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# Sales students in Parker College of Business compete virtually in global competition

May 18, 2020



Students use the voice recognition function on their phones to sell to artificially intelligent animated customer bots in the RNMKRS Virtual Sales Competition. (Image provided)

When Samuel Pearson signed up to compete in the RNMKRS Virtual Sales Competition, where he would interact with an artificially intelligent (AI) animated customer bot to sell a product, he expected it to be similar to a video game.

“The whole idea of selling to an AI seemed simple enough,” said Pearson, the top-performing Parker College of Business student in the competition. “At first, I thought the AI would react like a video game character and as soon as I learned how to beat it, I could win every time. That wasn’t the case.”

Pearson was one of 70 Georgia Southern University students and one of more than 1,300 students from 48 colleges and universities around the world to compete in the RNMKRS virtual competition where students used their mobile phones to interact with AI animated customer bots to compete for visibility with employers like Dell Technologies and HubSpot.

During the virtual sales competition, students used the voice technology on their phones to have conversations with the customer bot as they tried to win its trust and educate the AI on their product line of laptop computers. The customer bot then listened, adapted and responded as the students went through the sales call.

Despite his experience as a sales student in the Parker College of Business and his first-hand experience working in sales, the contest challenged Pearson in a new way.

“This competition works to show you exactly what is needed to land a sale,” he said. “RNMKRS allows you to learn all the aspects that go into making a sales call without the fear of diving straight into a face-to-face (sales) situation without any experience.”

Pearson prepared for this virtual sales competition much the same way he would prepare for an in-person sales competition. He took notes on the specification of the laptops he was selling to include the AI's given identity and took into consideration the tips the RNMKRS representatives provided.

"The key difference working with the AI is that you can't simply convince the AI that you're correct," he said. "You must be 100% correct with your wording or else the sale won't progress, or it won't understand you. You also didn't need to impress the robot like you would a person."

Linda G. Mullen, Ph.D., co-executive director of the Center for Sales Excellence at Georgia Southern, said the contest came at an opportune time for students after Georgia Southern moved to online instruction in March due to COVID-19.

"This competition's first run was in Fall 2019, but I jumped at the chance for our students to participate when I saw we were moving to virtual instruction," said Mullen. "This was our first time competing, and we will be doing this again in Fall 2020 for sure."

The first virtual, mobile selling skills competition was developed by the RNMKRS Faculty Alliance of Leading Educators, Dell Technologies training executives and developers from three countries. RNMKRS is a free online tool students and faculty can use to learn, practice and demonstrate selling skills in a Global Virtual Sales Competition.

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