

INTRO

Goals

Code for SF has a list of problems and ideas that were collected from different sources. They want to figure out a way to transition these problems and ideas into projects for people to work on. And your experiences of forming and starting a project will be very helpful for code for SF in this process.

All Stakeholders

- Government/ government representatives
- Non-profit organizations
- Project owners
- Project team members
- Code for SF participants that are not with any project
- Users that will be using the product
- Other citizens that don't directly use the product but benefit indirectly from the product
- Experts in the project field
- Founders in the project field

Current Interview targets

- Project team owners or leads
- New members
- Government representatives

INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Beginning

- Thanks for joining me today! We're helping SFBrigade to improve the process of integrating new members to the existing project team, and getting your frank feedback is a really important part of that.
- Before we start, I want to ask you if it is ok for me to share the details of our interview internally with the #research team. You're free to let me know if you want any of the information you tell me to stay between you and me.
- I like to keep these sessions pretty informal. I'm just trying to learn from you today. I'll ask a lot of questions, but I'm not testing you. There are no right or wrong answers.
- I'll start this session by asking some background questions.
- Do you have any questions before we begin?

Questions for "project owners"

- Background
 - What kind of work do you do?
 - What brought you to SFBrigade?
- How did this project transition from ideas or problems to a project with mission?
 - Who was the project owner?
 - How did the project get started?
 - When did the project get started ?
 - Who were the team members when the project first started?
 - How was the awareness of the problem formed?

- Do you guys have a mission statement? How did you form the mission statement?
- How was the solution of the problem formed?
- * How did the team discuss and come to consensus of the problem, mission statement, and solutions?
- How did you get buy in from founders/ team members/ other participants?
- What did the team do to get the project started ?
 - How did you define the project in terms of what needs to be worked on?
 - How did you evaluate different approaches to the problem and reach agreement on the solution?
 - Help me reconstruct how the project came together in its early period. What were some major events, milestones, difficulties that happened?
 - How did you recruit new members to work on the project?
 - How did you help new members to start working on the project?
 - How do the project members collaborate on this project?

Questions for “new participants”

- Background: what kind of work do you do?
- What brought you to code for sf?
- What was your expectation before you came?
- Can you tell me more about your experiences here? For example, what were you thinking when you came in, at the orientation, and after the orientation?
- Have you joined a project team? Can you tell me why?
- Any difficulties?
- Feedback?

Questions for ‘current team members’

- What brought you to code for sf?
- What was your expectation before you came?
- How did you decide to join this project?
- How did you get started on the current project?

INTERVIEW NOTES

Note: There are three sections: project owners, new members, and government representative. There is a short conclusion & a list of needs at the end of each interview. A master list of needs is also attached below.

I. INTERVIEW NOTES_PROJECT OWNERS or LEADS (n=5)

Adopt the drain (interviewed Jesse)

- boston initiated, apply to san francisco

- Mission statement and definition the same as other cities, with modification to fit san francisco.
- Nov. 2015 beginning (Jason and the government initiated the process)
- Early group: 3 developers and jason and jesse
- jason approached jesse to work on this
- New features: Jason worked with jean (sp?) add new features
- Initial phase: they worked a lot outside, or in the small rooms, only came here for meetings
- They just started getting new people.
- They haven't thought about how they would get new people involved. But they have a list of tasks on github.
- **Conclusions: the project has a knowledgeable leader, government backing, programmers, and a format of working together.**

Open disclosure- campaign finance, to visualize campaign finance (interviewed Tom and Aaron)

(<http://www.opendisclosure.io/candidate/libby-schaaf>)

- targeting 2016
- Spring/summer 2014
- Collaboration with city of oakland (Lauren). Her job is to come to brigade meeting and she has finance data, and she figured she could get people to work on it. Her knowledge that the data exists and gave direction for the project. She had scattered ideas, and the team had to work through. She browsed through data visualization and wanted to implement the idea.
- They talked about target users but never reached consensus. too complicated for citizens but too simple for press. They didn't have a mission statement and just focused visualize data.
- There was a designer that mocked it up
- Tom showed up and liked the idea (feb 2014).
- Late stage user testing- october 2014...Tom said it was very helpful and should have been done earlier.
- There was an event in oakland (all about campaign finance), and moved on to san francisco. And now there is also a san diego team, sacramento (less active), san jose (less active).
- **Difficulty: communication problem among teams in different cities.**
- Recruitment: they claimed that they don't recruit well, attributing to project structure being complicated
- **Difficulty: problem not well defined, no concrete work for people to work on, thus hard to pitch and recruit.**
- The SD guy had his own concrete ideas and that's why he fits well (others harder cause they don't have concrete ideas that they want to work on)
- Non-technical people...they want them to do research but hard to find people to work on it. When i asked them what they wanted the research to focus on. They didn't seem to have a clear picture. They think, on the one hand, people need to be proactive and figure out things to work on. The oakland project is successful because Lauren was an expert and knows what she wants to get solved.
- (Aaron) Government person from SD, she looked at mockup and felt it's hard to break down finance to different categories of sources. She felt the data slicing wasn't meaningful. And the feedback was valuable for the team to move forward. Government people would be the target. public ethics commission.

