



# Making Your Event an Experience

How to engage hackers in an unforgettable Hackathon :)



# Dylan Vidal

President of Knight Hacks @ UCF

3<sup>rd</sup> Year Computer Science Student

GitHub Campus Expert 🚩

MLH Top 50 2025 ★





# Knight Hacks VI

My first Hackathon! And where I really learned what an “experience” was to my community.

- A strong sense of collaboration and community
- Dungeons and Dragons!
- Heavy Investment into Decorations
- Quick-time events
- Heavy emphasis on socials
- AWESOME MERCH!





# Level Design

01

## Build the Moment

A Hackathon isn't all about Hacking.  
Invest in socials, and friendly events.

02

## Consider Immersion

Find ways to get hackers involved  
during the event in impactful ways.

03

## Make it Memorable

Find ways to leave a long lasting  
impression on hackers.



# Important Topic Areas

01

## Narrative

What is the theme of your event, what role does the Hacker play?

02

## Merchandise

Let Hackers take their experiences home with them forever.

03

## Logistics

Bake your narrative into every facet of your event.



# Building a Narrative



## Theming

### IDENTIFY AN ENGAGING THEME

- Something Hackers will remember.
- Know your target audience.
- Easily integrates into Hackathon Logistics.
- Rebrand your organization for Hack Season!

Past KH Themes: Fantasy (D&D), Pirates (One Piece), Gundam/Kaiju (Godzilla / Pacific Rim).

## Mascots

### USING THE FACE OF YOUR ORG

- Seasonal “in-theme” branding of your org’s mascot.
- Create an example of what this theme looks like.
- Mascots are memorable, and help make your event an experience that is easy to remember.
- Use the mascot to tell a story and create your narrative.

