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Tel Aviv duo bags $100,000 hackathon prize for cheap cell-network access

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Jose Fermoso, Twitter: @fermoso

Telecommunications companies aren't likely to endorse the sharing-economy app that bagged the $100,000 grand prize in San Jose's BattleHack finals this weekend for two Tel Aviv hackers.

But since they made the app during an event where coders wore pajamas and Mariachi bands played presenters off the stage, the telecoms may not have anything to worry about — yet.



Shai Mishali and Pavel Kaminsky, from Tel Aviv, Israel, won the BattleHack Series with a cool app that allows phone users that lose a phone connection to jump to another for a small fee.

Two young guys from Tel Aviv, Israel, Shai Mishali and Pavel Kaminsky, made an app called AirHop that allows people who own a phone, but don't have functioning telecom service, to temporarily leap on a stranger's carrier or Wi-Fi network for a small fee.



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The sharing economy is built on peer-to-peer services where owners lend out property or services for small periods of time. There is usually a mutual rating system that legitimizes the viability of the users and the security of the transaction. The market for these services is on the rise, and is already huge. Last year, it was defined as a $26 billion market.

AirHop accepts payment through PayPal. The finals task required applications to be built with PayPal, Braintree and VenMo APIs. VenMo and Braintree are both owned by PayPal.

According to the Israeli team, AirHop was built using MongoDB, Node.JS and Amazon Web Services and also integrated voice and SMS features through Twilio and transactional email platform SendGrid.

John Lunn, Senior Global Director, Developer Network at Paypal and Braintree, said the technical aspect of the winning app was "extraordinary." He said that since the app jumps between cell phone networks or connects them to create a "mesh network" — an ad-hoc wireless network that accepts different wireless bands — means cell phone area connectivity can increase in places with low signals.

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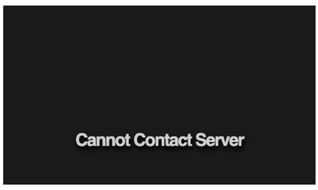
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