

# Hackers Work Together to Help Israeli Tourism

**EDUCATION:** Students seek to teach airline travelers about nation's culture.

The Israeli American Council hosted nearly 200 Israeli, Israeli-American and Jewish-American students last month for the IAC Eitanim Summer Hackathon.

The event culminated on June 28 with a Demo Day in which the students presented at the American Jewish University in the Sepulveda Pass their products developed to use inflight experiences to educate and engage passengers traveling to Israel about the country.



**MANUFACTURING & TECHNOLOGY**

Mark R. Madler

**Shoham Nicolet**, chief executive of the council, said that a commonality among the products developed by the 17 startup teams was creating a personalized experience.

"It starts with the inflight experience and continues outside as you go on a trip in Israel," Nicolet said.

One of the top products as chosen by the judges was a repackaging of food as way to teach about the diversity of Israel; another was a virtual reality experience that is custom made for the flight passengers about the country's culture and history, Nicolet said, adding "you have a (virtual) tour guide with you the moment you go on the site."

The top winning product was an app for inflight video seat-back programming to connect passengers to opportunities with nonprofits across Israel.

Judges included Nicolet; **Danna Balas**, co-founder of **Menchies Frozen Yogurt** in Encino; **David Gonen**, an investor with expansive knowledge of technology trends; and **Yonatan Winetraub**, co-founder of **SpacEL**, an Israeli



**Flying High: Summer Hackathon participants at American Jewish University.**

nonprofit with a goal of sending spacecraft to the moon.

The intent of the five-day program was to teach about both Israel and technology but to do it in a way that puts the students in the driver's seat, Nicolet said.

"You create an immersive learning experience that is life changing for students versus just putting them in a classroom and teaching them," he added.

## Utility Tech Contractor

**Integrated Telemanagement Services Inc.** has been certified as a woman-owned enterprise by the California Public Utilities Commission. The Simi Valley provider of telecom and internet services went through a rigorous certification process, including verification of the firm's operational stability and fiscal health and a thorough review of the majority owner's qualifying characteristics.

Chief Executive **Sharon Woods**, who bought the company in 2004 from the founders, said receiving the certification from the commission was a milestone. "When I took over the management and ownership of ITS, the telecommunications industry was a male-dominated industry. A woman president was quite unique," Woods said in a statement. "Today

there are many more women in technology and I hope to inspire more women in the future."

The commission has certified women and minority businesses since 1988 through its Supplier Clearinghouse, which audits and verifies the status of those businesses and maintains a database accessible to both the commission and participating utilities.

ITS is one of 58 women-owned technology companies certified by the commission. "By achieving this certification, we look forward to providing California utilities options to help them meet their diversity requirements while speeding up the contracting process," Woods added in her statement.

## Lustre Acquisition

**DataDirect Networks Inc.** has acquired the Lustre File System business and related assets from **Intel Corp.**, the companies announced last month. Terms of the June 25 deal between the Chatsworth computer storage company and Intel in Santa Clara were not disclosed.

The assets include the Lustre open-source file system that provides high-performance systems for computer clusters ranging in size from small workgroup clusters to large-scale, multi-site clusters. The technology is used in high-performance computer systems in the health care,

energy, manufacturing, financial services and academic research sectors. DataDirect will operate the Lustre team as an autonomous division within the company. It will be run by Senior Vice President **Robert Triendl**, who has helped grow the company's involvement in Lustre over the past decade. The acquisition of Intel's Lustre file system capability is a move that combines the most advanced file system technology with DataDirect's already substantial high-performance computing, analytics and cloud product portfolio, according to the company. Chief Executive **Alex Bouzari** said he was excited to bring on the experienced software development team with the acquisition. "Over the next few years, we are going to invest significant resources to enhance usability and to broaden Lustre's capabilities and feature set in the direction of flash-enabled performance, analytics, enterprise and hybrid cloud," Bouzari said in a statement.

## IV Monitor

**PDC Healthcare** has launched a new monitoring system for intravenous tubing. The Valencia developer and manufacturer of identification and patient safety products uses an innovative color-changing technology on its TimeAlert IV reminder labels to provide visual cues for when IV tubing needs changing. "Working with our hospital clients, we developed TimeAlert IV to make it easier for time-strapped caregivers to get a visual reminder plus added accountability and convenience," **Heather Hudson**, marketing manager for PDC Healthcare, said in a statement.