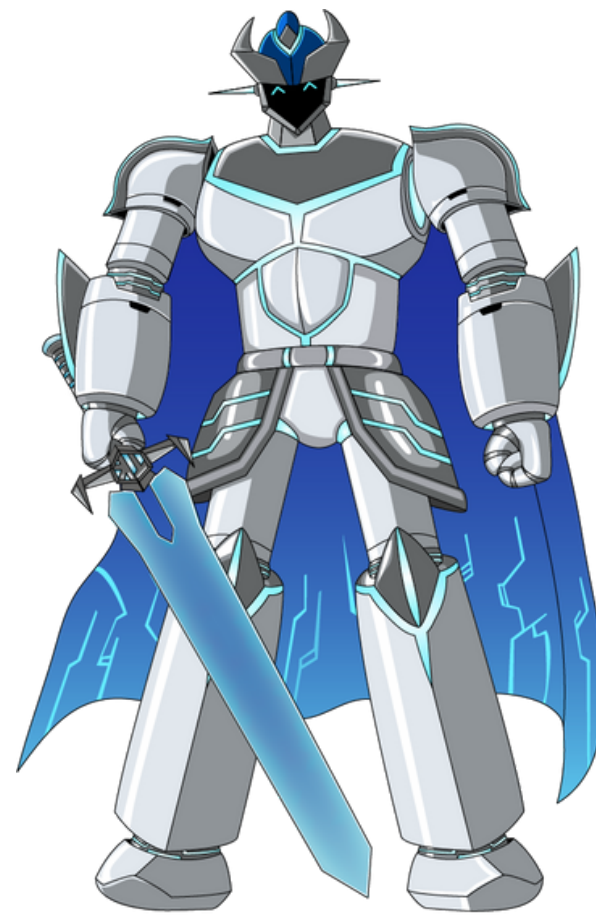


# Meet T.K!

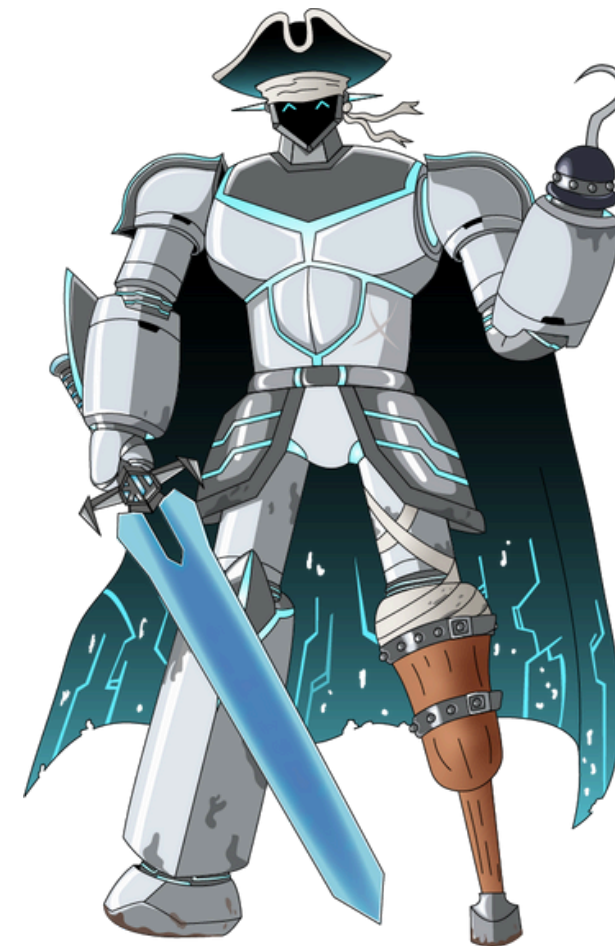
T.K Base



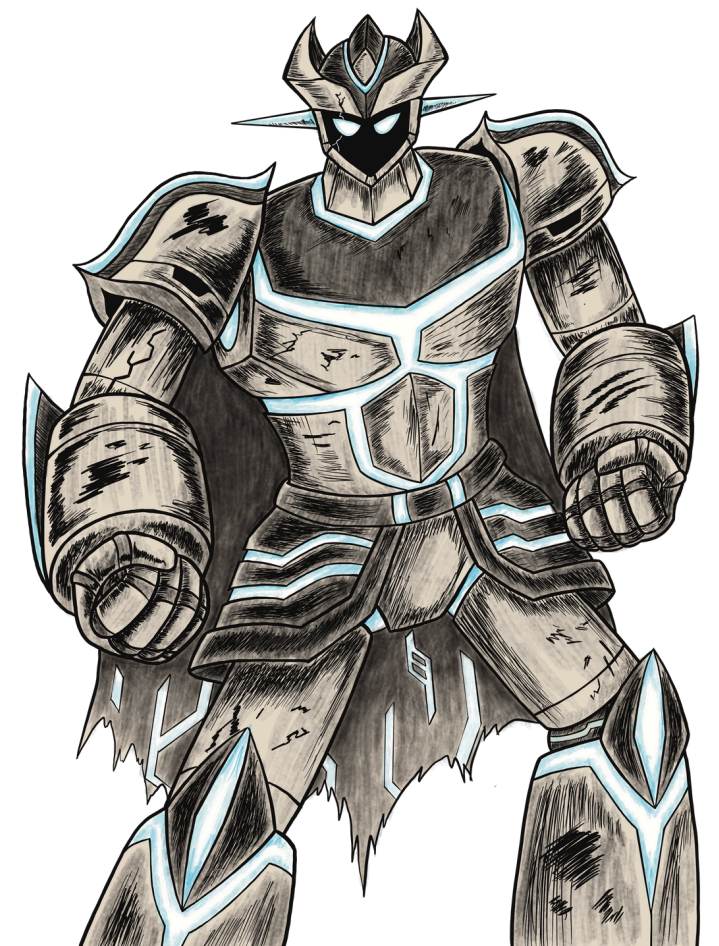
KH 6



KH 7



KH 8





# Rebranding

KH Base



KH 6



KH 7



KH 8





The image features several 3D pink cubes. One cube is in the top left corner. Another is in the middle left, slightly below the first. A cluster of four cubes is in the bottom left corner, arranged in a 2x2 grid. The cubes have a soft pink color with subtle gradients and shadows, giving them a three-dimensional appearance.

# Merchandise!

There are three main goals when designing merchandise:

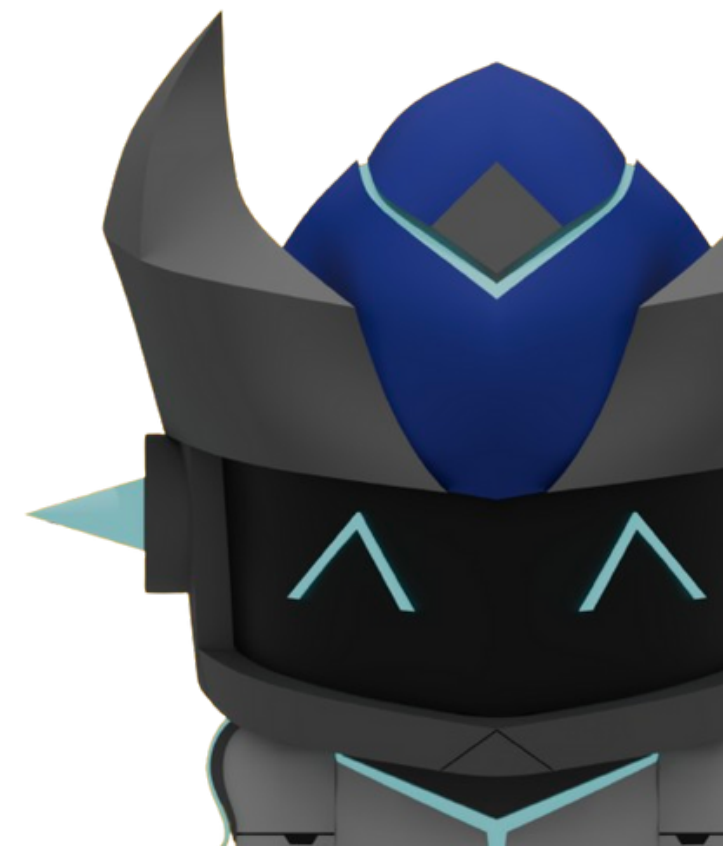
1. Keep it in theme - think Disney merch!
2. Find ways to build mindshare (usability is key).
3. Include a per-event exclusive specialty item.



# Specialty Merchandise

Find a really cool, in-theme item for each event. This will generate novelty, and exclusivity. Leave Hackers curious for what is next?

- KH 6 - Dice Set
- KH 7 - Deck of Playing Cards
- KH 8 - Funko-style T.K Figures



# Logistics

Incorporate your theme and narrative into even the smallest components of your event. This will help keep immersion as a part of your “amusement park”

- Rename common areas or workshop rooms.
- Distribute Hacker classes, and turn it into a friendly competition.
- Theme announcements before and during the event.





# Why Bother?

01

## Instill Passion

Hackers will associate tech with the great experiences they've had.

02

## Build a Positive Brand

People will relate your organization with positive memories.

03

## Inspire Organizers

Running a truly impactful event will inspire people to run it next year.





# Connect with me!

Portfolio

[dvidal.dev](https://dvidal.dev)

LinkedIn, Instagram

[@dylanvidal1205](https://www.instagram.com/dylanvidal1205)

Knight Hacks

[club.knighthacks.org](https://club.knighthacks.org)

