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Compete Caribbean hosts inaugural mediathon for Caribbean journalists

November 23 , 2016 - Compete Caribbean's final event in its three-day long celebration and dialog was the climax of the Mediathon at the IDB Barbados headquarters. The mediathon had started the day before on Tuesday November 22, at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre and concluded the following day at the Inter-American Development Bank's country office in Barbados.

Participants from Barbados, Bahamas, Jamaica, Belize and St. Kitts, were separated into four groups and asked to come up with an innovation which incorporated technology and science that would help the Caribbean.

Presenter Javier Iglesias took the participants through the various stages of creating an idea, including pitching it, and implementation. In an information-packed discussion, he explained the difficulties faced when pitching ideas to investors, and the masses.

Participants then had the opportunity to work on their ideas, and were asked to provide proof that their innovation was needed, or at least would be of some interest to the public.

The groups showed their initiative by surveying persons from their respective countries for feedback on their ideas in an effort to determine what the demand and interest was for the innovation.

Group 1 calling themselves “IV Untapped”, pitched an idea, which would help Caribbean residents with their water scarcity issues. Group member, Barbadian news anchor, Shane Sealy who has a mini TV series discussing the water issues which plagues his country, explained to the judging panel that their idea, a TV show where affected callers would explain their issues and seek solutions, was the best way to go.

Group 2 was Innovate Now. Led by Barbadian, digital media specialist, Israel Mallet, they pitched a project to get youth to be inspired by stories of innovation and become innovators themselves through the use of media.

Group 3, ‘STEM-tastic’ which comprised of Belizean broadcast reporters Courtney Weatherburne and Marleni Cuellar, Bahamians Tameka Lundy and Deanya Knowles, and Barbadian reporter Makiziwe Steele, showed some initiative by having primary school students in Belize send a video giving feedback on their idea.

Their innovation, “So You Wanna Be STEM-tastic!”, was an augmented-reality book aimed at inspiring children ages 7-11 to be interested in a career in STEM. The book, when the photos are scanned with smartphones, turns into mini-videos of successful Caribbean persons who work in Science, Technology and Engineering.

Group 4 using the name Strive had the idea of tracing the lives of innovators in the region through Mobile Journalism. They tried to convince the judges that on-the-go reporting was a worthwhile investment, and the way forward for journalists. They pointed out that reporters would do everything by phone- take photos, write the stories, record interviews and submit their stories.

The judging panel included Executive Director of Compete Caribbean, Sylvia Dohnert, IDB Communications Consultant, Pamala Proverbs, Secretary General of the Caribbean Broadcasting Union, Sonia Gill, Editor-in-Chief of MIT Technology Review, Marta del Amo and Rudy Hogan, Second Secretary Development, Government of Canada .

The eventual winners were the Group STEM-tastic, with 'IV Untapped 'placing second. This announcement was followed by an award presentation. The two winning teams will receive mentorship to turn their ideas into reality and a first refusal option by the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation to air televised content. Participants all lauded Compete Caribbean for a well-executed event, with many echoing that they had "learned so much."

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