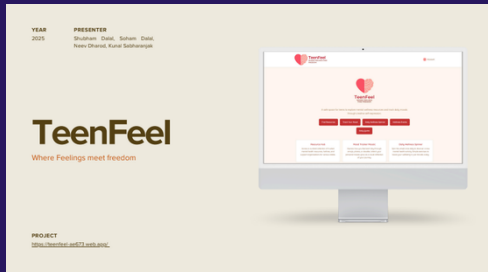
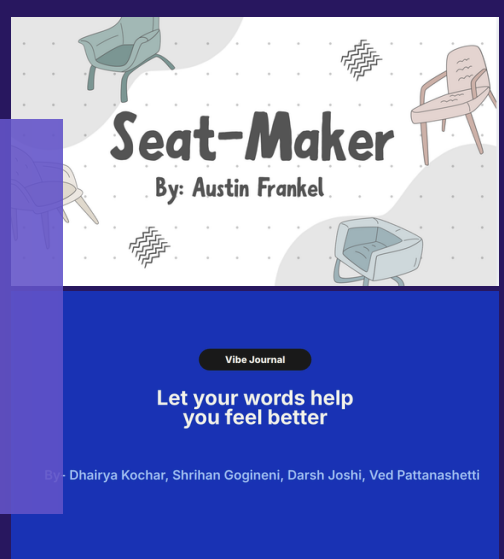
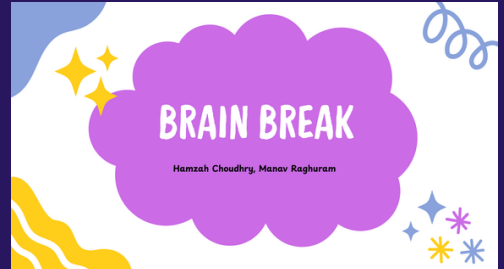
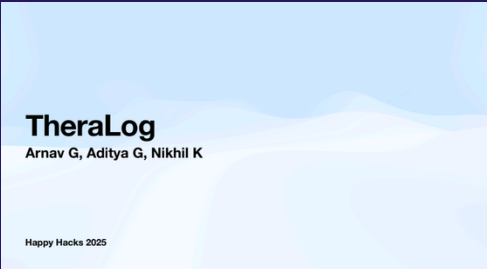


PROJECT MANAGEMENT CAREER DEVELOPMENT



FOOTHILL HIGH SCHOOL
4375 Foothill Rd, Pleasanton, CA 94588

April 8, 2026

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Problem Statement

Skill Gap

Students often learn how to build, but not how to pitch, position, or validate what they create

Risk-Averse Mindset

Many students pursue stable tech careers instead of exploring entrepreneurship and ownership

Application Gap

Most student projects stop at building, without showing real-world value or use.

What is Happy Hacks?

Happy Hacks is a one-day, 12-hour hackathon with a post-event incubator for the top teams. Participants identified real-world problems, built functional prototypes, and presented structured pitches to entrepreneur judges. The event raised **\$7,500** in sponsorship funding to support prizes, operations, and continued development after the competition.

OUR SPONSORS

Curry Kona ciena.
FUSION FOOD

Interview Cake



Project Goals

H

Harness a Diverse and Engaged Competitor Base

A

Apply Business and Presentation Thinking

C

Cultivate Measurable Skill Development

K

Kickstart Implementation Through Incubation

Key Metrics

75 competitors attend

75% of teams score 80/100 or higher overall on the judging rubric

70% of competitors indicate a measurable increase in technical or business proficiency

1 product launch that successfully gains traction

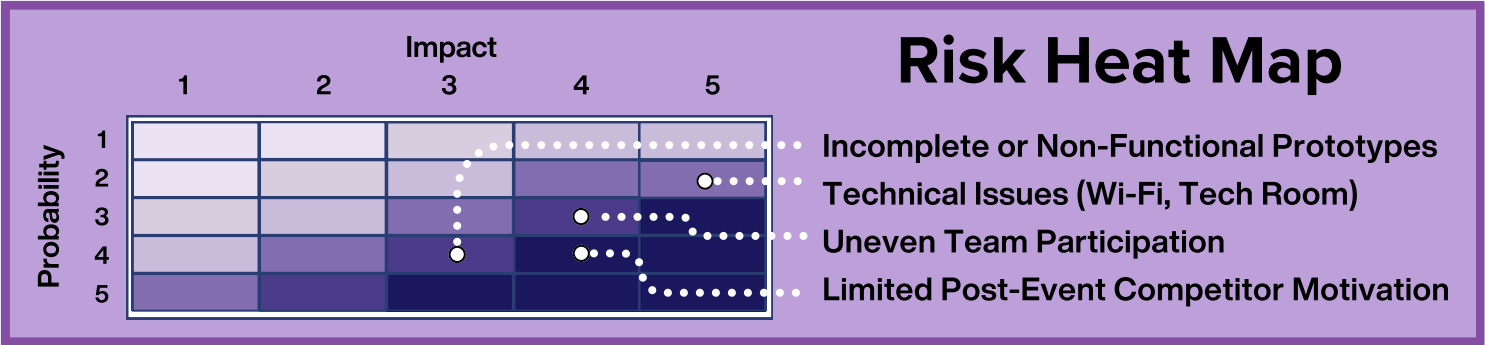
MILESTONE 1
Planning **Jan 3rd - April 17th, 2025**
Set Foundations; Organized Resources

