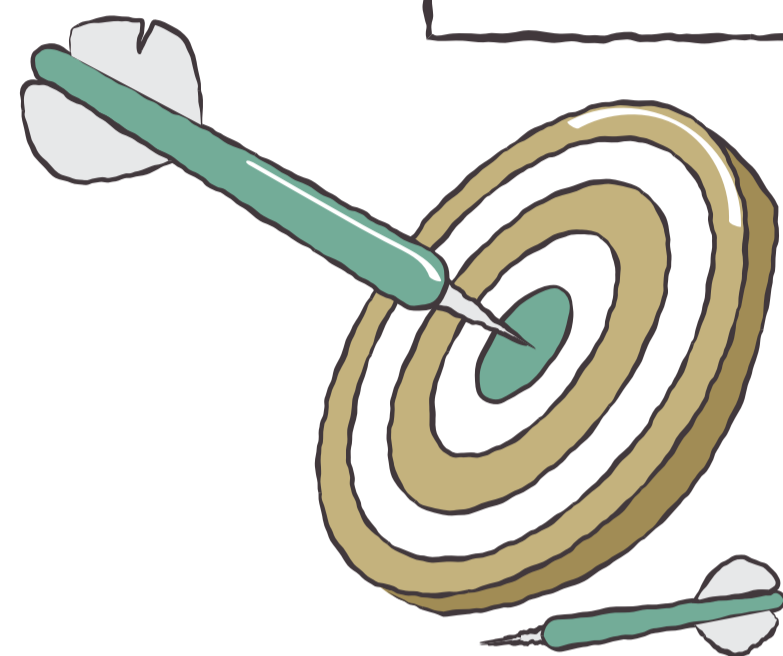


# Design Thinking: Running Successful Hackathons

A Minimalist, Highly Detailed Whiteboard Snapshot

Avoid the "Innovation Theater" Trap

## Pre-Hackathon



### Strategy First

Align with long term goals. Ensure the event connects to the bigger picture, not just a one-off activity.

### Facilitation

Secure a skilled facilitator. Focus on steering the process rather than dominating the conversation. Remember, the facilitator is the guide not the hero!



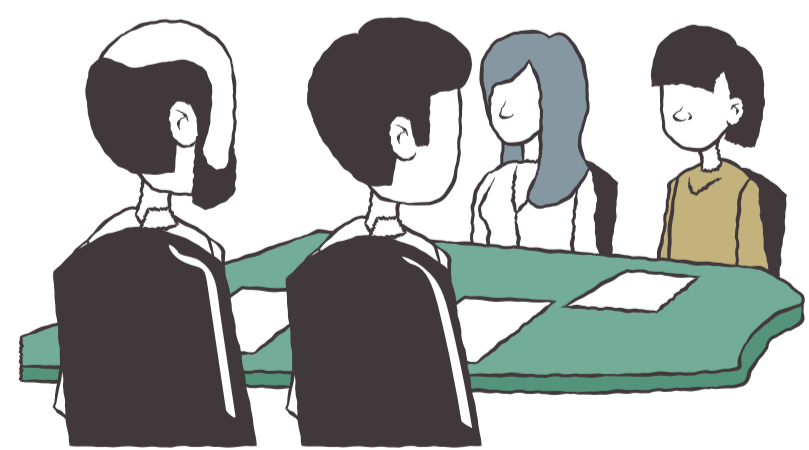
### Flexible Agenda

Prepare an agenda but keep it flexible. Allow time to read the room and adapt to the team's energy.



