



Hackmakers Hackathon Guide

A guide for hackathon teams across the individual phases of ideation, development and presentation. This guide is best used in conjunction with the Hackathon Toolkit and Hackathon Toolkit (examples), which are editable templates for teams to fill out.

If you have not yet formed your team, check out the [Participant Guide](#) for the most applicable information.

If you are looking for software tools recommendations for the technical build of your solution, check out the [Software Tools and Recommendations Guide](#) for the most applicable information.

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→ 1. PRE-PHASE: Getting into the Hackathon Mindset

Hackathons can be daunting, especially when working with people you've just met. Even if you're working with friends, the time pressure of a Hackathon can be very stressful. The purpose of the Hacker Mindset is to help you and your team identify each other's strengths and limitations, letting you plan for success when you're participating in a Hackathon.

This is a totally **optional phase** for first time hackers, so if you just want to get into the hackathon processes, please [jump into PHASE 1: Idea Generation!](#)

There are **three concepts** to remember to get yourself into the mindset:

- **SPOT** the opportunity
- **Build** the solution
- **GO** and keep going!



→ 1. 1 SPOT the Opportunity

Opportunities are out there - if you understand how to create them.
Discover the strengths and talents of your team members so that you
can identify what you want to focus on your time on.



Story

- Go around and share a little bit about your **personal journey, why** you have selected to participate in this Hackathon, and the **outcome you want to achieve**.

People

- Talk about **each other's strengths**, what you are **excited to work on, your availability** during the Hackathon, and any **development goals** you want to work on.

Opportunity

- Flesh out your **vision statement** based on what everyone pursues to achieve, and write out any **initial ideas you have**.

Test

- Write down the **assumptions** you have conceived based on your opportunity statement. Then, find data points and facts to **identify whether each assumption is valid**.

→ 1.2 Build the Solution

Identify your goal for the Hackathon and then draw out a timeline with milestones you want to achieve in the duration. We know that it is easy to get overwhelmed and distracted with minute details, especially when juggling many different tasks in a short time frame.

In the next few slides, we give you some points that could make focusing on the solution a lot easier...



Goals

- What does the 'ideal world' look like?

Pitch

- What can the team feasibly achieve based on the time frame proposed for the Hackathon?

Judging Criteria

- What is the criteria you are going to be evaluated on? How will you take advantage of this?

Communication Platform

- How will you, as a team, talk to one another to get things done?

Timeline

- How often will everyone check-in as a group?

Milestones

- What are the the achievements you want to make along the way to achieve the overall

→ 1.3 GO! And keep Going!

Hackathons only run for a short period. If you want to keep on learning and changing the world, you must find opportunities to improve yourself.

The best solution, after all, is one that continues to be improved upon!



Grow (Gain a good understanding of the stakeholders and processes)

- a) The **customers** you are providing to
- b) The **content** you'll educate them on
- c) The **channels** you'll use to reach them
- d) The **call-to-action** so the audience knows where to find additional information

Optimize (Ensure that you are continuously working to improve on your offering).

1. **Refine** your core offering
2. **Reach** new markets
3. **Revolutionize** your industry

SUMMARY: Getting into the Hacker Mindset

1) SPOT the opportunity - Know your team

Story: What do they hope to achieve?

People: What are your team members' strengths?

Opportunity: How do you use your team to achieve a goal?

Test: Are your assumptions valid?

3) GO and keep going!

Grow: How do you reach your customers?

Optimise: How do you improve your product?

2) Build the solution

Don't get sidetracked by the large amount of tasks you *could* be doing. Focus on identifying what you *should* be doing.

- Identify your **goals**
- the **judging criteria**
- what you can **achieve**
- how you **communicate** with your team
- when does your team **check in**, and
- what are some **milestones** you intend to achieve

→ 2. PHASE 1: Idea Generation

We are now jumping into a key part of the hackathon journey!

The purpose of Rapid Ideation is to help you **facilitate** a process of open innovation with your teammates. When we work together, ideate and collaborate with others, that is when the magic happens! To start off, you must **build rapport** with each person, introduce yourselves and make each other feel comfortable. This creates a safe zone.

Do an **ice breaker** activity to transition from a fixed to a growth mindset. One popular activity is 'half baked'. Get 2 people to think of a random object each. Then, think of an idea using these objects! Once you and your team are comfortable (or at least, less awkward) with each other, everyone will be more inclined to share all the potentially game-changing ideas in your heads.

→ 2.1 Empathize

Being empathetic means that you know what it is like to be in someone else's shoes. Knowing what your target audience wants, or what their problems are, is essential if you wish your solution to be considered a game changer.

