

Tech4Africa launches the Random Hack of Kindness, focusses on workplace skills and utility value

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This year Tech4Africa is running a Hackathon on the two days prior to the main event. This is an interesting development since they ran two Hackathons two years ago, and then stopped doing them altogether, until now.



When quizzed about this the founder of Tech4Africa, Gareth Knight, said: "The first two Hackathons we ran were great days and I think the attendees got a lot out of it, but we felt afterwards that they didn't live up to our expectations. And then looking at the ecosystem, we felt that there were already enough events doing that, so why try compete on that basis?"

Which is fair enough... but then Knight says "...And then one event I asked the audience how many of them were using some sort of source control, or CI for deployments, or who worked in teams bigger than 2, and the numbers were shocking poor - clearly there is a lot going on in the ecosystem, but we started questioning whether it was actually relevant. So this year we've decided to do something a little different, with the focus on a utility product for the African market, and the core skills taught being code collaboration and shipping product. When you unpack this, it's basically our mantra of: ***Want to build big tech product for Africa? Focus on product with daily value for user. Mobile first. Make it easy to share. Make sure cash-flow has you in it.***"

So, unlike most Hackathons, the format will be different: the attendees will all work on the same project, but within their different skill sets and abilities, and everyone will share the same codebase. The objective will be to release a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) onto Github in two days, for anyone to take a look at, and to make sure that everyone attending has the skills to collaborate on software projects of 2 or 20. After that, if the MVP is good enough it will be demo'd at the main Tech4Africa event and to the Johannesburg City Council.

To support this, Microsoft are sponsoring Azure cloud instances which will give the developers the ability to push their code live, as well as *free* online training. Tech4Africa will be running Google Hangouts beforehand to help the developers get up to speed.

Says Knight: "It's hard to overstate how far behind we are in Africa in some respects, and we think that focussing on developing skills around collaboration and releasing products is the most productive thing we can do right now to help grow innovation in Africa. We're excited by this approach, and so far the number of signups is validating this. It's going to be awesome!"

The Hackathon website can be found at <http://bit.ly/Tech4AfricaRHOK>, the main website at: Tech4Africa.com and anyone can register at <http://register.tech4africa.com>. Tickets are FREE.

Date: 6-7 October followed by Tech4africa 7-8 Oct. Venue: FNB Stadium