

THE HACKATHON TEMPLATE

A high-angle, close-up shot of a person's feet wearing white brogue shoes, standing on a skateboard. The skateboard is on a wooden floor, and the image has a teal color overlay and a motion blur effect, suggesting movement. The text 'THE HACKATHON TEMPLATE' is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif font.

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Introduction

The Hackathon is a great way to accelerate adoption of a data driven mindset as your organization undertakes its digital transformation. It can also help you achieve your company's goals by focusing your talent on difficult analytics or data problems.

The following sample goal is borrowed from a past code-a-thon run by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services to help combat the opioid epidemic. Replace the goal with your company's biggest data challenge.

The agenda and other details are inspired by those of several Alteryx customers that have run successful data challenge events.

Sample Goal

Data is provided for each track. Participants are also allowed to find and use open source data that may assist in achieving the project goals.

Prevention track: "How can you help federal, state, and local stakeholders predict and analyze the supply and movement of legal and illicit opioids?"

Treatment track: "How can you help federal, state, and local stakeholders improve access to effective treatment and recovery services?"

Usage track: "How can you help federal, state, and local stakeholders identify at-risk populations and their underlying risk characteristics of opioid misuse or abuse?"

Logistics

It is recommended to hold the event in a large conference room or meeting area that can house all teams, so that teams can feed off each other's energy and enthusiasm. Short of that, each team should at least be together in a conference room. It is not recommended that people work from their desks, as it is too easy to get distracted by day to day work tasks.

Recommended team size should follow the "two pizza" rule – i.e., approximately six.

Agenda

DAY	ACTIVITY
Day 1	<i>Kickoff & Training.</i> Describe the competition goal to the participants and allow time to form teams. Make sure participants have access to the data and the necessary analytics software installed. Provide training material and trainers as appropriate.
Days 2-3	<i>Competition.</i> Teams work together toward common goal.
Day 4	<i>Presentations & Judging.</i> Allow 5-15 minutes per team to present results. Slides should be kept to a minimum – the presentation should focus on the demo.

Judging

Judging should reward overall creativity and innovation, as well as business impact. For best results, senior leaders should constitute the judging panel. Consider:

- Does the solution exhibit an analytically sound methodology?
- Is the solution repeatable, generalizable, and easy to follow?
- How much value or savings is captured by implementing this solution?

Prizes

To foster widespread interest in the event, promote it with posters around the office. Give away t-shirts and stickers to participants. As long as the competition is clearly important to senior leadership, the bragging rights will probably be enough to motivate participants. But consider prizes, as well, such as:

- Udacity scholarships
- Lunch with CEO
- PTO day
- Conference pass
- Cash bonus