

Human resources needed

At least three organizers

The method: what is it, when to use it and what outcome to expect

Hackathons/ideathons are sprint events taking the form of a competition during which several small teams of participants have to develop a concrete and practical idea or a prototype. The idea or prototype is expected to provide a solution to a specific problem or value to specific end-users.

Usually participants have only two days (usually a weekend) to develop their ideas and, therefore, have to collaborate very intensively. Organisers of such events can be municipalities, businesses, universities, schools or civil society organisations.

The method is suitable for mixing groups with various backgrounds, expertise and experiences, who are normally less likely to work together. Such collaborations enable the inclusion of various perspectives in the process and can contribute to more innovative ideas and solutions.

The event can be more or less structured: You can leave the teams free rein to develop their idea or structure the two days with talks, feedbacks and coaching sessions. Often, the process is accompanied by experts, who coach the teams and can give punctual support in the development of their project.

The process: how to conduct it in an in-person setting or online using a PC/laptop with video option

1. Introduction: The facilitator contextualizes and introduces the event, the question or problem that needs a solution and the goal behind it. In order to support the ideation phase, you can invite 1 or 2 experts to speak about the concrete problem, or to present some solutions

2. Ideation: Give participants some time to start developing a very generic idea alone or in a group. Some participants will already have an idea. Others will come out this sessions without concrete ideas. Participants who came out with an idea are invited to briefly pitch it to the other.

3. Teambuilding: Participants informally discuss the various ideas. Participants without ideas can build teams with participants with an idea. If participants have an idea but cannot find teammates, they might need to give up their idea and join another team. Make sure that eventually everyone is part of a team.

4. Developing: In unmoderated small groups, of around 5 participants each, work on their ideas for 48h hours. This phase can be structured with coaching or exchange sessions. During this phase, participants are free to organize their work as they want. However, you will need to be always there to monitor their progress and support them in case of questions.

5. Pitching: Each group pitches their idea and answers questions from the participants and/or juries of experts.. The most promising ideas are awarded with prizes.

Ideally, you explain how the winning ideas will be used and implemented. You can also try to establish relationships between the teams and future potential users of the idea (for instance through the

Blended participation

By integrating online elements into the process, you can stretch the process over more days. You can also organise Team building and group formations face-to-face, and then ideation and presentation of the ideas online, and eventually the project development face-to-face.

Digital communication

Useful for informing the public about the status quo prior to the process as well as results.

To reach a wider public, the pitching of the projects and the evaluation of the juries can be organized via an online platform or by video recording.

Good to know

- In order to increase participation in such an event, you might need to offer prizes to the most promising ideas
- Think about organising childcare, as such events generally take place during the weekend and target rather young people
- The format might be especially relevant for young people, such as students

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