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How Charlotte Got Its First-Ever Innovation Week

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Seed the South underway. Courtesy photo.

By Courtney Gabrielson

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At the end of January, the Queen City will host a first-of-its kind, week-long celebration of the local tech and startup scene.

Aptly named [Charlotte Innovation Week](#), the Jan. 20-24 event came about largely by coincidence — and a desire to harness happenstance into something powerful.

Luong specified that ecosystem leaders, like Charlotte Inno's Juan Garzón and Sam Smith of Vishion, noticed that there was an uncommonly large amount of high-profile tech programs happening at the end of January.

"A bunch of events were happening that week, so we just decided, 'Hey, this would be a great idea,'" [Collective Hustle](#) director and Charlotte Innovation Week organizer Lynn Luong told Charlotte Inno. "It would be easy to just say, 'This would be the first-ever Charlotte Innovation Week.'"

The "bunch of events" she mentions include Collective Hustle's [Seed the South](#), a two-day event for investors and founders; [PitchBreakfast](#); and Charlotte Inno's own [Inno on Fire awards event](#).

With the core foundation of the week's programming laid, other Charlotte groups, leaders and startups became eager to participate. More events were added to the Charlotte Innovation Week calendar to accommodate that interest, resulting in 10 unique sessions (with more to be announced this week).

"There's a lot going on in the ecosystem that people don't know about, and the week's programming is a chance to highlight those things," Garzón said.

The team's goals extend beyond just spotlight-lighting, unifying or educating the ecosystem. Luong added that the week wants to celebrate the state of Charlotte's innovation community, too, in a way that's accessible to all kinds of attendees (from all facets of the startup world).

After all, the biggest goal for the Charlotte Innovation Week team is to encourage actionable change. Speakers have already been encouraged to not only challenge attendees to think about what's next for Charlotte, but also provide the answer (from their perspective) during those sessions. Inspired listeners can then begin building that future after the event ends, and hopefully return to future Charlotte Innovation Week programs and watch as the city continues to develop.

"When you create something that is finite in time — so, something that just lasts for a week — what you're really looking for is how it makes an impact the rest of the year," Luong said.

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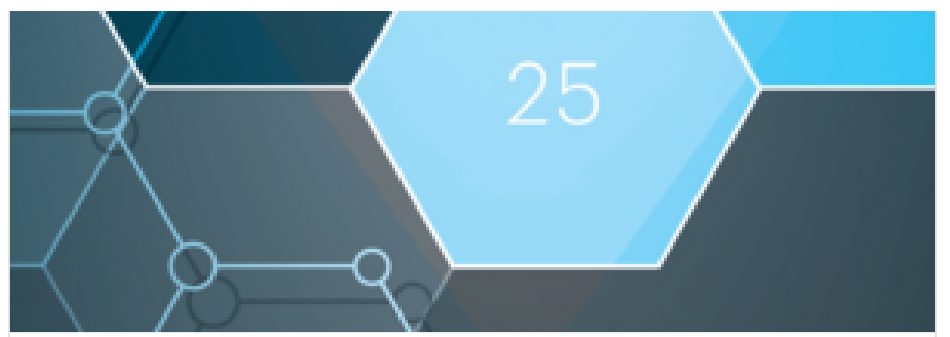
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