The Hackathon

and the hacking culture at Microsoft

Linda Thackeray
Director of Awesome
The Garage - NERD
The Microsoft Global Hackathon

The One Week Hackathon is the company-wide, multi-day, global event from THEGARAGE that brings employees and interns from all over the company together to create, innovate, and hack on ideas that inspire them. It is the largest private hackathon on the planet.

For Hackathon 2017, there were 18,300+ employees and interns who registered and 4,700+ projects created by teams from 400+ cities across 75 countries hacking on hundreds of topics and technologies.

The Hackathon is a highly visible demonstration of Microsoft’s commitment to employees in support of the values of a hack culture. The annual One Week event and year-round hacking activities exist to cultivate employee innovation, inspiration, and collaboration. The Hackathon is the most well-attended and diverse employee event at Microsoft, and it continues to attract people from across multiple spectrums of the company.

When it comes to the Hackathon, there is no shortage of ideas for hack projects. There have been more than 10,000 ideas generated for hack projects in just three years — with the number increasing each year — demonstrating that Microsoft employees welcome an outlet for pursuing their ideas.

Projects are recognized through science fairs, category judging, and online interaction with local and global recognition of the winning projects.

The global Hackathon is produced by The Garage at Microsoft. The Garage headquarters are on Redmond main campus in Building 27 South, including a Maker Garage with the latest 3D printers, CNC mills, laser cutters, and soldering benches. The Garage communities include chapters focused on Robotics, Drones, Wearables, Urban Farming, Brewing, Coding, and more.

The Garage is also the official outlet to share experimental projects from across the company with customers externally at garage.microsoft.com. Hackathon projects, maker projects, open source projects — anything goes.
Some context

The Garage
A small, scrappy team at Microsoft that runs the Hackathon and empowers hacking across the company.

The event, the HackBox site
The main Hackathon is a three-day event in July, but we launch our internal online site in the spring.

The ideas, the teams
Employees and interns – any role, group, location – can enter ideas into HackBox. Anyone can join open projects and teams can start to collaborate right away.

The hacking
Projects can be any idea to create or improve something. It might have code or prototypes, but a hack project can also be a marketing campaign, a process improvement, a finance plan... Any proof of concept. The Hackathon teams work toward a deadline to submit a video of their idea.

52 weeks
We’ve seen the hacking culture change how people work all year long. The Garage promotes year-round hacking activities and many custom hackathons using HackBox.
# Microsoft Hackathon by the numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FTEs + Interns</td>
<td>11,550</td>
<td>13,380</td>
<td>16,174</td>
<td>18,304*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interns</td>
<td>521</td>
<td>763</td>
<td>1,736</td>
<td>1,722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projects</td>
<td>3,058</td>
<td>3,387</td>
<td>3,834</td>
<td>4,760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countries</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplines</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Engineering</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4,620</td>
<td>5,485</td>
<td>4,852</td>
<td>5,030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New to Hacking</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9,240</td>
<td>8,965</td>
<td>10,351</td>
<td>8,339</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Includes 90 external hackers
The Hackathon has global participation

- 38% of Hackathon participants were from Global Development Centers (GDCs)
- 53% of Hackathon participants were from outside the Puget Sound area
“Hacking” is more than a 48-hour caffeine-infused event. It can be an event, or a set of activities, or a way of working all year long.

These five elements are the framework for hacking at Microsoft.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ask for ideas</th>
<th>Get diverse perspectives</th>
<th>Hack!</th>
<th>Share</th>
<th>Move projects forward</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An open forum for creative thinking.</td>
<td>Lots of input from various skills, roles, backgrounds.</td>
<td>Focused time for teams to work on their proof of concept.</td>
<td>A place and time to share projects and project outcomes.</td>
<td>Mechanisms to advance ideas, all year long.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Hackathon Planning

#### The Ws

- **Why** is hacking important?
- **What** are they hacking on?
- **Who** are the hackers?
- **When** is the hacking?
- **Where** is the hacking?

#### Logistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Budget</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Locations</th>
<th>Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

#### Goals

- **For Hackers**
- **For Projects**
- **For Hack Organizers**
- **For Organizations**

#### Success

- **For Hackers**
- **For Projects**
- **For Hack Organizers**
- **For Organizations**

#### Documentation

- Event Strategy Doc
- Execution Plan

---

### Hack Organizers

#### Hacker Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preview</th>
<th>Sign Up</th>
<th>Team Build</th>
<th>Hack &amp; Submit</th>
<th>Demo</th>
<th>Sustain Momentum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Capable Teams</td>
<td>Productivity</td>
<td>Inspiration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hackers needed</td>
<td>Justification</td>
<td>Registration</td>
<td>Matchmaking</td>
<td>Help</td>
<td>Audience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

### Hackathon Preview

- **Outcome**
- **Hackers needed**
- **Execution Plan**
- **Roadblocks?”

---

### Hackathon Sign Up

- **Commitment**
- **Registration**
- **Matchmaking**
- **Help**

---

### Hackathon Team Build

- **Capable Teams**
- **Help**
- **Audience**
- **Support**

---

### Hackathon Hack & Submit

- **Productivity**
- **Inspiration**
- **Support**

---

### Hackathon Demo

- **Inspiration**
- **Audience**
- **Support**

---

### Hackathon Sustain Momentum

- **Sustainability**
- **Support**
Thank you!

Email: linda.thackeray@microsoft.com
Twitter: @lindathackeray
LinkedIn: