How to use a Science Fair to increase product awareness at your company

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Claps: 18

Date: May 22, 2018

As your company passes about 120 people, [previous communication models and transfers start to break down](). You can be working hard to build a great product and engineering culture, and finding that communicating your teamâ€™s work to the rest of the company is getting harder and harder. For this reason, itâ€™s essential for your team to come together and share work broadly. A **science fair** is an effective solution to showcase, celebrate, and educate employees around the work done by engineering.

Itâ€™s a little different than what you might have done in middle school, but the essential idea is the same. The science fair provides a dedicated time for your team to come together and learn about what the product and engineering teams have built. They can try it out for themselves, learn about why they built it the way they did, what customers it serves, or why it matters.
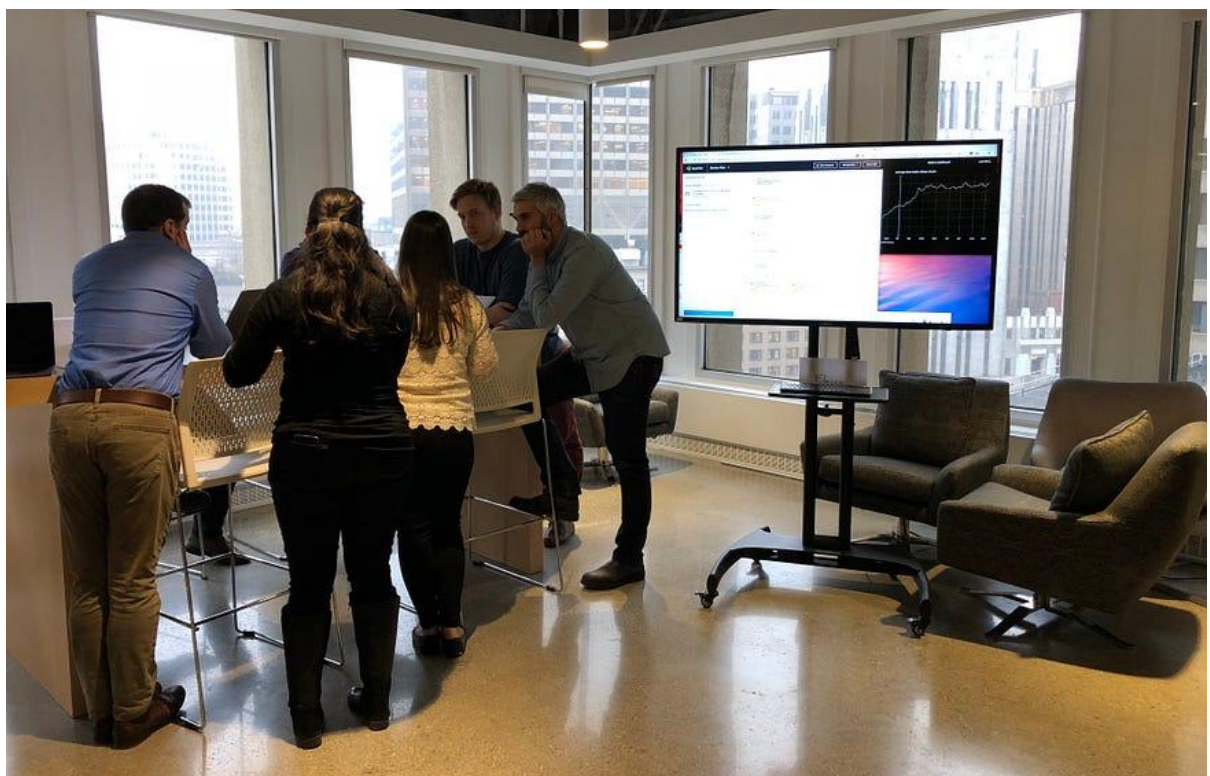
The Flows team sharing ideas for new features.

The format is simple:
For the first few minutes, each team introduces their work and where their fair booth is in a large room. Each team has a demo station prepared where they can show off their work.

Then, people from around the company circulate the room.

The original credit for this goes to [Yoav Shapira](#) and [Sam Clemens](#), who originated the first one I attended at HubSpot in 2010 ([One of those early science fairs is immortalized here](#)). We also used them very effectively later at InsightSquared, and then held our first one at Klaviyo in April.

The benefits are powerful for your culture, and easily worth the time investment. Itâ€™s a prime moment to encourage colleagues who donâ€™t normally interact with each other to meet, learn from each other, and create new relationships across teams. By providing a reason and direction for common conversation, itâ€™s easier to stimulate conversation between different groups in the company. When your engineers can directly discuss the product with your salespeople, both groups will come away with a new understanding of how their jobs are challenging, how to support each other, and what matters for each group.


Klaviyoâ€™s content team, with members of Sales and Success learning about our new Signup Forms

1. Running your own science fair

Socialize with the team at the beginning of the month that at the end of the month, theyâ€™ll be presenting on what they produce and sharing their achievement with the team.

