You Hacked and Now What?
Exploring Outcomes of a Corporate Hackathon

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Hackathons are...

“... time-bounded events, typically of 2-5 days, during which people gather together and form teams, each of which attempts to complete a project of interest to them. The teams are usually collocated, and often composed of people with diverse backgrounds, experience, and expertise.”


**RQ1:** How do activities before, during, and after a hackathon contribute to project continuation?

**RQ2:** What impacts do participants believe the event had on them?
Studies on civic and collegiate hackathons promise that…

- Innovative ideas or software products (e.g. Briscoe, 2014; Cobham et al., 2017)
- Informal and collaborative learning (e.g. Fowler, 2016; Lara and Lockwood, 2016)
- Networking (e.g. Busby et al., 2016, Cobham et al., 2017)
- Career advancements (e.g. Briscoe, 2014)
- Expanding or creating communities (e.g. Farzan et al. 2016; Möller et al., 2014)
- Civic innovation (e.g. Almirall et al., 2014)
- Tackling social and environmental issues (e.g. Porter at al., 2017; Lamela et al., 2013)
RQ1: How do activities before, during, and after a hackathon contribute to project continuation?

RQ2: What impacts do participants believe the event had on them?

We studied 5 teams that participated in Microsoft’s OneWeek Hackathon.
Pre-interviews with team contacts

Selection of teams

June/July

Pre-interviews with team contacts

Observation of five teams during Hackathon

July 18 to 20

July 24 to 27 2017

Observation of five teams during Hackathon

Questionnaire with available team members

Questionnaire with available team members

Post-interviews with all team members

Post-interviews with all team members

July 28 to August 7

October 8 to 23

Post-post-interviews with available team members

Post-post-interviews with available team members
Team B: 7 individuals of which 3 had worked together created a software that is not related to their work.

Team C: 4 individuals of which 2 had worked together created a game that is not related to their work.

Team D: 4 individuals all of which had worked together created a software that could support their work.

Team A: 7 individuals who had not worked together created a software that was not related to their work.

Team E: 3 individuals all of which had worked together created a software that was inspired by their work.
RQ1: Before the hackathon...

Teams A and E:
- Career driven leader
- Participants motivated by project and expertise focused learning
- Met with the team before the hackathon
- Evolved the initial idea
- Asked for feedback
- Prepared individually

Teams B, C and D:
- Led by individuals interested in networking and learning
- Met with the team before the hackathon
- Leader developed initial plan
Teams A and E:
- Distributed tasks based on individual skills
- Executed the project plan (with minor modifications)

Teams B, C and D:
- Distributed tasks based on individual interests
- Planned during the hackathon
- Changed directions
RQ1: ...after the hackathon

Teams A and E:
- Presented their project in science fair and group
- Leaders used networks to find a home for their projects

Teams B, C and D:
- Presented their project in science fair (teams B and C) and/or work group (teams C and D)
RQ2: Perception of impacts on individual participants

- Career advancements
- Learning gains related to technologies and project management
- Sparked interest to continue learning
- Improved confidence
- Networking (for teams who did not know each other before)
Innovative ideas or software products

Evolution rather than revolution / meticulous preparation

Informal and collaborative learning

Trade-off between project continuation and learning

Networking

For teams that did not know each other

Career advancements

Can be a contributing factor