

# [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>

---

# **Interop, RapidMatter, and Mentoring**

## **Interop 2018**

This year at [Interop](#) will be exciting as usual with a number of events focused on community collaboration in and out of the technology ecosystem.

Tuesday and Wednesday will feature a 5km (3 mile) #vFit fun run.

Tuesday run: <http://schedule.interop.com/session/itx-vfit-runs/856879>

Wednesday run: <http://schedule.interop.com/session/itx-vfit-runs/856880>

There are also two blocks of time which are [Ask the Expert sessions](#) hosted by me and a group of incredible technology community mentors. The mentoring sessions are happening on Wednesday and Thursday from Noon to 2:30 on site in Booth 619 in the Business Hall.

There is no cost to the session as it's included in your Interop pass. Thank you to the team at UBM and all who make Interop possible, for all of the continued support of our technology community.

Wednesday Ask the Expert Session: <http://schedule.interop.com/session/ask-the-experts/857845>

Thursday Ask the Expert Session: <http://schedule.interop.com/session/ask-the-experts/857846>

Sign up for your individual session here: [Ask the Expert Signup Form](#)



## **RapidMatter and MentorConnection**

Mentoring is, and has been, a powerful contributor to successful changes in my life. This is something that has always been important both as a recipient of mentoring (aka mentee)

Being in a mentoring program requires a strong commitment from both parties involved. As a mentor, you're contributing your time and providing guidance, feedback, and sometimes difficult advice. As a mentee, you commit to taking in that advice and also to act on it even where you may not have done such tasks or taken such an approach in the past.

To quote [Ray Dalio from his book, Principles](#) (a must-read book IMHO):

Are you willing to fight to find out what's true?

Do you deeply believe that finding out what's true is essential for your well-being?

Do you have a genuine need to find out if you or others are doing something wrong that stands in the way of achieving your goals?

If your answer to any of these is no, accept that you will never live up to your potential.

If, on the other hand, you're up for the challenge of becoming radically open minded, the first step in doing this, is to look at yourself objectively.

This is the reason that RapidMatter is launching the start of the MentorConnection program. This is the first phase of the platform and it begins with our very own community connections who we are bringing together through RapidMatter to increase the success and the accessibility of mentoring and finding a mentor within technology. And that is just the start.

I recorded episode 54 of the GC On-Demand podcast on the subject and I hope that this is something that strikes a chord with folks in the community

If you're keen to be a part of this program, either as a mentor, or a mentee, or even just to stay informed on the progress, please visit [RapidMatter.io](#) to sign up for notifications. There are going to be some exciting opportunities to build and leverage this community platform.



Look for more exciting news and sign up to stay in touch!

---

## [Turning Grey Matter into RapidMatter](#)

Today I spotted something on Twitter that caught my eye, and I clicked through the link because of a couple of reasons. First, I have done work with Rene Van Den Bedem (aka [@VCDX133](#)) through [Virtual Design Master](#) plus other community based activities, and secondly, because I love to geek out about Enterprise Architecture:



Even before I read what Rene is proposing, I had a feeling that it was the start of something very cool. [Rene did up a great post that talked about the project](#) and the background to why it is important.

Please take some time to look over the post, and I encourage you to think of anything that you see as being important to this type of a tool. I use the word tool lightly, because I really see the potential here for this to become not only a phenomenal tool, but a platform that can help everyone in the IT community.

### **Dynamic Reference Architectures Generated with Openness and Neutrality (DRAGON)**

Recently I had an idea to create a way to help folks to pool together their ideas and provide a way to share what they are doing in their environment, along the lines of what is done using the [RefStack](#) and vOpenData concepts.

The next step beyond this is to be able to create dynamic reference architectures from these pooled designs that can show real-life deployments and highlight the differences and we could then feed those reasons with detail from seasoned architects from the industry to help illustrate the “why?” of the design decisions.

The name I had chosen for my little idea, that I’d gladly turn over to Rene’s Rapid Matter project, is DRAGON: Dynamic Reference Architecture Generated with Openness and Neutrality.

### **What is Openness and Neutrality**

The reason that I highlight openness and neutrality is that we need to embrace these qualities. There will be proprietary vendor content contained in the library of architectures, but the openness and neutrality comes with having as much data available to make the decision, and also that any vendor can contribute their designs and data into the system.

Making this an open system means that as a consumer of the service, that you have access to as

much information as possible. It will really encourage vendors to share their data, any API information, design criteria and more. By feeding more information into the system, they open the doors to make better information come out through the designs and architecture.

I would even think that this could move further up the stack and be done at the application tier also, but let's start with infrastructure because it really is an open field right now. This is our opportunity as architects to bring all the expertise and experience we have accumulated, and contribute to a share system which will benefit the greater community.

## **How to Contribute**

As [Rene mentioned on his blog](#) it is easy to contribute by contacting Rene by email, and most importantly, we can all fork the project and [contribute to the Github repository](#).



I've submitted a pull request with some quick ideas, and hope to be a part of helping this really exciting project to grow. Remember that this is only as good as we choose to make it, and personally, I want to make it awesome!

Thank you to Rene for getting this started, and I hope to see lots of you submitting your contributions via Github and making Rapid Matter a platform that we can all enjoy together.