- Size of team: 15 people- 4 programmers, project manager, designer, user testing person, 2 data scientists, testers (people who use the site and provide feedback)
- Lauren pointed out wording/term problems, data problems, some kinda of data visualization (people that wanted to practice javascript and worked on the graphs)
- Lauren moved. Oakland hired someone to replace Lauren. The person will start coming to this meetup.
- They mention the possibility of alternating 'speaker night' vs 'work night'....it's hard to get work done (too many people walking around)
- They are not sure if they want to recruit new people at this point. There are 4 people working on the code and it's chaotic enough. Also they are not sure how to guide and mentor new people. But they do plan to open up once they are in a more stable state.
- They have not enlisted themselves to pitch. Tom felt self-conscious about the current state without a clear pitch and with a chaotic structure.
- They also mentioned that oakland brigade has a different format. And there are more older people. Tom lives in SF so he goes to Oakland every other week.
- They are now targeting the 2016 election. They have a mobile-first design with bar graphs.
- **Conclusion: they started with a government person as a leader. The person had access to the data, and background knowledge of the data. However, the team did not start with a problem statement, nor did they reach consensus on the target users or the mission. The leader later left. The team is having a hard time communicating among each other, defining a pitch, finding time to work together, and to recruit.**
- **Needs: Problem-driven, defined target users, defined mission statement, a leader, a coordinator, a clear pitch, ways to work together, proactive people that know what to work on, better work/talk balance**

SF in Progress (interviewed Matt)

- Almost a year
- Started from a nation wide hackathon
- They knew they wanted to work on a housing project. Jean reached to her friend Jody, who works for san francisco housing coalition. They knew each other through SF bike coalition. They wanted to have solutions to housing policy. They pitched the idea at the hackathon.
- Kim-Mike Cutler very knowledgeable about housing policy. She showed up at the hackathon as well.
- Matt joined at hackathon. Debra (code lead & developer; the hive in Oakland is her recent project) is the current code lead, friend of Julia (moved to SJ). Debra is very knowledgeable about housing.
- They had a prototype on the first day. They knew seattle brigade had been working on a similar project. So they drew upon that. There were a dozen people during the hackathon. About 4 people stayed after the first day. 2 people now. They decided to make the interface nicer than seattle.
- Things expensive -> expensive housing -> economy well, people with more money, and more new people -> current housing structure can not support -> build more housing. In SF, 7 years (only 2- 2.5 yrs in north carolina).
- They want to build a website to educate people about housing policy in the bay area. They want to build a map that demonstrates the pipeline as they go through

- different stage. The hope is that the more people with knowledge, the more people would go to the meeting and advocate for more housing.
- Question: why map? Matt: because it's engaging.
 - Question: target users? 1. to engage people who are already knowledgeable but lack the resources to organize public hearing information (the map allows people to submit information about public hearing) 2. general population.
 - They don't have problems convincing people that this is an important project. There may not be alignment between what people want to work on vs. what they are doing. A lot of people are here to improve their programming skills.
 - Basically people showed up -> they will join the slack -> they point out what tasks they can work out. Matt doesn't feel like there is a problem guiding people. He is not going to teach people how to code but people are welcome to learn on their own.
 - He mentioned that a lot people are here to learn to code. He would let them dive in and if they don't have the right motivation, **it's not worth engaging too much with them.** He believes people need to struggle through it.
 - Current team: about 8 active members. (communicate on slack and emails) mostly engineers, one designer, some policy people.
 - Change of direction: several times, but ended up moving back the original direction. Example: they were trying to create platform to solve policy issues ...but never got built.
 - Evaluation/ Prioritization: there was a guy that was a pain to work with. He wanted to work on other stuff (like set up google hangout). They ended up asking him to leave. Other than that, they don't really have a process of evaluation. Matt and Debra are the 'visionary', they have ideas about direction and guide people. They rely on people to pick it up on their own. They don't want to hand-hold people. Matt and Debra communicated on Slack or email about what to work on next.
 - Matt mentioned 'cooperate' format isn't what people are here for, too much format and structure
 - **Conclusion:** the projects started from hackthon with a straight-forward problem domain. **They formed their solution with the hope to educate people and provide data viz of the current state of new housing developments.** The leaders form ideas about what to do and guide newcomers to pick up tasks. **They don't like handholding so it's up to the newcomers to dig into the code.**
 - **Needs:** good newcomer-onboarding process, new participants with basic knowledge of what to do (e.g. coding), new direction exploration (e.g. fixing up housing policy)