MILESTONE 2
Marketing **Feb 8th - April 24th, 2025**
Increased Event Exposure; Gathered Sign-ups

MILESTONE 3
Executing **April 26th, 2025**
Executed Event; Fixed Problems in real time

MILESTONE 4
Following Up **April 26th - June 9th, 2025**
Continued Engagement; Evaluated Impact

Monitoring



Risks

Schedule	Budget	Quality
Teams falling behind or sessions running late could disrupt the event flow. This risk was managed by creating a detailed schedule with clear milestones.	Overspending on materials, technology, or prizes was a potential risk. Organizers controlled this by planning a comprehensive budget in advance.	Inconsistent project outcomes or uneven judging could reduce the event's impact. We fixed this through guidance.

Evaluation of Key Metrics

88 competitors attended the Happy Hacks event	78% of teams score 80/100 or higher overall on the judging rubric	86% of competitors indicated an increase in technical or business proficiency	1 event winner gained traction after launching their product
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Recommendations for Future Projects

1	2 Judge Panels to expedite total presentation duration	2	Longer event to allow more time for project development	3	Establish a centralized web domain for project hosting
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II. INITIATING

A. Statement of the Problem

Innovation in technology cannot be accomplished by technical ability alone. Entrepreneurs must connect technical execution with **product strategy, user value, and clear communication.** In fields such as product development, entrepreneurship, and digital marketing, employers and investors increasingly look for people who can both **build solutions and explain why they matter.** However, many high school students in the Bay Area are developing **fragmented skill sets.** As technical proficiency becomes more accessible, many students **excel in coding, web development, and advanced topics like machine learning** but lack experience in **pitching, market thinking, and understanding customer needs.** Employer data reflects this imbalance: while technical proficiency is high, skills such as **communication, teamwork, and critical thinking** are valued more but less developed (**Figure 1**). At the same time, some students develop leadership and business skills but lack **hands-on product experience,** creating a divide between **builders** and those who can only **communicate or code.** Successful employees and entrepreneurs are **well-rounded,** with proficiency across the categories in **Figure 1.** As **industry uncertainty** rises, many students choose **traditional, lower-risk careers** over entrepreneurship and innovation, drawn to a steady salary rather than an **entrepreneur's variable income (Figure 2).** *Happy Hacks* addresses this gap by providing a **structured environment** where students can **build, position, present, and grow technological solutions as viable products.**

Competency	Employers	
	Importance	Proficiency
Communication	96.1%	53.5%
Critical Thinking	96.1%	55.9%
Teamwork	93.9%	81.5%
Career & Self-Development	65.6%	43.2%
Professionalism	89.4%	50.3%
Leadership	45.0%	31.0%
Technology	71.7%	72.0%
Equity & Inclusion	70.0%	63.3%

Figure 1 (Source: Minnesota State University)

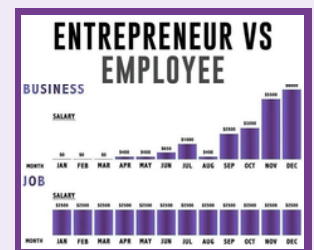


Figure 2 (Source: Donevogel)

“ Growing up in the Bay Area, I thought my **only option was a FAANG desk job.** It felt like there was this **pressure to chase prestige,** and I never dared to consider anything remotely different.
- Sahil Deshmukh, Grade 11

B. Project Scope

PROJECT CONTEXT

THE STELLAR HACKS' MISSION:

To create **interdisciplinary hackathon experiences** that merge **technology** with **other fields of study,** helping students apply **cross-disciplinary skills** to **real-world challenges.**

As a **student-led nonprofit organization** dedicated to making hackathons **free and accessible** for high school students, **Stellar Hacks** has differentiated itself by expanding the traditional hackathon model into **distinct fields.** **Stellar Hacks** has hosted **2 prior hackathons:** **Stellar Hacks I** connected technology with **astronomy and aerospace engineering,** tasking competitors to build a space asteroid detection system, while **Brainstorm** extended that approach into **neuroscience and bioengineering** and connected winning students with professors from **Harvard and UC Berkeley.** Continuing our mission to bring together different disciplines, *Happy Hacks* focused on connecting technology to **entrepreneurship** by allowing participants to find a market niche, develop a creative solution through a **technological tool,** and present a pitch to a **panel of 3 judges** with entrepreneurial experience with winning teams using prize money to start their company in a mini-incubator.