Make sure you interview your personas and observe what they:

See - Their physical, commercial, social environments

Think - Why they make the decisions they do

Feel - Their emotions

Do - How they perform their tasks

Pains - What issues or problems your persona has

Gains - How can your solution provide an ideal solution



→ 2.2 Define

To make a solution, you must understand the problem. **Write a statement that describes the current situation the person/customer is facing.** This helps you define the problem that you can effectively build a solution for.

Some points to consider are:

- Who exactly is this person?
- What are they trying to achieve?
- What is blocking them from achieving this?
- How does this make them feel?
- What is their pain point?
- What would happen in their perfect world?



→ 2.3 Ideation

Practice divergent and convergent thinking. This means gathering as many ideas as you can, then select the ones that you believe the team can create.

It doesn't matter how improbable you think the idea is - it might trigger another team member's creative juices. Then, build on your ideas with each other.. and don't stop!



1. Whiteboard every single one of your ideas
2. Ask yourself, what if you had to pitch your idea to a high profile innovator or investor (eg Elon Musk)?
3. Select the ideas that will be desirable for the persona, feasible by the team, and economically viable

This ensures that every member has a say. **Together, pick one idea you and your team will pursue during the Hackathon.**



→ 2.4 Prototype

Once you have the core idea, everyone will have their own perspectives on how it might look, feel, sound (or even taste) like

- Take the time to **draw your ideas out individually, then present it to one another**
- The strongest idea is often a **combination of each member's contributions**
- You can draw it out on scrap paper, on the back of napkins, or even throw together a quick PowerPoint presentation
- Don't get bogged down on spending too much time on the details here - you want to make it **quick and snappy**



→ 2.5 Test

Take your idea to its limits. Find the **edge cases**.

Try out **unconventional uses**. **Attempt to break your solution**.



Use the time during the Hackathon to **test your idea**. Remember: we are all here to network, build on our skills, and learn from one another. Working together, we can create something tangible that will challenge the norm.

You're an innovator. A changemaker. Now go and get started!

SUMMARY: Idea Generation Summary

1) Empathize

Ice-breakers and switching to a creative, productive mindset should be the first step taken. This helps everyone put their guards down when meeting new people and builds a comfortable sharing atmosphere.

2) Define

Next, teams should identify a problem and empathise with people who have to face said problem. Building an effective solution requires a well-defined problem.

3) Ideation

Every team member brings their own skills, abilities, and perspectives. Any idea that is put forth could be the seed that a revolutionary solution is built upon. As a team, select ideas that you feel are feasible and build upon them.

4) Prototyping and Testing

Don't feel that you are limited by your current skills. Learn, fail, and learn from those failures. Teach your team as they teach you. After all, Hackathons are about experimentation and networking.

→ 3. PHASE 2: Rapid Build Part 1 (Lean Canvas)

Here is a quick explainer of each Lean Canvas block (and in the order to go through them) :

1. Problem

Each customer segment (CS) you are thinking to work with will have a set of problems that they need solving. In this box try listing the one to three high priority problems that you CS has. Without a problem to solve, you don't have a product/service to offer.

1. Customer Segments

The problem and Customer Segments can be viewed as intrinsically connected — without a CS in mind you can't think of their problems, and visa-versa.

3. Unique Value Proposition

In the middle of the canvas is the UVP. A value proposition is a promise of value to be delivered. It's the primary reason a prospect should buy from you. A way to get your head around this is to think why are you different and why should your CS buy/invest time in you — further reading: [Useful Value Proposition Examples \(and How to Create a Good One\)](#)

4. Solution

Finding a solution to the problem is the golden egg! You're not going to get this right off the first bat — it's OK, as that's what Lean is all about. What you need to do is [Get Out The Building](#) — a phrase coined by the godfather of Lean Startup, Steve Blanks. And what Blank's here is that the solution is not in your office, it's out there in the streets. So go interview your customer segment, ask them questions, and take those learnings. Remember the Lean Startup is validated learning through a continual [Build — Measure — Learn](#) cycle.

5. Channels

Channels are ways for you to reach your CS. And remember that in the initial stages it's important not to think about scale but to focus on learning. With that in mind try to think which channels will give you enough access to your CS at the same time give you enough learning. Channels can be email, social, CPC ads, blogs, articles, trade shows, radio & TV, webinars etc. and BTW you don't have to be on all of them, just where your CS are.