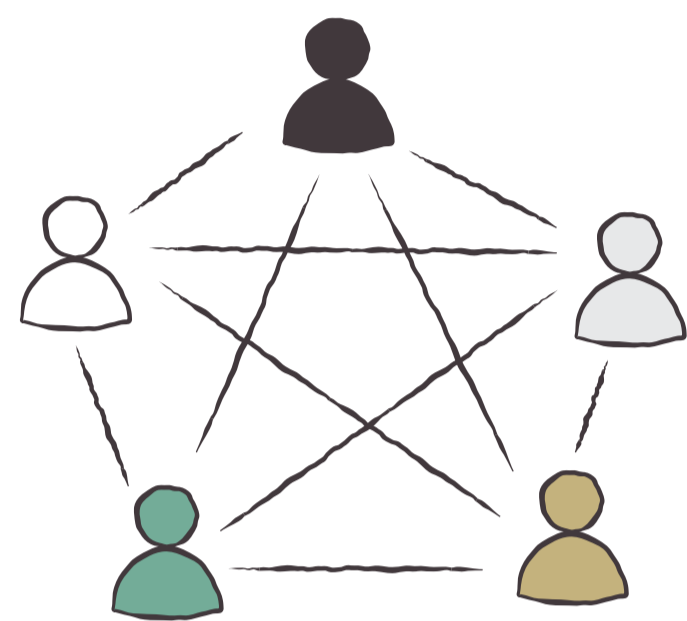
### The Right People

Invite the right mix of roles. Empower the event with executive support and expert knowledge (Business & Technology).



**Dunbar Number Theory** Based on this theory, smaller groups lead to deeper communication, improved team dynamics and better outcomes.

## During-Hackathon



### Optimal Team Size

Limit groups to 4-6 people. This ensures diverse skills and fast decision making.

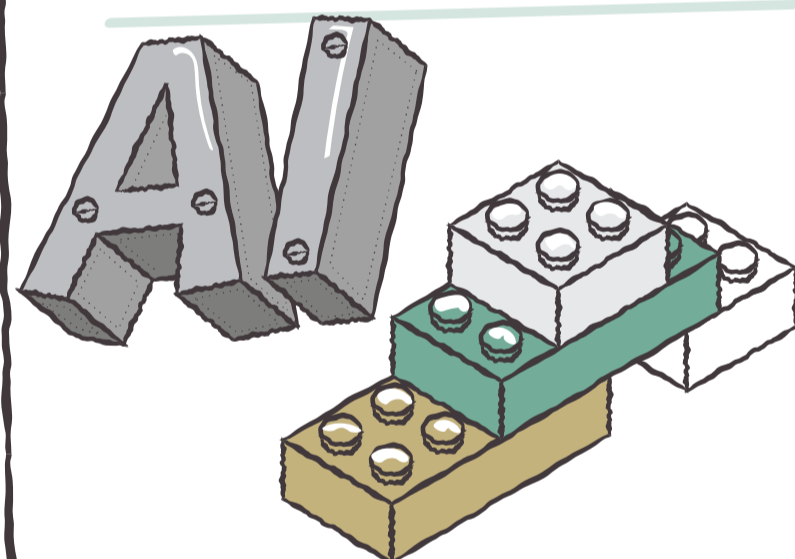
Apply Dunbar Number Theory



### Less is More

Keep it focused. Do not try to fit too many objectives, tools, or activities into a single event. Design for impact!

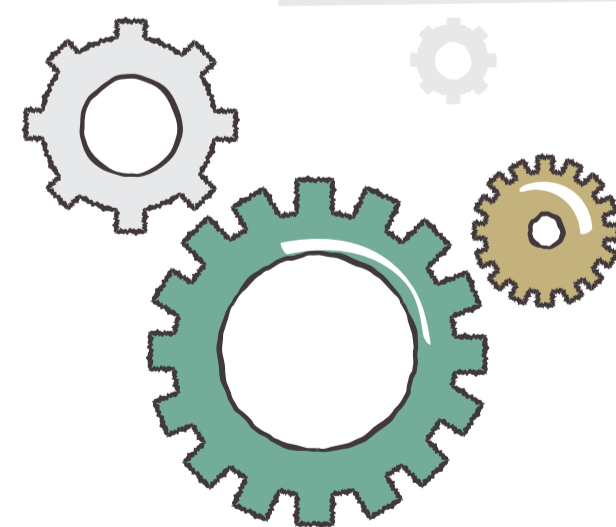
Cognitive Load Theory



Be intentional with sticky note colors. Design for results, not theater!

### Intentional Tooling

Be intentional with your use of activities, games, and sticky notes. Ensure every activity or tool directly serves the hackathon's goal.



