

Hackathons help solve key business problems

In the digital age, solving a business problem well requires innovation and speed, both of which are fundamental components of the hackathon format.

Companies are hosting them to create products and processes that tackle issues ranging from climate change and crime customer service and supply chain management. Hackathons offer a chance of multiple, rapid-fire ideas to cleverly solve organisational challenges.

The recent 48-hour [#CreativeHack2017](#) in Cape Town provided the ultimate showcase of networking, creativity and collaboration to produce brand identity ideas for the soon-to-be-launched Tiger Tail Digital – a specialist workforce solution provider within Adcorp that is focused on digital skills recruitment.



Better solutions come from asking better questions

Says Lianne Du Toit who has conceptualised and hosted dozens of hackathons around the country: “Hackathons are fast becoming an organisational tool where various stakeholders trying to solve a particular problem are able to come up with innovative, creative and sometimes disruptive solutions.

“To find the answers of the future we need to start asking better questions today. It was great to partner with Tiger Tail who are asking better questions and finding new ways to recruit the workforce of the future.”

The detailed planning required to host a successful hackathon provides an opportune platform for organisers to really unpack the relevant issues. This is because without an in-depth understanding of context and the problem to be solved, the critical introductory briefing and inspiration session won't hit the mark for participants.

For hackathon organisers, it's about starting as you mean to finish – with a clear plan that is well articulated and inspires.

Hackathons attract innovators and initiators

[#CreativeHack2017](#) attracted a phenomenal calibre of talented creatives, designers, developers and data science participants totaling 70 and spanning design schools, graduates and top agencies.

The participants were divided into 16 teams and over the course of 48-hours, were mentored and inspired by some of the country's most prolific names in the creative industry. With John Sanei as MC and 10 respected mentors from AAA, Ogilvy

Friends of Design, TBWA and more, the participants benefitted from a powerhouse of experience to help them reach their objectives.



Real solutions as decided by your customers

Any new idea for a product or process is only as good as the customer decides it is. It's about the end-user and whether the solution adequately solves the problem for them.

Hackathons by their very nature enable litmus testing along the way. Teams need to collaborate and sense check each other and mentors can also play a valuable role here. They aren't meant to directly influence outcomes but they can provide course correction when needed by a team. The pitching processes characteristic of a hackathon also enable ideas to be shared and critiqued. #CreativeHack2017 have decided to let their own customers decide on the final winner.

The hackathon produced three dynamic finalist teams – namely Team Atomic, JFK and Fantastic 4.5. These finalist teams will get to present their work at Tiger Tail's client launch in May 2017, where the audience comprising design heads and tech experts at leading South African corporates, will get to vote for their favourite design. It's another great idea among many that helps to eliminate subjectivity.

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Speaking about the way relevance was maintained throughout #CreativeHack2017, Sanei says, "Competition and collaboration seem on opposite sides of the spectrum but when thrown into the same pot with millennials, challenged to disrupt – magic happens. I was so impressed with the contestants that since the hackathon I have been advising all my clients to get a few millennials to sit in on their exco meetings to give their perspectives, wisdom and insights about the

future.”

Separating the ‘ditherers from the doers’

#CreativeHack2017 proved that hackathons are not just for coders. They are for any discipline and any organisation that needs to solve a problem innovatively and timeously.

Alistair King, founding creative partner of King James Group and one of the judges says, “I’m not convinced a strict deadline will always throw up a flawless, ready-to-go solution, but it certainly does get you most of the way very quickly. Above all else though I think the hackathon separates the over-thinkers from the clarity-makers, and the ditherers from the doers.”

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