6. Revenue Streams

How you price your business will depend on the type of model it is, however, it's quite common for startups to lower their cost, even offer it for free to gain traction, however, this can pose a few problems. The key being it actually delays/avoids validation. Getting people to sign up for something for free is a lot different than asking them to pay. There is also the idea of perceived value. Further reading: [Simple pricing strategies for your products or services, the lean way!](#)

7. Cost Structure

Here you should list all the operational costs for taking this business to market. How much will it cost to build / landing page? What is your burn rate — your total monthly running costs? How much will it cost to interview your customer segment? How much do market research papers cost? etc. You can then use these costs and potential revenue streams to calculate a rough break-even point.

8. Key Metrics

Every business, no matter what industry or size, will have some key metrics that are used to monitor performance. The best way to help with this is to visualize a funnel top down that flows from the large open top, through multiple stages to the narrow end. A good model to help with this is Dave McClure's ARRRR (aka Pirate Metrics) — further reading: [Startup Metrics for Pirates](#)

9. Unfair Advantage

This is the most difficult to block to answer. However, do try to think about this as having an unfair advantage can help when it comes seeking partners & investors. Here is a [great definition of unfair advantage](#): *"The only real competitive advantage is that which cannot be copied and cannot be bought."* — Jason Cohen. Unfair advantage can be insider information, a dream team, getting expert endorsements, existing customers etc. So rather than think about adding something like "commitment and passion" as an unfair advantage (because it is not), think about what you have that no one else can buy.

→ 4. PHASE 2: Rapid Build Part 2 (Business Model CPR)

The purpose of **Business Model CPR** is to breathe life into your project so that it is sustainable and profitable.

There are three major points to consider:

Customer: This is about understanding the true value of your solution. Who exactly can you help, for which industry, and how will you speak to them?

Position: You need to understand how you will portray yourself to your customers, and to the public to gain trust.

Revenue: Understand the type of business model you want to pursue and run with, and measure it so define whether it is a success or not.

→ 4.1 Customers

Businesses live and die by how well they understand their customers. **Identify** the types of customers you are targeting with your offer, and figure out how you will **communicate** with them.

Location:

- Where exactly are your customers? In which regions? What kinds of cultures have they been exposed to? Which languages do they understand?

Industry:

- Name the trends that are relevant in the industry you are targeting. What are some new processes you will provide? Why is your product innovative in that space? What jargon do you need?

Position: Identify how you will communicate to customers on a variety of levels:

- Strategic - C-level / Tactical - Directors / Operational - Managers / Product owners - Specialists

→ 4.2 Position

The customer-business relationship goes two ways. **Make sure you know how your customers see you.**

Know where your product stands in the public's eye. Place yourself in the **correct light, highlight your strengths and identify the message you are portraying.**



Ensure that you take full advantage of how you control your customer's understanding of you and your product.

To create a big impact on your customers, you need a good dose of **OXYGEN**

Oppportunity: Identify the big and bold idea you have. This is your solution.

X-Factor: Note why you and your team have what it takes to deliver

Your Strengths: Understand what makes you stand out from the crowd. How does is your product superior to what's out there?

Go To Market Strategy: How you will reach your customers? Consider who your target customers are - whether you will dealing with other businesses (B2B) or directly with customers (B2C).

Education: The key messages and thought leadership you will convey to your potential customers. Let them know what they are missing out on.

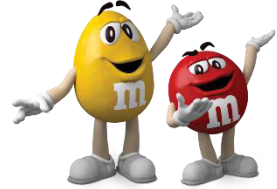
Network: Identify people who have an influential impact on your target audience. They can easily amplify the key messages you intend to spread.

→ 4.3 Revenue

Businesses ultimately exist to **create revenue**. You need to know how you are getting cash flow, even if it is just a plan.

Create offers at a **price point that will be reasonable** for the customer to purchase.

Use the **M&M's** of revenue development



Model:

Highlight the business model that you will go with. Don't be afraid to be experimental and try out different offers to see which one 'sticks'. Most companies have a diverse portfolio and revenue mix

Measurement:

Have a cadence of reviewing what works and what doesn't work. It's important to have tangible goals that you can assess. Most importantly, be smart with your decisions so you are delivering positive operating profit.

→ Building and software recommendations

We have an entire guide dedicated to recommending teams the most intuitive and easy-to-use free or open source softwares you can use to build your solution!

Check out the [Software Tools and Recommendations guide](#) to find a list of Hackmakers and community sourced softwares which previous teams have used to create amazing solutions.