### Action-Driven

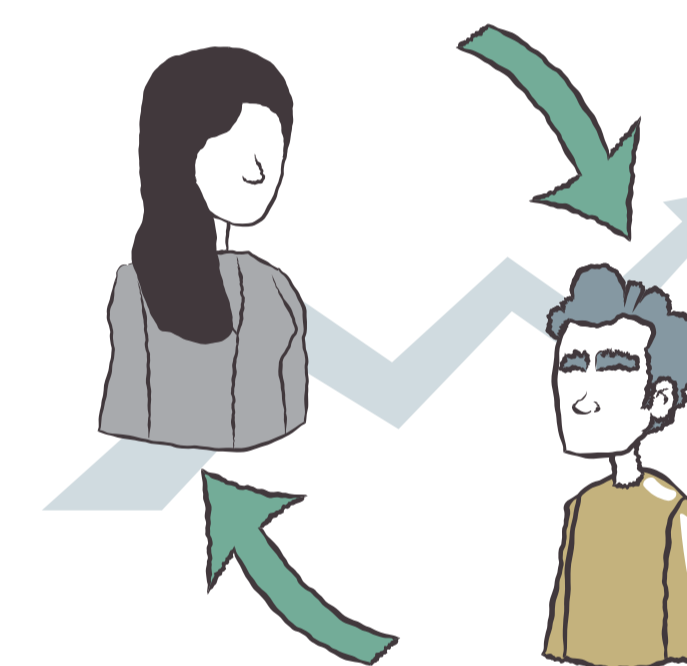
Make decisions during the session. Let the hackathon be defined by action, not just talk!

## Post-Hackathon



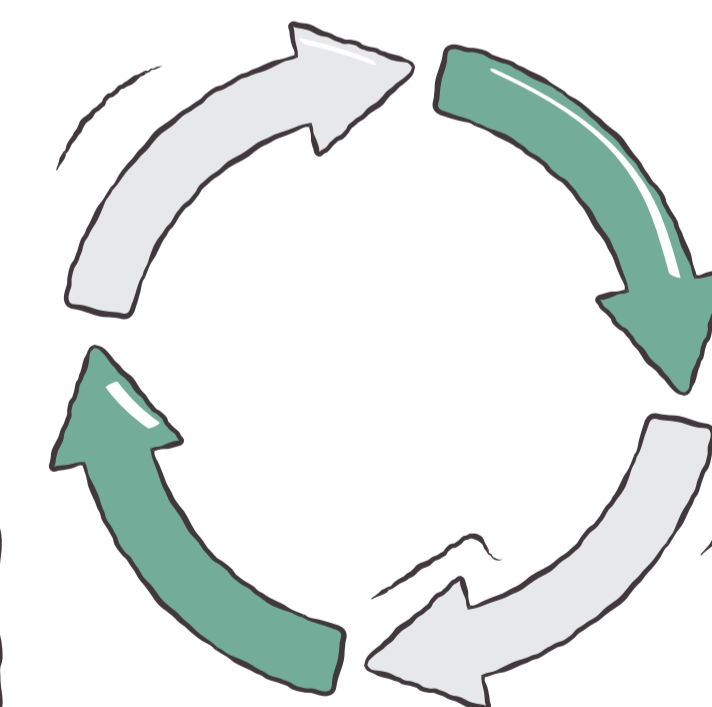
### Document Outcomes

Record the key activities, decisions, and agreed next steps to ensure accountability and maintain momentum. The real work begins when the event ends.



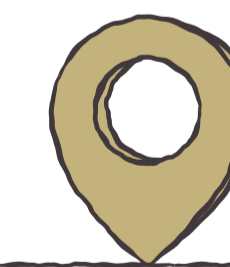
### Follow Up

Stay connected with your participants. Keep everyone informed and engaged shortly after the event concludes



### Iterate

Gather feedback and act on it. Use every hackathon as a learning opportunity to ensure continuous improvement.



**Cognitive Load Theory (CLT)** This framework states that our working memory has a limited capacity, which can be overloaded if too much information is presented at once. By managing cognitive load, hackathon organizers can create a more effective and enjoyable experience and enhance creativity, ultimately leading to better outcomes in terms of innovation and learning.

Ontario Consulting

info@ontarioconsulting.ca

@OntarioConsulting

@OntarioConsulting

Rody Vonk innovation & creativity training

www.rody-vonk.com