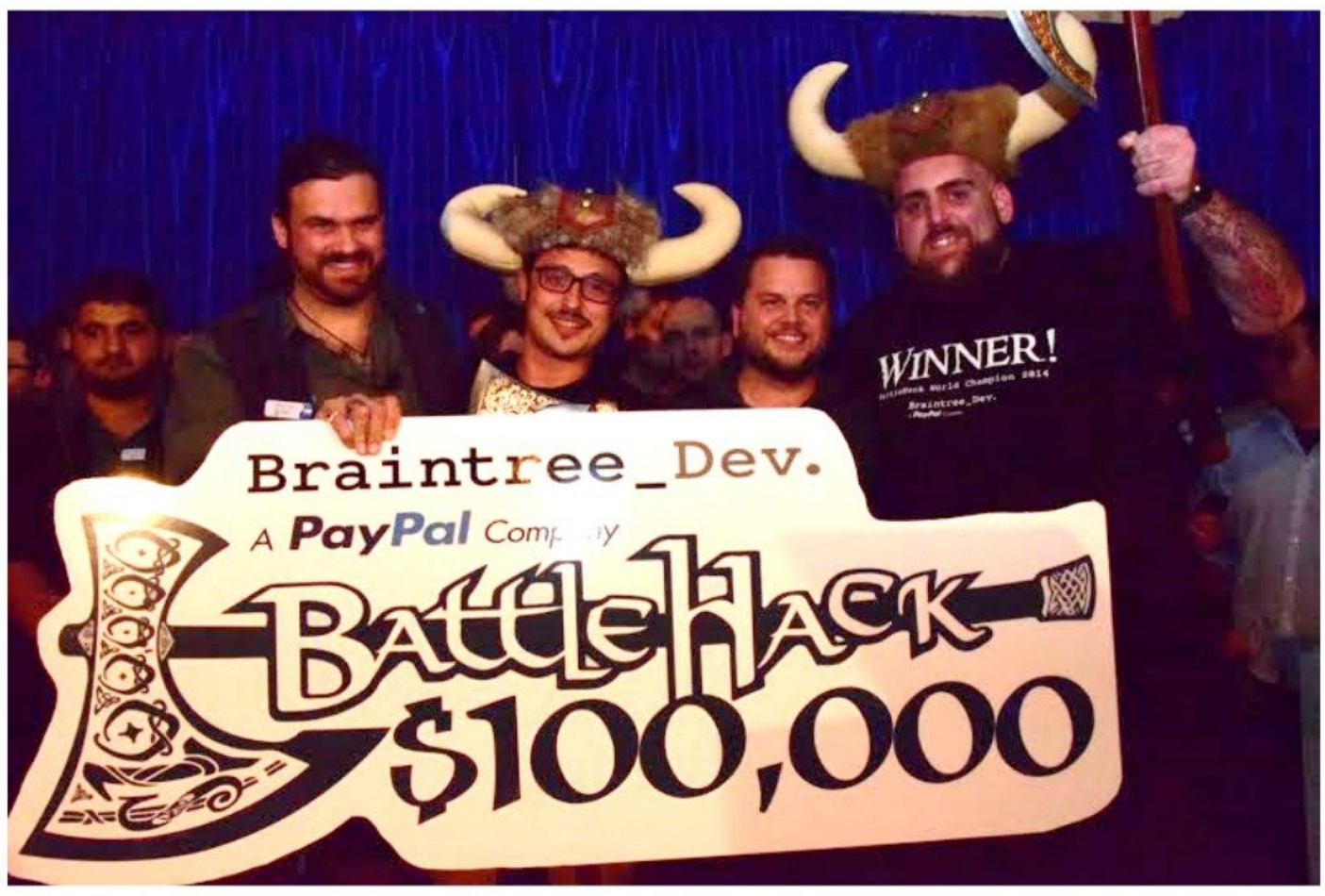
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BattleHack: Cybergeniuses code for good causes

By **ShareAmerica** - Dec 11, 2014



Horn-wearing hackers Pavel Kaminsky, left , and Shai Mishali celebrate their BattleHack victory with Braintree CEO Bill Ready, center. (Courtesy of PayPal)

For many people, the term hacker carries a negative connotation. But what happens when cybergeniuses create tools for a good cause?

One way to find out is at BattleHack, a global competition launched by PayPal in 2013 that tasks geeks to create computer code beneficial for communities.

At the 2014 BattleHack championship, held November 15–16 in California, Israeli programmers Shai Mishali and Pavel Kaminsky won the title Ultimate Hacker for Good along with $100,000 in prize money. Mishali and Kaminsky developed AirHop, an app that enables mobile phones with no service to "hop" on phones with service and could be used in emergencies, such as natural disasters.

The road to the BattleHack championship started earlier in the year, when nearly 3,000 coding enthusiasts competed at preliminary BattleHacks held in 14 cities around the globe. The winning team from each city then competed in a 24-hour championship "hackathon," where they built apps using PayPal, Braintree or Venmo APIs.

At the 2014 BattleHack championship, Team Toronto took home second place, while Team Boston placed third. Apps created by the 14 teams ranged from helping the visually impaired to developing an open marketplace for education.

But none of these ideas would be possible without a free and open Internet. Experts say that an Internet free of government control boosts innovation, efficiency and freedom.

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