




Virtual collaboration drives real innovation at the 2020 Hulu Hackathon

By Billie Sue Chafins, VP, Software Development and Nick Brookins, VP, Software Development

This July, Hulu's U.S.-based tech team held its seventh annual — and first completely virtual — Hackathon. For 10 days, teams collaborated remotely to develop projects designed to better serve Hulu's viewers, solve complex technological problems, and explore exciting new product possibilities. Despite teams being entirely remote, a record number of Hulu employees and interns participated in the Hackathon this year. Interns who'd never interacted in person teamed up across states and time zones to create some of the event's most impressive projects. These included **Acronym Breaker**, a time-saving browser extension that explains Hulu-specific jargon for employees, and **Widgets**, an ingenious new way for Hulu viewers to personalize their mobile viewing experience with customizable Hulu widgets. For this year's event, many participants were inspired to respond to the moment. A special 2020 Hackathon awards category, **Spotlight on Helpful Hulugans**, encouraged projects designed to ease the stress of working remotely, help Hulugans connect with important resources, and/or create opportunities for community engagement. The 2020 Hulu Hackathon was an experiment in remote teamwork and creativity in unique circumstances, and the results speak for themselves. Let's take a look at some of the innovative Hackathon projects Hulugans created: Haptics for Streaming Video Imagine *feeling* your favorite Hulu TV shows and movies in addition to seeing and hearing them. Nearly every American has a mobile device that uses haptics — the science and study of how people understand information through touch — for everything from mobile gameplay to text messaging. This innovative Hackathon project applies this technology to streaming video, unlocking an exciting new dimension of storytelling. *Team: Linda Dougherty, Bryce Horwood, Pablo Orrantia, David Resnick* Ads for Positive Actions Our winner in the Helpful Hulugans award category, Ads for Positive Actions, builds on Hulu's interactive ad formats. This project repurposes Hulu's innovative ad technology to connect viewers — via QR codes and optional text notifications — to nonprofit organizations and social justice initiatives. *Team: Jorge Zapata Guridi, Brandon Hyman, Tiffany Jiang, Andrew Salituri, Nivedita Sonker*

 Shareable Playlists This is the perfect feature for anyone who has ever made a list of their favorite holiday TV episodes. The Shareable Playlists project lets Hulu users create curated playlists of their favorite content and send their recommendations to family and friends. *Team: Brandon Wee, Rahel Yimenu, Jane Wang* The Masked Binger Thanks to the Masked Binger project, Hulu's cover images are now following CDC guidelines. This clever — and topical — project uses facial recognition technology to add digital masks to the characters and people featured in Hulu cover art, reminding Hulu viewers to stay safe and mask up. *Team: Daniel Wu*

 Context Switch Context Switch is an internal tool that addresses a common problem: the stress and fatigue associated with working from home. The feature links with Hulu employees' work schedules and sends out challenges, such as stretching exercises, throughout the workday via Slack to break up the monotony. *Team: Adrian Teng-Amnuay, William Goeller, Fred Wang* Hulu Guest Mode With Hulu Guest Mode, Hulu subscribers can create a special profile for house guests or visitors that doesn't affect or reveal their saved shows, recommendations, or account information. The feature benefits guests, too: while in Guest Mode, users can quickly establish viewing preferences and personalize their experience to get to their favorite shows in a shorter amount of time. *Team: Levi Kipke, Raymond Qi, Nivedita Sonker, Daniel Yi*

 Hulu Plan Builder Hulu Plan Builder helps new subscribers customize their Hulu plans from a wide range of

offerings and add-ons. With an intuitive interface, the Hulu Plan Builder asks a series of questions related to budget and viewing habits, using the information to then recommend a plan that's optimized for the subscriber's needs and preferences. *Team: Amna Aftab, Nina Fan, Jia Hui Huang, Eric Lee, Stacy Li, Carlos Mortera, Howard Myint, Susie Riley, Trev Thomas, Matt Wong* 📱 *If you're interested in working on projects like these and powering play at Hulu, see our current job openings [here](#). This blog was originally published on the [Hulu Tech Blog](#).*