Schedule it on the calendar a couple of weeks in advance. Mid-late afternoon can be a good time for this, since itâ€™ll be a change of pace from the rest of the workday for teams. It can be hard for some people to get back into a work mode afterwards. So itâ€™s good to cap the end of a day. Consider starting it at 4 or something depending on your teamsâ€™ typical work schedule.

Prepare a short deck â€” one slide to remind people why theyâ€™re there. Two slides per team â€” one intro/title slide (names, faces, responsibility), one summarizing what theyâ€™ve accomplished at a very high level. Ask the team leaders to make those slides. Creating these slides should be fast for them since itâ€™s summarizing recent work and the people they work with, no more than 15 or 20 minutes of work. We typically ask the product manager or technical lead on the team to do this preparation work and present. Just one person from each team goes up during this section to briefly introduce their work and announce where to get the rest.
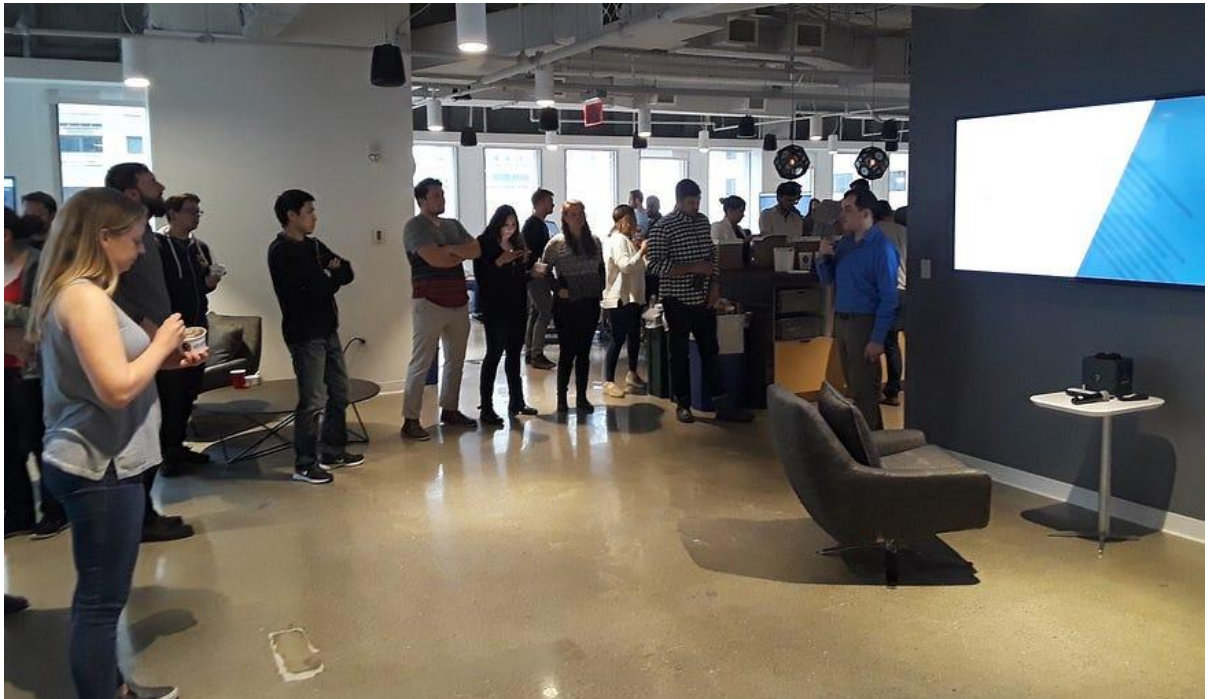
Introducing the teams at the start of the Science Fair

Give each team the biggest monitor or TV they can grab. If your office has TVs on carts, relocate them to where you can do this like many do. We did it in our cafeteria/kitchen area, which is the only space big enough to hold the entire company at once.

Ally and Josh from the Reporting, Segmentation, and Profiles team share a new internal dashboard

Provide 30â€"45 minutes for people to circulate the room, ask questions, and learn from each other. Consider sending a survey afterward via Google Forms or building into your other weekly review process. Just ask for feedback on the experience and make it a conversation, so that it evolves in a way that is unique to your organization.

If you want to try your own science fair, here are a few notes on questions to consider as you build your own event.

