


# How to start a hackathon\*


\* and why

# Hello!



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So, what exactly is a  
hackathon?

**Hack·a·thon**    'hakə THän/

an event, typically lasting several days, in which a large number of people meet to engage in collaborative computer programming.

**hack**



**marathon**











A large group of young people, likely students, are seated in a lecture hall or classroom. Many are looking at their laptops, suggesting a tech-focused event or lecture. The text "Why do we care?" is overlaid on the image.

# Why do we care?

**“Women want safe spaces  
Women want to contribute”**

– *“What Do Women Want At Hackathons? NASA Has A List” by Elizabeth Segran*

# Our solution



+



=



Flawless  
HACKS

Flawless  
HACKS  
2016



# How we got started



Decide who you want to engage—  
and **start with them**



# What they said ...

“Excited about getting a t-shirt  
**intended for women's bodies**”

“If you had **feminine hygiene products in the bathrooms**, that would be amazing.”

“**Female mentors** would be  
very inspiring!”

“I'm ready to take on the tech world—super  
excited about it!”

“I'm just excited to be surrounded by  
women who have the **same passions**”

“Not really into the whole  
hacking culture”

“Lessen the competitive aspect”

“I'm glad it's an **all-day (rather  
than all-night)** hackathon”

“I'd love speakers addressing  
**inclusivity and diversity** in industry”

“Inputs from **people with different  
backgrounds** are essential.”

“Would love **workshops**

to learn  
“Very new to hackathons  
& willing to learn!”

# What we heard ...

"Excited about getting a t-shirt"

inter Tailor to the ies"

"If you have the bathr products in nazing."

"Female mentors would be very inspiring!"

"I'm ready excited al  
I'm just excited to be surrounded by women who have the same passions"

"Not really into the whole hackathon culture"

Less competitive aspect"

than all-night) hackathon"

"I'd love to include diversity in industry"

"Inputs from different background is key"

"Would love workshops  
Coming to learn!"

& willing to learn!

Find a  
squad



# Structure

School  
supported?

LLC?

501c3  
Nonprofit?

Something  
else?

The (not) fun part



# The (not) fun part

Ask your friends

Ask your friends' friends

Reach out through your network

Ask strangers

**Email ... relentlessly**





# How to create a successful hackathon

# General Timeline

1. Decide on a hackathon theme
2. Design and develop website and branding (1-2 months)
3. Pick a space and a date (1 month to find space)
4. Send out registration form
5. Reach out to sponsors to sponsor swag, food, workshops and speakers (4-5 months). Set a fundraising goal.
6. Order food and swag
7. Build excitement
8. Plan out schedule and day of
9. Be absolutely **flawless** day of

# The right space for you





# Getting the right sponsors + mentors





Development &  
design

❖ Find people who inspire you ❖





# Know your participants

Accommodate your participants

- Dietary constraints
- Clothing sizes
- If they need parental consent
- What they want out of this hackathon

# Make a schedule

- Advanced and Beginner workshops
- Time for breakfast, lunch and dinner
- External activities (networking events)
- Brainstorming sessions
- Presentation

# Add a little pizzazz



**Don't forget to be excited and have fun!**



# Accomplishments



+ **400**

attendees



**86.8** %

students  
from **56 schools**



**14** states

22.1% outside of NYC

+ **3** countries

1.5% international



**42.9** %

were first time hackathon  
attendees in 2016 + 2017

**13.5** % attendees  
returned in 2017

# Feedback

“Every mentor was so kind and eager to help.”

“I also liked the presentations were light and informal instead of a competition.”

“I really appreciated the topics of accessibility and about how the toxic culture of tech can change your experience when you're a woman and POC in tech.”

“The keynote speakers were amazing!”

“The food was great.”

“The swag was the best I've gotten from a hackathon.”

“The space was amazing and the people were too.”



# Feedback

Less competitive ✓

Tailor to the  
attendees ✓

Diversity  
is key ✓

Space for women ✓

Coming to learn! ✓


# Biggest takeaways?



Be nice!



Just ask!



Fake it til  
you make it

# Resources

## Hackathons we like

Pearl Hacks

Hack at Brown

Stupid Hackathon

Monthly Music Hackathon

## How to start a non-profit

## Hackathon resources

[Example prospectus](#)

[Guide to public speaking](#)



Thanks! □

