Learning Report

Activity Highlights

It has always been our dream to participate in an international competition with participants from all around the world. We could not be more grateful to be given the opportunity to engage in the Global Legal Hackathon in the United States, which is widely conceived as the cradle of talents and innovation. This journey is an extremely rewarding one, and we have gained much exposure to the legal and tech industries, as well as insights from other participants, guests and judges. We know that this is a once-in-a-lifetime experience, so we will definitely cherish the memories we have created.

Engagement and Participation

The final gala was held on 21st April, 2018 in New York City, USA. Arriving on the 20th, we had ample time to prepare for the presentation on the following day. Prior to the start of the gala, all teams sat in booths and interacted with investors and guests in the demo hall. We have printed leaflets about our solution and demonstrated to the guests how our solution works on our laptops. It is indeed our pleasure to receive a high degree of appreciation and encouragement from lawyers, journalists and software developers who did not know our solution at all before our explanation. Yet at the same time, we have been challenged and received some negative comments, but they allowed us to realize the flaws and limitations of our solution, which provided us with directions to make further improvements. We have also exchanged ideas with our counterparts and learned a lot about how their ideas were created, how they developed their ideas into functional tools, etc. We were then invited to conduct a radio interview with Legal Talk Network to explain our thoughts to global audience together with the team from Brazil.

There were more than 100 audience in the presentation hall, consisting of 14 finalist teams, guests, and the judging panel. The final presentation was judged by 5 judges from 5 continents. The finalist teams included the teams from Hungary, New York, Melbourne, Singapore, Nigeria, etc. We were the only team from China that entered into the final round. Each team was given 5 minutes for presentation. We prepared a detailed presentation deck and some videos for demonstration. Some teams had entirely different presentation styles and focus, and we were all very impressed when other teams could demonstrate a functional web app/ browser extension to the audience.

The 14 finalist teams entered into 2 different categories of the hackathon, namely the public sector and the private sector. We were very fortunate to become one of the two winners in the public sector. During the post gala cocktail session, we had further discussions with the judges, guests and other participants on what would be our next step forward after the win.

How we have been benefitted

Joining the grand final of the Global Legal Hackathon not only pathed us to our dream to share our messages to the world, but also provided us with inspirations related to legal-tech development globally: examples include utilizing blockchain for legal data management and incorporating google assistant for legal enquiries and smart contract, etc. Through such a comprehensive legal tech expo, we have learned much more about how technology enhances the efficiency of legal work, and how technology can be utilized to enhance people's access to justice, which is a greater social good.

It is not just only us who benefitted from the gala. After our return, we have set up meetings with difference parties, e.g. public interest law advocate PILnet, law firms, and the government, to share our great experience in the Global Legal Hackathon. Representing Hong Kong to join and win the first legal hackathon on a global level, the South China Morning Post has featured our experience and this could definitely garner more attention from Hong Kong public to the development of legal tech and benefit the ecosystem of legal tech in Hong Kong. For foreign media coverage, we are glad to be featured in several posts, including New York Law Journal and AI Lawyers.

Moreover, this was a precious occasion for us to get in touch and mingle with legal professions and students from a wide range of jurisdictions. For example, one of the teams was working on handy data protection tools for the public in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in EU countries, which is not covered in our regular legal study curriculum. It was a great chance for all of us, as law students, to learn laws in other jurisdictions by listening to real practitioners' sharing.

All in all, the hackathon is a life-changing experience, and we are grateful for all the support, be it spiritual or financial, and the opportunities to meet so many people with different expertise. We hope that more and more HKU students will grasp the opportunities to participate in international competitions as well.