2. How to engage back-end focused teams

For teams that build directly for customers, showing off their product, showing the output and outcomes of their work is pretty straightforward. For teams that donâ€™t have a front-end aspect to their work, or canâ€™t represent their user-facing features easily, there are still ways to contribute. Internal or back-end facing teams can still bring workflow charts that show a process that was followed, dashboards from apps like Grafana, and speak to which items on there they worked on and why those matters. Sometimes the lesson from a teamâ€™s work one month is, for example, that latency is really low now, and the impact of that improvement on your other systems.
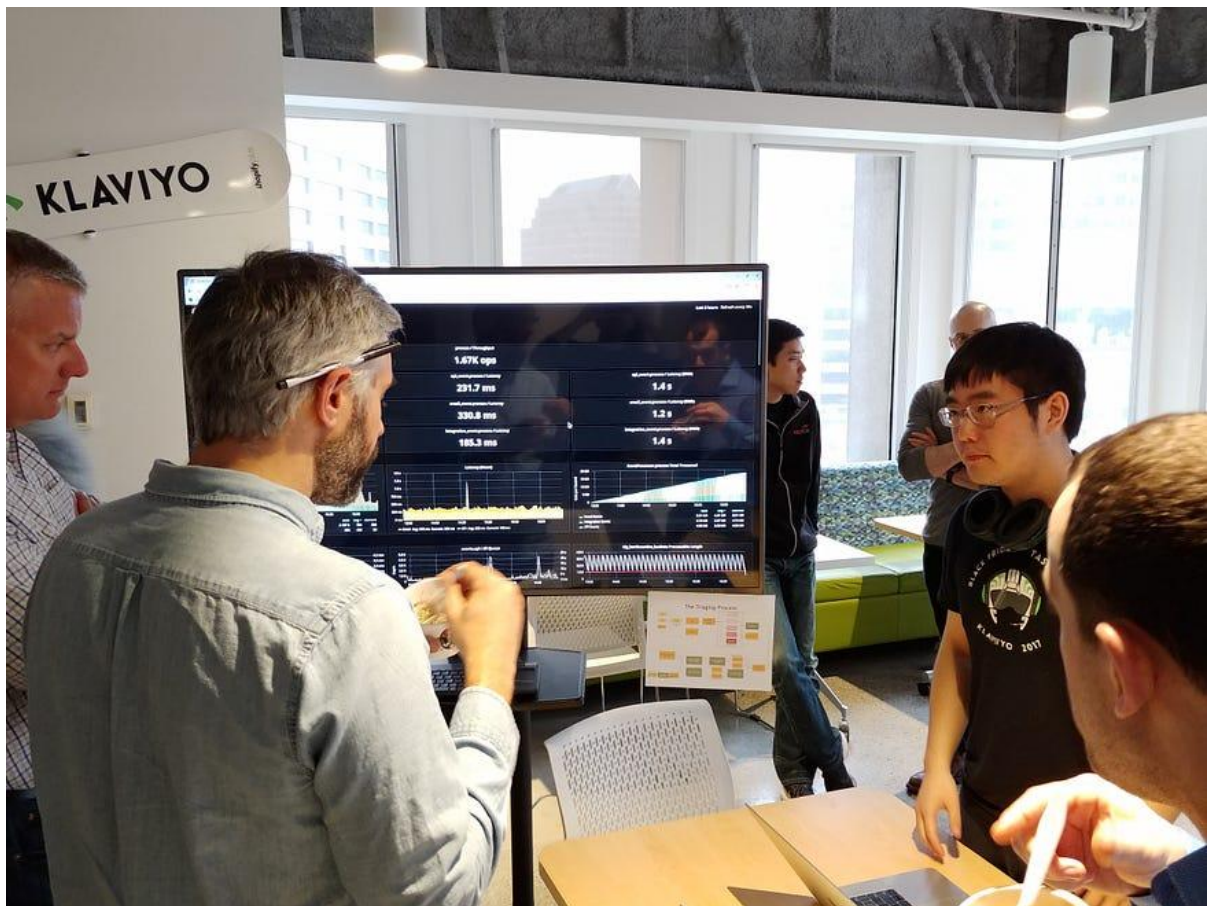
Seed, one of our Data Storage engineers, sharing operational improvements

3. Is attendance by other teams mandatory?

Make this choice right away. Attendance should be essentially mandatory for product and engineering. Maybe something comes up thatâ€™s more important for a couple of individuals, things happen, but teams should treat the opportunity to show off their work as an essential part of their job.

The question then, is do you make attendance for the other teams in your company explicitly optional or mandatory? There are some trade offs to consider. How important does somebodyâ€™s work need to be to miss this? I think you should make it explicitly optional, but provide strong incentives, whether itâ€™s the collaboration time and chance to meet others, or something else.

For example, at InsightSquared we also used the moment to celebrate other important team milestones, like employee anniversaries. It gives everyone a chance to celebrate people who have committed years to the team and growing the business. People really enjoyed this and would remind each other that showing up for each other like this mattered. Weâ€™d cut up a giant ice cream cake to celebrate their milestones together and keep it a memorable event for our community.

4. Recruitment Benefits

Itâ€™s also great for recruiting â€" let potential employees join the meeting to watch (as long as your product development doesnâ€™t need to be a close secret for some reason). Itâ€™s a great

way to show how you exemplify the ideals of your culture and make them tangible. They can get a sense of how the whole company engages with each other, values each others work, and shares news in a way that is unique to the teams involved.

At both InsightSquared and HubSpot, we also included a short ritual at the beginning where new employees in the room since the last science fair would take a moment to introduce themselves to the company. At Klaviyo, we already had a long-held establishment of doing that in our week-end team meeting (more on this to comeâ€¦), so we didnâ€™t adopt that for the science fair.

Do you have a science fair or similar ritual for your company? What does it look like?