**What is a hackathon?**

A hackathon is an event that brings together experts and creates a collaborative environment for solving a certain problem. While the majority of hackathons revolve around computer programming and IT, many other industries follow suit. Today, it's possible to find HR hackathons, economics hackathons, music hackathons, and the like.

The word hackathon is a combination of "hack" and "marathon." So, essentially it's a marathon for hackers.  But, in this case, hackers are exploratory computer programmers.

The first hackathon dates back to June 1999 when OpenBSD brought together ten software developers who worked on cryptographic software.

Modern hackathons appeal to sponsors, partners, and recruiters. Besides working on a solution, hackathon participants join workshops, make presentations, interact with sponsors, communicate with recruiters, and much more.

Let's define hackathon in simple terms.

**Hackathon definition**

A hackathon is an event set up by a company or an organization that wants to get a high-quality solution through collaboration between experts. Hackathon format is often competitive.

For example, an organization wants to design a brand new operating system. It hosts a hackathon that brings together 10 startups or teams of developers.  Each team provides a solution. The jury chooses the best product and hands out a prize.  After the event, the organization may choose to sign a contract with the winning team.

It's not just the winner, who gets a shot at landing a contract. Many tech companies monitor hackathon activities and buy products or choose new team members on the spot.

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**Why are hackathons so popular?**

The success of the hackathon format stems from creative freedom. Instead of using a specific methodology or following company rules, tech experts are free from typical development constraints.

While there is a time limit, hackathon organizers usually don't impose a strict framework. Such an environment is highly productive.

In addition to problem-solving, hackathon participants get an opportunity to learn, share their ideas, do effective networking, and enjoy a relaxing and welcoming atmosphere. Meanwhile, organizers gain access to top talent and a chance to find an innovative solution to their problems.

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**How do hackathons work?**

How does a hackathon work? Hackathons are usually theme-based. An organizer chooses a theme that aligns with its business goals and appeals to the right teams, sponsors, and partners. After that, they:

1. Set up judging criteria and pick a hackathon jury.
2. Decide on the prizes.
3. Pick the right venue (it's also possible to organize a virtual hackathon).
4. Arrange food and drinks if the hackathon event is offline.
5. Set up equipment for offline events and arrange the necessary software (like Slack, Zoom, Crowdcast, etc.) or a platform for the online version.

List of thing you can bring to hackathon:

* Laptop
* Pen
* Papers
* Watch
* Your GPUs

To bring as many participants to the hackathon as possible, the organizing party can market the upcoming event with press releases, social media posts, email campaigns, and paid ads. The host can also contact incubators, accelerators as well as teaching and administrative staff at universities.

For participants, both online and offline hackathon structure is usually straightforward. Even when newcomers don't have a clear idea of what happens at a hackathon, they get used to the format quickly.

In short, hackathons work by bringing talent together to work on a mutual problem. The organizer arranges a helpful, relaxing, and productive environment for effective collaboration and competition. Meanwhile, participants take advantage of the format to find solutions, learn, network, and discover better career opportunities.

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**What do you do at a hackathon?**

The main goal of a hackathon is to find an effective solution to a problem. Accordingly, developers, designers, engineers or whoever else participates in the event work toward discovering that solution.

Meanwhile, organizers and sponsors look for collaboration opportunities, attend to organizational aspects of the event, and do networking.

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Scoreboard of participants

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name participants** | **Point round 1** | **Point round 2** | **Point round 3** | **Total point** |
| Kelvin | 5 | 5 | 5 | 15 |
| Thomas | 3 | 2 | 1 | 6 |
| Khav | 4 | 4 | 4 | 12 |
| Vivo | 2 | 2 | 5 | 9 |
| Dima An | 2 | 5 | 1 | 8 |

**How long do hackathons last?**

Hackathons usually last 24 to 72 hours. When teams declare their participation, they usually have a week to prepare. During this time, they decide which team member is responsible for what part of the project.

However, many hackathon participants are individual specialists. New teams form during the first hours of the event, so roles need to be set on the spot.

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**Types of hackathons**

While the main elements of hackathons are similar, these events come in many shapes and sizes. The most common types of hackathons are:

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**Internal hackathons**

An internal hackathon is a hackathon organized by the company for its employees. The goal of such a hackathon is brainstorming, team building, inspiring intrapreneurship, increasing employee engagement, and streamlining awareness.

A hackathon can help an organization understand its talent better while gaining an opportunity to scale. Employees enjoy the freedom of the creative environment and start thinking outside the box.

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**External hackathons**

For an external hackathon, an organization works with both internal and external experts. These hackathons allow companies to find new talent, speed up product development, harvest new ideas, and much more.

External hackathons are usually bigger and more expensive than internal events. However, the outcomes tend to carry significant value.

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**Coding hackathons**

Just like the very first OpenBSD hackathon, coding competitions involve coding experts getting together and creating working software during a set period of time. Such hackathons can last longer than the average 24 – 72 hours and result in one or several finished products.

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**Industry hackathons**

Not all hackathons are arranged by IT companies. Organizations across many industries run different types of hackathons. The most popular examples of industry-specific hackathons are Music Hack Day and Science Hack Day.

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**Offline, online, and hybrid hackathons**

Hackathons can be arranged in three formats:

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**Offline hackathon**

An offline hackathon is the traditional format. The event takes place in a venue where all participants interact with each other and organizers personally.

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**Online hackathons**

An online (or virtual) hackathon is an excellent way to work with talented experts around the globe. The entire event is arranged online. It can be done through a special platform or by using different collaboration and communication tools like Asana, Slack, Zoom, Skype, etc.

Internal online hackathons are great for companies that have remote employees in different cities, states, and countries. External online hackathons remove geographical and financial (e.g. travel cost) limitations.

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**Hybrid hackathons**

Hybrid hackathons are a combination of online and offline events. Participants can choose the most suitable way to join this type of hackathon. If they don't have an opportunity to participate in the event physically, they can do it online.

Hybrid hackathons cater to larger audiences, allowing organizations to leverage the benefits of both virtual and in-person events.