Park_Safe

Patrick.stern@gmail.com

- Patrick was already interviewed by stephanie. Can schedule another time or answer questions via email. Double check with Jason.
- Patrick mentioned that he recruited most of his people through his network. He also went through team falling apart and recruiting a new group.
- Patrick felt like he wants to focus and get work done. He found it hard to get things done here with so many people talking and walking around. His way of solving it was to not come in the past.
- **Needs:** better work/ talk balance

Fire project

- **Needs: better way to guide less experienced programmers**
- background research

ALL NEEDS (to this point)

- **a knowledgeable leader**
- **government backing**
- **programmers**
- **a format of working together.**
- **Problem-driven,**
- **defined target users,**
- **defined mission statement,**
- **a leader**
- **a coordinator,**
- **a clear pitch,**
- **ways to work together,**
- **proactive people that know what to work on,**
- **better work/talk balance**
- **good newcomer-onboarding process**
- **new participants with basic knowledge of what to do (e.g. coding)**
- **new direction exploration (e.g. fixing up housing policy)**
- **better way to guide less experienced programmers**
- **background research**

Data Science (interviewed Jude)

- Background: Market research, marketing management consulting, dealing with marketing strategies, product development
- Motivation to join SFBrigade: moved to the area and wanted to make friends. Only in the past year learned data science and programming..., and wanted to practice data science
- Team leads: sanat and jude. They see themselves as servicer to the other groups and an explorer of open data...and share their findings and statistical findings..to point to an end-to-end product (but they don't want to focus or work on it). Jude advocates to handle data science challenges for other groups. Right now they are helping Park-safe, and re-deploy visualization (from some Sacramento project, they did visualization. Budget-> performance, SFHipexplore and inferential analysis...robust findings for other groups and if there is end-to-end opportunities they will talk to SFBrigade to let others work on it
- How did this team get started? While Jude was on FireRisk project, he was thinking this project and others can benefit from data science...but data science can be independent of the other teams....
- He is also working on Adopt-the-Drain....he wants to predict if certain drains will get clogged on certain days....Joy (chief data officer) was excited about it. The team didn't ask for help... The data science team kind of just volunteered.
- When did it get started? 3-4 weeks in SFBrigade. He couldn't find anything 1st week. 2nd week he found fire risk...3rd week...fire risk wasn't going anywhere...was waiting for the city...and then there were qualified people on the team. Jude proposed the idea to them.
- Fire risk people the first group of Data Science member

- How did the group attract so many people? They showed right away that they have a plan and they are driven. Jude told them every week that they want to get shit done
- Mission statement? He pitched his idea. And the guys got very excited about the idea...especially the seniors guys. So from there, he decided to pitch the idea to SFBrigade.... and he encouraged people to pitch in on mission statements. And then he wanted to make sure that he gets buy-in ...important to sustain the group for the long term. There were others that wanted more of end-to-end or pure enthusiast group
- How did you get buy-in? He knows that everyone wants to get something out of their investment here. He told them he can get them what they want.... by working together. And he told them logically, end-to-end would not work...too much for the group.
- How did you decide what to work on ?
 - the problems came to them (exactly what Jude was working on). They discussed internally if it is possible to work on it. And get back to the team. They have a google sheet for people to fill in their skill sets...as well as their goals.
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Ss1eIDviHmq660Gr7LWdzN8lHRTQWiC_tKE4N5fa2So/edit#gid=0 he wants to help others to achieve their career and life goals as well.
 - Example: ParkSafe...buildings are coordinate..different sizes...but what they are working on would be open-source...There are only two people that are experts in Geo-data. So, he asked these two people if this problem can be solved
- Major success or difficulties? Data scientists are very systematic
 - https://github.com/sfbrigade/data-science-wg/tree/master/projects-in-this-repo/311_Exploratory-Analyses
 - It is exploratory....just showing people the shape and the higher level trend of data....better inform deeper inferential statistics
 - <https://hackpad.com/311-data-analysis-9StgE5Z5Eif>
 - Managerial , conceptual
 - Real analyses they are doing....
 - He is giving people a deadline..Hy wants them to present results at XX (that microsoft event) and he agreed.
 - 3 people on inferential statistics,possibly 4
- New members onboarding?
 - Intro to the projects...
 - Relative needs of each group/project
 - Ask them which of these do they find interesting and want to work on?
 - And then introduce them to the subgroup working on it
 - Growing pain: 2-3 the members are very interested in data science but they are still learning...
- Jude mentioned they have an agenda each week
 - Each task group report back where they are at (1-2 minutes)...and their challenges (maybe can be solved collectively)
 - Jude would introduce the new people. Ask them to introduce themselves.
 - Jude will tell them about deadlines and ask them if they can come up with the results

