

You Hacked and Now What? – Exploring Outcomes of a Corporate Hackathon

Background

- Hackathons are becoming more and more popular across various domains.
- Most studies **focus on the event itself**
- Studies that focus on hackathon outcomes:
 - Are conducted in the space of collegiate or civic events
(e.g. Almirall, E., et al. (2014), Nandi, A., & Mandernach, M. (2016), Tandon, J., et al. (2017))
 - Focus on singular outcomes
- Existing studies found:
 - That project continuation is an issue
(e.g. Carruthers, A. (2014), Guerrero, C., et al. (2016), Cobham, D., et al. (2017))
 - Effects of participation on individual networks
(e.g. Lapp, H., et al. (2007), Leclair, P. (2015))
 - Effects on individual competences
(e.g. Nandi, A., & Mandernach, M. (2016))



Civic data meetings



Collegiate event



Corporate hackathon

RQ: What are potential outcomes of corporate hackathons related to projects, individuals and teams?

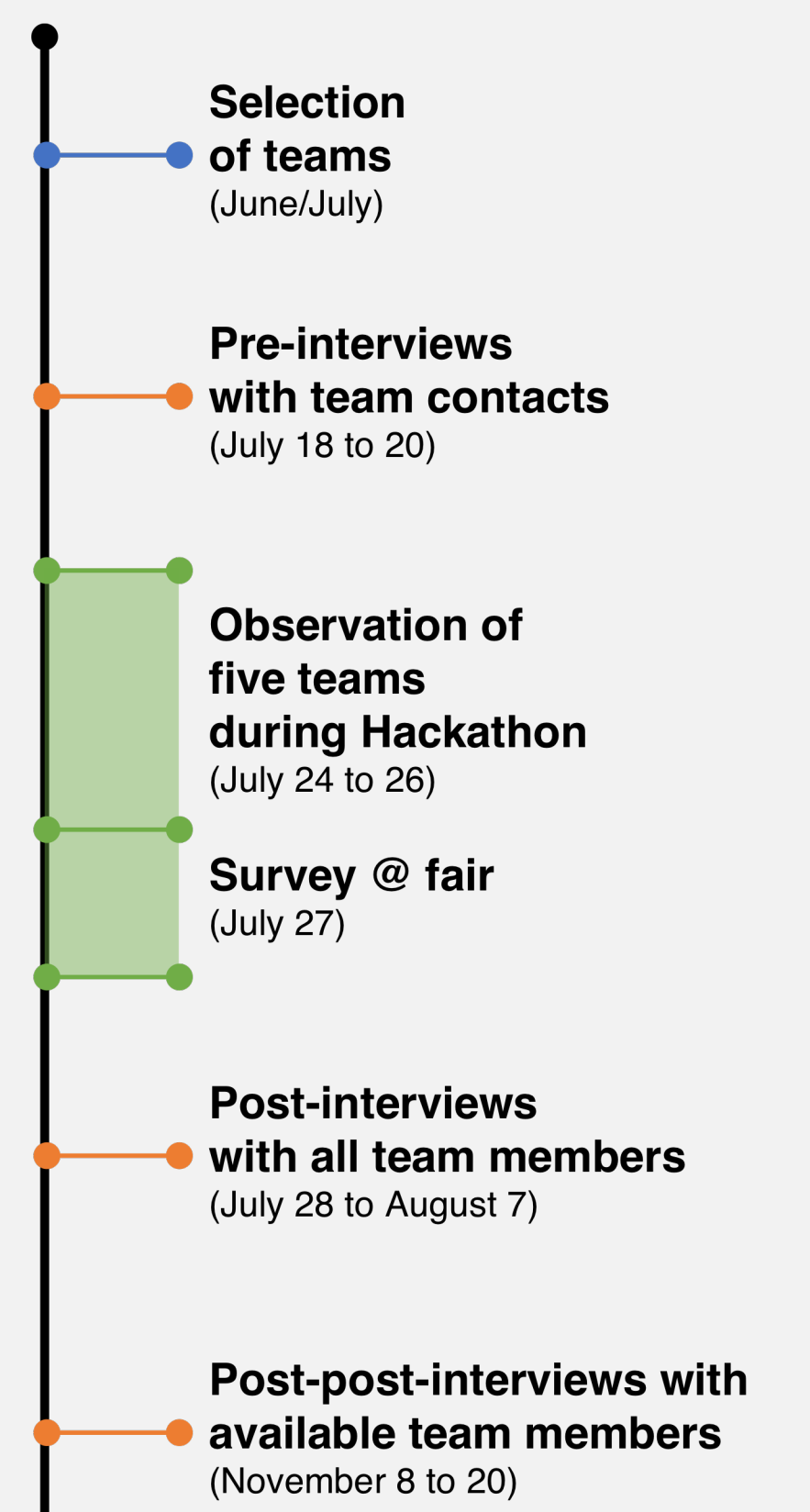
Case study

Microsoft One Week Hackathon 2017

- 4 days (3 days hacking and 1 day fair)
- 6.700 participants, 1.800 projects in Redmond alone
- Study population:
 - 5 teams (3 to 7 members each)
 - Selected based on relation of project to work and familiarity of members
- Mixed-method study consisting of:
 - Pre-interviews
 - Observations
 - Post- and post-post interviews
 - Surveys



Timeline



Insights

Projects

- Most participants **wanted to continue** their projects (70%) and wanted to continue working with the people in the team (70%)
- **Two out of five** projects will be continued
- **No original team member** will be part of the continuation
- One group leader attempts to stay involved
- Continuation required:
 - Individual intentions
 - Internal marketing (outside of fair)
 - Fit to existing products
 - Market need
 - Resources

Individuals

- Effects on individual **skills**:
 - Acquired new technical skills or extended them
 - Project leaders improved project management skills
 - Sparked interest to acquire new skills and instill confidence in the ability to acquire them
- Effects on individual **careers**:
 - Promotions based on hackathon performance
 - Improved perception of participant by manager
 - Improved perception of participant by other employees
- Effects on individual **networks**:
 - Networks of newly formed teams increased through hackathon
 - Networks of project leaders improved through exposure

Open questions

How can we scaffold activities towards outcomes?

Organizing hackathons in a certain way might lead to specific outcomes.

Which outcomes are peripheral?

Some outcomes might happen anyways while others can be influenced actively.

How to integrate hackathons?

They could become an integral part of innovation and software engineering practice.

How much should we plan?

Too much planning might turn hackathons into just another work task.

