

[We Built a Thing: the Virtual Design Master 2019 Hackathon Result](#)

There have been a number of times in my life and career where I have decided to share an idea with the world hoping that it may work and entirely willing to ride the results, whether it's to success or to failure. And by failure, I really mean to a profound learning experience. This past Friday (August 9th) proved to be the former. The Virtual Design Master virtual Hackathon was a success by my measurement. Let's see what happened

Build Year = Learning Year

Virtual Design Master has been around for 6 full years now in one form or another. We have seen a growth in the community supporting and participating in the events and we have given out well over 10,000\$ in prizes while providing what we hope to be valuable to our community peers. When this year's organizing meetings started, I decided to flip the script.

Moving from the traditional architect-focused program was not something I took lightly. What drove my desire to shift into a hackathon focus came from many interactions I've had over the past few years where many of my ops-origin friends and community peers shared that joining a hackathon is not easy to do unless you're a developer. I want to change that. [This article gives a good indication of the challenge.](#)

Small Team, Big Result

The hackathon event was designed to change the approach of a hackathon while still ensuring we tested with an actively engaged audience. This was a broadcasted signup with folks who knew they had to commit to 24 hours of availability, but we were up front in saying that this was not a full-out 24 hour straight coding exercise.

After a 4-part education series on what a hackathon looks like, we had a handful of folks jump in as either participants or volunteers. It was good enough to test the method. Then the day arrived and we found that life happens to us all and our numbers dropped to four participants. This is how we learn.

The pitch was to create. product that would allow algorithmic matching of people based on personality and skills in order to better match mentors with potential mentees. The result, after a lot of testing, site building, and collaboration, was a working system that is able to programmatically match people based on a few criteria and a simple web application to collect that information. This was the basic proof-of-concept which will be evolved into an actual product thanks to the testing and work that was done by the team (Joe Houghes, Angelo Luciani, Al Rasheed, and Me).

Lots of Content to Watch and Explore

The lead up to the event included a 4-part educational series presented as live webinars and each of those are available on demand here:

Episode 1 - [The Idea](#)



Episode 2 - [Building the Team](#)



Episode 3 - [Product Management for Hackathons](#)



Episode 4 - [Getting Ready and Test Pitching](#)



We live streamed a significant portion of the interactions as well which are all here in sections:

Part 1

Part 2

Part 3

Part 4

Part 5 - Finale and Demo

The Product and Presentation

All of the code and documentation from the event was created and shared on GitHub under the Virtual Design Master account. You can check out all the links which will also evolve as more documentation and updates happen beyond the hackathon.

Project page: <https://github.com/VirtualDesignMaster/Hackathon-Team-BusOne>

Wiki: <https://github.com/VirtualDesignMaster/Hackathon-Team-BusOne/wiki>

Presentation:

<https://github.com/VirtualDesignMaster/Hackathon-Team-BusOne/blob/master/rapidmatter.pdf>