be advertising for you for the entire weekend and afterwards.
- 2. Offer prizes people want for things people would want to hack on.** We all like trying new things with technology, but there are a lot of options and some incentive makes the decision easier. A good place to get started thinking about what to offer is our list of prizes from past events – here's our list from this past [spring](#) and [fall](#). Alternatively, feel free to search for other hackathons' prize lists on [ChallengePost](#). The most effective prizes aren't just token trophies – they have the hacker in mind. People want to hack on interesting ideas and probably won't go for an overly specific prize that they have to build their hack around. They prefer prizes that are open to interpretation or can be integrated into an idea they are already working on, and add a cool dimension to their project.
- 3. API sponsors – make good use of your stage demo.** Your minute onstage is going to be your company's introduction at PennApps as well as your only chance to address all 2000 attendees at once – giving an engaging API demo is pretty important. Some tips for success: try to keep things short and sweet, don't use too much field-specific jargon (hackers all have varying levels of experience in your field), and focus on the demo of how it works – there typically isn't enough time for live coding. This is also a great time to quickly announce your company prize.
- 4. Sponsor an event/meal/lounge.** A great way to interact with hackers is to sponsor a side event (think Quizzo, ice skating), a snack or meal (dinner or midnight cookies), or get your own lounge (bring your own furniture or set up a game room). These kinds of events bring a large number of people by your location, and then it's just up to you to strike up conversations or simply associate your brand with something awesome.

And finally, remember to follow all the usual [Codes of Conduct](#) and venue rules (for example, no alcohol); nothing too complicated. Just sending a group of awesome people to PennApps to rep your company is enough to do wonders!

Now that you know how to make the most of sponsoring a hackathon, check out our sponsorship tiers at pennapps.com/sponsor! When you're ready, send us an email at sponsor@pennapps.com and we'll get moving on giving you an awesome hackathon experience. See you at PennApps!