Cisco's CodeSprint Pioneered a New Way to Attract Software & Security Innovators

Cisco partnered with HackerRank to run a 2.5 day CodeSprint that pulled over 6,500 engineers and surfaced the best software and security talent in the world.

Cisco builds the highways of the Internet. Its engineering and security team is among the best in the world, supporting the core infrastructure of the web billions of people rely on each day. It's on a mission to shape the future of the Internet through software, hardware and other network services.

When you're at the forefront of technology with a high bar for passion, talent and cultural fit, traditional methods of recruiting just won't cut it. In order to attract innovative programmers to help achieve this mission, Cisco's recruiting team needed an equally innovative strategy to spot the highest skilled talent.

Cisco partnered with HackerRank to host two simultaneous CodeSprints (online hackathons) aimed at attracting top engineers with talent, skill, and an entrepreneurial spirit. The CodeSprint competitions also created a new way for Cisco recruitment leaders to fill one of their most difficult and elusive positions–security specialist engineer. By hosting a special competition exclusively for security specialists, the Cisco team was not only able to attract thousands of skilled engineers, but also see their creativity, problem solving and teamwork abilities on display. No need to rely on LinkedIn, job boards, or referrals–the Cisco team was finding new talent in a way traditional recruiting never could.

In the span of 2 and a half days, nearly 5,000 engineers came to the CodeSprint for a chance to win top honors in the general Cisco Software Challenge — another 1,700 engineers competed in the Cisco Security Challenge. Each challenge consisted of 5 problems tailored to match Cisco's desired skillset. Most importantly,, almost *all* of the competitors expressed a clear interest in working for Cisco. To sweeten the deal, the top-ranking competitors also won prizes such as MacBook Pros, GoPro Hero4s or a Cisco t-shirt.

Based on the average challenge success rate in the graph above, you can see just how challenging the security problems were in comparison to their software counterparts. For the Security Challenge problems, the success rate for each problem followed the logical trajectory — the easier ones were achieved more often than the harder problems. But the Software Challenge problems yielded a slightly surprising result: The moderate "**Big Table**" problem was harder for folks to finish than the difficult "**Largest Palindromic Substring**."

You can see the Software Challenge problems here: **[P1**, **P2**, **P3**, **P4**, **P5]** and the Security Challenge problems here: **[P1**, **P2**, **P3**, **P4**, **P5]**. The Security Challenge competitors demonstrated a high level of skill and mastery.

Interestingly enough, although the Cisco Security Challenge problem-set was much more challenging with a lower rate of average success, there were many more winners with perfect scores than software engineers. In other words, the Security Challenge competitors were extremely qualified and skilled at their specialization.

Out of the over 3,000 Software Challenge competitors, there were only 17 perfect scores; whereas out of 450 Security Challenge competitors, there were 27 perfect scores! This proves that niche, specialty-specific code challenges are a highly effective way to bring out the very best engineers in the world.

Speaking of the which, where did all of these talented Cisco competitors come from? Let's take a look at the top countries with the most competitors. The highest number of competitors came from India, the U.S., and Canada for both the software and security challenges. The U.S., however, brought in more security specialists. The following is a breakdown of the countries with at least 3 engineers who placed in the top 50%.

Since India, U.S. and Canada had the largest representations in both the software and security challenges, it makes sense that these countries garnered the highest number of folks who finished in the top 50%. But it's interesting to see China make it to the third spot for Top 50% finishers when China only represented only 1% of the total competitor pie.

Even though India, the U.S., and Canada had the highest number of participants, the countries with the highest number of winners were all over the map. With the exception of the US, which had the most top performers in both the software and security challenges, the top 3 countries with the highest number of competitors were underdogs: The Czech Republic and Japan in the Software Challenge, and Belarus and China in the Security Challenge.

That's the beauty of HackerRank CodeSprints. We connect the best talent with the right companies no matter where you're from, what school you went to or what experience you have. The only thing that matters is your talent, drive, and passion.

For a cutting-edge company like Cisco, finding smart, accomplished engineers with the perfect skillsets was a challenge–but through CodeSprint, Cisco was able to use HackerRank's platform to access thousands of high-quality, motivated candidates. The best part? It took less than 3 days.

Last, but not least, here's the final leaderboard of the top 10 winners of the Software and Security Challenge.

As you can see, experts from lesser represented countries, like Poland, Argentina, Belarus, and Thailand were the top competitors. Here at HackerRank, we're proud to empower folks from all walks of life with the chance to work at the world's leading companies, like Cisco–if you're smart, talented, and committed, you can take your place among tech's brightest minds.

Technology shapes our daily lives, thoughts, and routines–but who shapes technology? HackerRank is committed to adding new voices to the communities and teams that build these exciting platforms. If you have the skills and the passion, HackerRank and pioneering companies like Cisco can help you leave your mark.