- And break up...everybody gets to hacking...and jude, sanant, and Matt (the PhD) will talk to the new people
- How do they collaborate
 - Give them agency...Jude does not convolute....or impose protocols...
 - If some group perform better or worse, they might step in and give them help. In those cases, Jude hopes they will be honest about their challenges, and ask Matt to help them on this.
- Jude, has a lot of experiences leading teams, in both marketing and politics Social scientists...he knows what kind of things can be positively negatively motivating.
- **Conclusion:** The project got started while everyone was waiting to hear back from the FireRisk project. They are the most organized and structured project team that I have interviewed so far. **The project has a clear mission statement, well-defined goals, a structured weekly agenda, and a step-by-step new member onboarding process both online and during the hack night.** The team is led by Jude, an experienced marketing person and manager, and Matt, an expert in the data field. Between the two of them, they are able to take care of both the technical aspects and the managerial aspects of the project, and properly motivate the team members.
- **Needs from newcomers:** clear missions, user onboarding process from the team, a sense that they can achieve their goals by working with the team, a semi-mentor situation, knowing that if they are stuck others will help
- **Needs from the team leads:** knowledge of the skillsets of the people, knowledge to decide if a problem is manageable given the resources they have, some way to track progress within the team, some way to attack problems/bugs with group effort, some way to communicate the values and goals of the project to the members, getting buy in
- **Needs for both:** achieving goals, meeting people

II. INTERVIEW NOTES_NEW MEMBERS (n=5)

A young kid

- His computer teacher recommended it
- He is passionate about public transportation, but he is open to other projects. He wants to see if he can work on something software related.
- He doesn't know how he wants to get started yet. He will walk around and see if anyone will let him work on the project.
- **Needs: a project team that accepts him**

Matt

- The fire proeject for two wednesday but the project currently on hold because they want to make sure they are not double effort iwth the fire department

- To meet more people that are interested in social well being. To improve development skills and data analysis skill
- Have an impact and wanted to start from the beginning. not sure if he could jump into the code and start.
- Never actually worked on anything
- 1st week just talked about what happened. 2nd week learned about bad news
- ME/EE background, trying to learn ruby on rail, meteor
- Hoping to help someone build small pieces
- request for startup, ideamarket (top down)
- **Needs: to meet like-minded people, to improve coding skills, to have an impact**

David Garber (Davidgarber@gmail.com)

- Sales development representative for a company Layer
- Join 'Hack oregon' in portland...wanted to join something similar after moving 1 month ago here.
- Just want to contribute...any way that he can. Keep up with coding skills.
- He had been on campaign finance...this one is similar
- The other one was on rails...he had ruby and rail background
- He wanted to help with front end....ruby javascript and rails
- Highlight: a guest speaker, a guest speaker.
- Difficulties: none
- Feedback: He wanted to know the teams, stacks work in, skills they need.
- **Needs: practice coding, to help/ contribute, a better idea about teams/ stacks/ skills needed**

Jezmin jezminfuentes@hotmail.com

- 1st time (4 months ago), she was lost when she first came
- After the presentation, she joined a new member orientation....but not very informational
- 1st time (4 months ago) she just landed with a project. She helped them prioritize tasks.....
- She couldn't go every wednesday....she felt like she wasn't able to get too involved
- She came for about 7 times.
- 2nd time was very disorganized.....The project owner spent a lot of time explaining. But she felt very awful that she wasn't able to join the next week.
- From then on, she made it clear that she can't come every week
- 3rd time...brainstorming....good experience and productive
- 4th or 5 th time, demo night... She was able to see the results of the brainstorming team...she also brought coworkers to the demo night
- She wanted to work on her own projects
- Reasons that she didn't join a team?
 - She wasn't sure that she would be needed.
 - The brainstorming team made her feel that she could contribute with less of a long-term commitment
 - She wished she could have seen what each team needed
- Project management- she can provide feedback but she can't actually do the management role.

