

Students win \$10,000 for barcode app that makes recycling easier

Messaging bot for HDB residents and AI app for school counsellors also recognised at event

Esther Loi

A Web-based app created by university students will allow users to scan the barcode of various items, ranging from shampoo bottles to drink packets, to show how they can be recycled and where the nearest recycling bins are located.

TrashAway, developed by a group of National University of Singapore students, was submitted as an entry for the inaugural Build For Good citizen hackathon, an event that seeks solutions aimed at building a better Singapore.

The team, which calls itself Renesan, was one of three to win \$10,000 at the finale on Saturday.

The competition, which began on June 3, saw 690 sign-ups.

After a selection process, 13 teams of 60 participants tested their ideas and prototypes on Singaporeans as they sought to tackle issues such as recycling, mental health and support for the elderly.

The three top entries were decided based on the positive impact the product has on the public, prototype execution, product feasibility and innovation.

After scanning the barcodes of different items with TrashAway, users will be given detailed in-



The TrashAway app was designed by National University of Singapore team members (from left) Shreyas Rao, Remus Kwan, Chiam Jing Ru, N. Vijay Narayanan, Chen Jun Hong and Zechary Au. The team was one of three to win \$10,000 at the Build For Good citizen hackathon finale on Saturday. ST PHOTOS: DESMOND WEE



Team Noteflow members and AI app creators (from left) Samuel Suther David, Tan Yan Liong, Ong Zhi Xuan, Benjamin Chew Jie Han and Lok Bin Kai.



Team MS members and KnowLiao Web platform and messaging bot creators (from left) Catherine Cha, Bui Thuy Hanh and Wong Wen Yu.

structions on how to properly dispose of each item, which include cleaning, drying and flattening it.

The team said it added the feature after a poll they conducted on 95 Singaporeans showed that 62 per cent could not find their nearest recycling bins. The app will also help users locate recycling bins within a 200m radius.

Users can also add unlisted recycling bins to the database.

For now, the TrashAway prototype has a catalogue of packaging of locally made products such as Heaven and Earth green tea bottles and cans, and Milo packet drinks. The team plans to expand this database using object-recognition technologies to include more recyclable products that do not come with barcodes.

Speaking at the finale on Saturday, Minister of State for Trade and Industry Low Yen Ling said the competition showed what could be done with the right talent, support and desire for public good.

“In just one month, 60 builders were able to build 13 different working prototypes – and this is on top of their day jobs.

“Imagine what we could do if we could get all of Singapore together to make this little red dot a better place. What kind of Singapore could we create together?” added Ms Low.

Another winning team was Team MS, which created a centralised Web platform and Telegram messaging bot called KnowLiao, which disseminates announcements to people living in Housing Board estates.

KnowLiao currently operates on the basis of user contributions. But the team is hoping to work closely with government agencies so residents can be alerted about works in their housing estate, such as when a fumigation exercise is being held, through the platform.

The third winner was team Noteflow, which created an app for school counsellors that uses artificial intelligence to transcribe and sort their case notes, thus saving them time.

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