TimeAlert IV comes in 72-hour and 96-hour formats to support the most common IV tubing change protocols used by health providers. The indicator includes fields for caregivers to record the IV start time and date, change time and date, and initials for compliance and accountability. PDC Healthcare is a division of **PDC**, a manufacturer of identification products for the leisure, animal health and law enforcement markets.

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# Bar Association Re-Opens Mediation Center

**COURTS:** Judges can refer cases to Tarzana service for low-cost resolution.

The San Fernando Valley Bar Association's Valley Bar Mediation Center is now taking some of the weight off L.A. Superior Court judges with its designation as one of two vendors that can provide low-cost mediation services to those who request them from the court.

The center, which is registered as a 501(c)3 nonprofit and is located in the Bar Association's offices in Tarzana, provides educational workshops and discounted mediation services



**LAW**

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with the aim of helping businesses and individuals resolve disputes without entering into costly litigation. It applied earlier this year to be one of the providers of mediation services through the Superior Court, which required that applicants demonstrate that the organization's attorneys possessed the necessary qualifications and

could provide references from individuals who had successfully resolved disputes through their services.

The mediation center first received word of



**Van Nuys: L.A. Superior Court building.**

its selection in March but was added to the Superior Court's website the week of June 18. Its phone has been ringing since then, Executive Director **Deanna Armbruster** said.

"Our goal is to alleviate the burden on the courts because we are offering the opportunity for litigants to pursue a resolution through mediation, which is faster and cheaper and more streamlined," she explained. "It doesn't impede the court system."

The L.A. Superior Court ran its own mediation center for more than 20 years, but was forced to close it in 2013 due to budget cuts. Since then, judges have been overwhelmed by requests for mediation, which is often utilized by small businesses in the case of issues pertaining to workman's compensation or unemployment insurance, customer injuries or landlord disputes.

## Dynamex Coalition

Three local chambers of commerce were part of a statewide coalition of businesses and trade organizations that sent a letter to the California Legislature on June 20 requesting that it put a hold on the application of a three-part worker classification test outlined in the ruling in *Dynamex v. L.A. Superior Court*, as the cost of ensuing lawsuits threaten to decimate businesses, the coalition said.

The Simi Valley, Oxnard and Camarillo chambers were among 76 companies and trade organizations to sign the letter, which included signatures from the **California Hospital Association**, **California Retailers Association** and **Family Business Association of California**. Well-known "gig economy" tech companies **Uber Technologies Inc.**, **Lyft Inc.** and **Postmates Inc.** also backed it; such firms are thought to be particularly vulnerable targets to legal action under the ruling, which sets forth a three-part test for determining whether a worker should be hired as an employee or an independent contractor.

According to the ruling, a business that wishes to classify a worker as a freelancer must show that A) they have no control over when a worker performs his or her tasks; B) the worker is performing a task outside of the company's usual scope of business; and C) that the worker is engaged in their own business that offers the services she or he is performing for the company.

The ruling poses a challenge for businesses because it has the potential to hit them at the core of their business model, **Gary Cushing**,

chief executive of the Camarillo chamber, said.

"Not that we like the rules right now, but if you change them, that could change the model for what people are doing in their companies," Cushing said. Representatives for the Simi Valley and Oxnard chambers did not return requests for comment by press time.

The letter outlines two distinct problems that threaten to ensue from the ruling. First, it has the potential to "eliminate the vast majority of independent contractors in California," the letter said. Second, it will further the litigation costs that are already strangling businesses under the controversial Labor Code Private Attorneys General Act, or **PAGA**, which allows employees to sue their current and former bosses for most Labor Code violations, regardless of whether they themselves have been directly harmed.

"Employers will face a wave of litigation under PAGA with this decision that will destroy businesses or significantly reduce their economic growth," the letter said.

The goal of the letter is to convince state legislators to stop legal action that could result from the *Dynamex* ruling until all stakeholders have had the chance to work together to come up with a more balanced test for employee classification, according to the letter.

"The time to act is now, before work opportunities are destroyed, and before the trial lawyers start crushing businesses with an onslaught of litigation," the letter said.

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