- It's been a very pleasant experience overall. She kept mentioning that she wished she could have contributed more... and she wished there was a better structure.
 - Roles
 - Tasks they need help with
 - e.g. user testing for just today
 - e.g. backend...2 months
 - time commitment
 - all the teams available, mission statements
- Last wednesday, not enough tables. a lot more tables in the past.... she wasn't able to have a conversation or work on stuff.
- **Needs: more helpful new member orientation, better new member onboarding from the project teams, seeing results, short-term commitment (tasks, time, duration), clear picture of what each team needs, list of teams with mission statements, more tables to work and talk**

George

- Access the community. Introduced by a wevote team, he isn't here this time so George doesn't know what to do. Very hard to information about the teams, and access to the team. Formulas that let new members ask team leads, and there will be a section lead within the team (e.g. python lead).
- Believing in the project. The only exposure he had about wevote is wireframe.....but he didn't believe in the wireframe. Too heavy, too much work. He needs to have an outlet to express those concerns, be convinced, and communicate, preferably the leader . He doesn't want to work on someone's broken ideas. He thinks the priority is not just to have it on the resume, but have it shipped.
- He cares the most about making something useful to people, making a change.
- Quicker on-boarding process from both.
- Organizational structure. Provide a format for teams. Project management and design consultants. Maybe have C4SF.....provide better learning experience.
- **Needs: more information about project teams, easier ways to approach teams, a convincing idea to work on, creating something impactful and useful, better onboarding process, better organizational structure from Code for SF, possibly better learning**

III. INTERVIEW NOTES_GOV. REPRESENTATIVE

Interview Goals:

- To understand how government people get involved and work together with the project teams

Questions

- What brought you to SFBrigade?
- When you first joined, how did you get involved with a project team?
- As for now, how do you work together with the project team?
 - What are your roles
 - What are the tasks that you're involved in?
- * Optional: looking back, what has changed in terms of your involvement with the team?
- What were some major milestones and difficulties?

Joy (Joy.Bonaguro@sfgov.org)

- Jesse invited Joy to present. Joy came because not many gov people are here
 - Reason 1: to answer questions
 - About data set, how things work, and give people feedback about how government
 - Budget process
 - Reason 2: to learn about what people are doing..connect them with people and folks in the city
 - Reason 3: brought projects to brigade
 - Reason 4: just to participate
 - Reason 5: to learn about how government can improve....their own platform, their data (sometimes people provide feedback on bugs or bad UI)
 - Joy did light weight user testing
- When Joy first came, Joy pitched her idea in national data hack night. Housing data hub. june.2014, code base done in sept. oct. 2014...now in maintainance
- Joy was the project manager. Mix of coding and a mix of content work and design framing and marketing...it was hard because of her other tasks. Providing vision, directions
- Joy did it again 2015 national civic data hacking...project manager ...the project is on hold cause the main technical person moved.... government took over. made with open data
- Joy only pitched projects that gov would do or take over.
- Milestones: final completion
- Challenges:
 - hard to get it done on hack night, the way in which new volunteers learn about the new project...took away time.
 - point of contact....
 - It was unclear if it is ok to not take on new people....they just wanted to work.
 - The delineation of projects is messy....a separation of social area vs. work area. Then again whats the point of hack night....talk? work? ...space ...so people have better control over their participation in terms of space and time.
 - Confusion between intro and orientation....how about old members? how about second time? intro has a bit of orientation.
 - Pitching was chaotic...lots of people pitching (make it more productive)....need better structure and guidance....pitching should pitch to the right people. Pitcher and participants...may not match together.
- Joy wants people to think of them as resources...answer questions, connect them to city resources

- **Needs:**
 - **Be able to**
 - **connect projects with government resources**
 - **answer questions about government processes**
 - **Bring projects from government to Code for SF for people to work on. In this case, only projects that the government would want to work on were pitched at SFBrigade**
 - **Learn about government platforms**
 - **hacknight structure that's less time-consuming**
 - **instructions for teams and new members in terms of taking in new members. E.g. who to talk to, how many, if it is ok to not take new people**
 - **spatial and temporal separation for 'work' and 'social'**
 - **separation between 'introduction', 'new member orientation', and 'pitching'**
 - **process for 'pitching'....to make it more productive...and pitch to the right audience**