

16-Year-Old CEO Shares Thoughts on Silicon Valley and the “Sharger”

David Andrés, CEO and cofounder of startup Sharge, describes how the Smart Teen Mobility team won the Audi Creativity Challenge, spent a month immersed in Silicon Valley, and plans to use the winning product to connect charging stations.

David Andrés was one of the speakers in a session called Disruptive Technologies Transforming Cities at the Smart City Expo World Congress 2016. I had the chance to ask him some questions after the event.

At 16 years old, you are the CEO of Sharge.io and the winner of the Audi Creativity Challenge. Could you please tell us more about this challenge?

The Audi Creativity Challenge is an entrepreneurship contest organized by the car manufacturer Audi and by Imagine Creativity Center. In its first event, more than 300 teams from all around Spain participated in the contest. This challenge had four phases following the Lombard Method created by Imagine.

During the first phase, the teams had to find problems regarding mobility and finally choose one of these problems. In the second phase, the teams had to think about ideas that solved the problem they were focusing on. For the third phase, the teams had to prototype their idea. And finally, during the fourth phase, the teams had to communicate their ideas. I strongly think that communication is very important; a great idea without great communi-

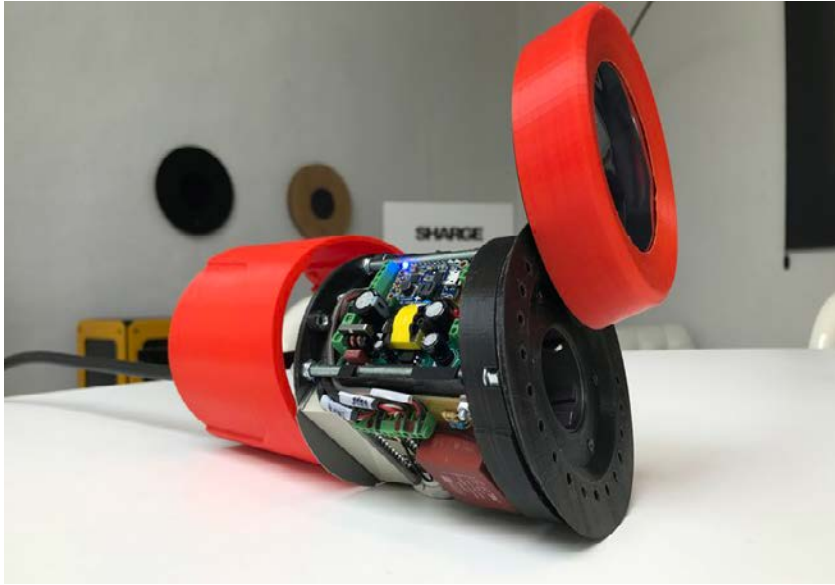
cation doesn't reach its potential.

We had to create a video with a three-minute pitch explaining our idea. Then, the jury selected the best 25 teams. The selected teams had a week to try to reach the maximum amount of votes in social media. Finally, the jury—alongside the media votes—selected the best 10 teams to participate in the final event in Madrid.

In the final event, we had the opportunity to do several activities around the city of Madrid to improve our pitch and receive feedback from communication experts. Finally, we did



David Andrés, CEO and cofounder of startup Sharge.io.



The Sharger counts the kilowatts consumed per hour.

a final presentation at which a jury formed by Entrepreneurs, the Imagine founder Xavier Verdaguer, YouTubers, and Audi representatives selected the best team.

How did you and your teammates from Smart Teen Mobility come up with the idea? And what challenges did you encounter during the competition?

I think that the help of our mentor, Joan Viladomat, was crucial to us coming up with the idea. He is an expert of sharing economy and he founded the startup Parkinghood. He really saw that sharing economy could be the solution to the problem we were facing and helped us select the idea. He also supported us through the whole process of the contest.

I think the most difficult part of the competition was to create a good pitch. We had many problems recording the video and practically spent three days to have it finished. But I am now very proud of the work we did.

After winning the Audi Creativity Challenge, you and your teammates went to Silicon Valley and developed and presented your idea at the Imagine Creativity Center. How was that experience?

Going to Silicon Valley with Imagine was a dream come true. It was an amazing experience that completely changed our lives. We visited and received feedback from the most innovative enterprises around the world like Facebook, Google, Twitter, and Apple. We also had the pleasure of meeting one of Steve Jobs's best friends (Daniel Kottke).

It was fantastic to see this incredible entrepreneurship ecosystem. In Silicon Valley, everyone is always thinking about new ideas and new projects, so everyone is interested and asking about your ideas. It was great to have the help of Imagine—especially on the prototyping of our Sharger.

The learning we got in Silicon Valley I think is the greatest learning experience we will probably have in our lives. Being surrounded by experts for a month and gaining knowledge from them was totally awesome.

Tell us more about your startup Sharge.io. What is Sharge?

Sharge is a sharing-economy startup, which allows electric car owners to share their charging stations with other electric car drivers. We saw that the lack of EV charging stations was a real problem. But really, there are enough charging stations because every EV owner has a charging station at his or her house. That's why we have an app that allows drivers to book the charging stations of providers, who receive money for that. We control the payment process by using Blockchain technology.

We also have a product that is called Sharger. The Sharger is a device that connects charging stations to the internet and controls the charging process. The driver who has booked the charging station can open the Sharger by using their mobile. Because the Sharger is connected to the internet, it can recognize the user and give him or her information about the charging process.

We are also willing to install Shargers at public charging stations in order to connect them to the internet. One of the problems that public charging stations have is that drivers cannot know if the charging station is being used until they arrive there. The other problem they have is that many of them are broken. We can solve these problems by connecting them to the internet; that's why we are looking for city councils to install the Shargers.

How is this charger different from other charger stations? Why do I need to plug in the special Sharger to the electricity outlet? Does it work for fast charging stations, too?

The advantage Sharge has is that it is completely connected to the Internet. If you charge your car with our device, you can know at any time and from anywhere if your car is fully charged. You also can, of course, share your Sharger with other users and benefit economically.

We are looking to extend the Sharger to all kinds of charging stations. That's why we are currently designing new prototypes to make them work with all kind of plugs.

Who is behind the electronic design of this product?

We have had the enormous help of Imagine Creativity Center in the prototyping of the Sharger. I would really like to thank them and Xavier Verdaguer for the time they have dedicated to us in Silicon Valley as well as Barcelona. We de-

veloped the electronic design with them and with other engineers. Of course, our CTO, Alex Sicart, also has helped with the process.

How can users pay for the service?

Users pay for the service by using the app. We control the payment process with Blockchain technology in order to make it faster and easier. We have our own virtual coins, called Sharge Coins. These coins use bitcoin technology in order to work. We are now developing our Blockchain network.

Is there a kickstarter campaign for Sharge.io? Has Sharger been funded yet?

We haven't had a kickstarter campaign to finance our project yet, but I think it would be great—especially to validate our product. We are planning to do a campaign in the coming months, so be sure to subscribe to our newsletter to be in the know. We also will fund our startup in the following months because we are willing to enter other acceleration programs, especially regarding Blockchain.

When and where will you expect the first Sharge stations to be available?

In the coming months, we will be doing a pilot with Sharge stations. We are talking with very important companies who are willing to collaborate with us, but also with a startup that is willing to install charging stations at gas stations around Spain. We are happy to collaborate with them in order to connect these charging stations to the internet. This year, we will definitely have our first Shargers working.