SUMMARY: Rapid Build

1) Understand your customers

Know the customer's **LIPs**:

- **L**ocation: Their environments
- **I**ndustry: Their market
- **P**osition: Their communication channels

3) Have a cash flow plan

Snack on revenue **M&M's**:

- **M**odel: Understand the model you will be using.
- **M**easurement: Assess and review your strategy to know what works.

2) Make sure your customers understand you

Keep yourself alive with **OXYGEN**:

- **O**ppportunity: What does your product do?
- **X** Factor: How does your team help you succeed?
- **Y**our Strengths: What makes your product stand out?
- **G**o to Market Strategy: How will you reach your customers?
- **E**ducation: What do you want your customers to know?
- **N**etwork: Who can help you improve your product's desirability?

→ 5. PHASE 3: Demo and Presentation

A good solution is half the story. You want to make sure that your audience understands *how good* your product is.

The purpose of **Pitch Like A Pro** is to provide structure so that you can condense your produce and be ready to present to your family, friends, potential investors, customers, and most importantly: the judges.

There are **three key points** to cover that will guarantee an impressive Hackathon pitch. The structure below will address each of these points to convey your message across and for the judges to be very impressed by your work.

Desirability:

- Clearly identify a problem that you are solving and highlight how your solution addresses this need.

Feasibility:

- Explain how the skills and strengths of your team will make your solution stand out.

Viability:

- Entice your audience by showcasing your strong plan for getting a reliable return on investment.

You might have noticed that this is very similar to the Hacker's Lean Canvas. This is for good reason! Hackathons require rapid development. **Save time** preparing for a pitch by grabbing all the important information off your Lean Canvas, and structuring it with the Pitch Like A Pro framework!

→ 5.1 Desirability

Explain the problem.

Who is the customer you are solving a problem for? What is the problem and how big is it?



Here you want to clearly identify that your solution as a need that must be addressed right now:

- 1. Persona:** Outline who you are solving this problem for, their current situation, and why it is important to help them.
- 2. Problem:** State the facts. How big is the problem? Who else has it? What is the projected Total Addressable Market (TAM)?
- 3. Purpose:** Highlight your vision. What does the perfect world look like, and how will your product make it a reality?

→ 5.2 Feasibility

Showcase your product and your skills.

Next, explain how your product solves the problem defined above and how it stands out from currently available products.



Highlight your team and how they will contribute to the further development of your product.

- 1. Customer Benefits:** Go through the new customer journey and the benefits the customer will have using your solution.
- 2. Competitive Landscape:** Research to see who is offering similar, or same products, and clearly explain where the gap is.
- 3. Core Team:** Mention who is part of the team, their profiles, experience and contributions to continue the solution moving forward.

→ 5.3 Viability

Describe how your product can stay competitive.

What is the customer willing to pay to resolve their issue? The revenue streams must align to the roadmap. Achieving a strong return on investment is important for those who are investing in this with you.



- 1. Revenue Streams:** Say how you will charge customers and provide a business model that is sustainable and profitable
- 2. Roadmap:** Outline what you will be doing the short, medium, and long term to achieve your goals and aspirations. How do you intend to ensure the product will continue to meet customer needs in the future?
- 3. Re-iteration:** In your final sentences, you must reiterate your key messages to your audience. Say what you will do immediately after the Hackathon and have a reasonable 'ask' to the audience. The 'ask' engages them and makes your audience try to think up a personal use for your product.

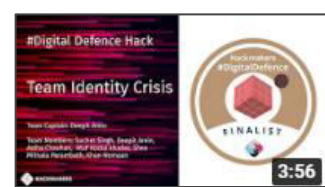
→ 5.4 Watch previous winning submissions

One of the best ways to see what X-factors that previous solutions have had is by watching their submissions.

Luckily for you, we make all the winning and finalist submissions public on the [Hackmakers Youtube channel!](#)

When watching these winning videos, here are a couple things to be on the lookout for:

- Presentation style
- Contents and demonstration of product
- Video editing software



More questions?

- **I want to know more about this hackathon:**
 - Hackathon FAQ Quickstart Guide:
<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1by21Mh4YueRPyNdTgt17tqM5DXdD4LiICG4SGMJUcy4/edit?usp=sharing>
- **I want to be a mentor/ understand who mentors are:**
 - Make a new registration as a mentor at: www.hackmakers.com
 - Read through the Mentor Guide:
<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1jL7CHdheH98y7gaUmsBF8nu8PgTfg7-e9vXNEzbIPbE/edit?usp=sharing>
- **I want to know the general rules and regulations:**
 - https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1l0cdM_6tacrpiHgCyU6g039THDrSuuEB2fypcgnUShl/edit?usp=sharing