

How to Host a Hackathon with Agentic Quest

Introduction

This workbook is designed to help automation program leaders, CoEs, and event organizers plan and execute an internal hackathon leveraging Agentic Quest challenges. These challenges simulate real-world problems that can be solved using agentic process automation (APA). Hackathons are not just about hosting a fun competition. When done right, they accelerate learning, ignite creativity, and surface transformative automation ideas. This guide aligns your event with the nine dimensions of the Pathfinder Framework to ensure it contributes to the long-term maturity and value of your automation program.

Each section includes strategic context, practical worksheets, and guiding questions to help teams tailor the experience to their organization's goals.

Purpose & Focus

Clarify the “Why” Behind the Hackathon

The purpose of a hackathon may vary across organizations. Commonly, hackathons are used to rapidly prototype a solution to a real business problem and offer a variety of fresh solutions outside the normal development cycle. Alternatively, they could be focused on skill development for developers or citizen users, evangelizing APA capabilities to internal stakeholders, seeding the automation pipeline with fresh ideas, or accelerating program maturity. Defining your primary goal is key to selecting the right structure, content, and post-event follow-through.

Be clear about who is sponsoring the event and what business objectives it supports. If the hackathon is tied to strategic transformation efforts or stakeholder engagement initiatives, align messaging and measures of success accordingly.

Guiding Questions

- What is the primary goal of this hackathon?
- Who is the executive sponsor or business champion?
- What internal initiatives or OKRs does this support?
- What does success look like? Immediate? Long term?

Activity: Answer the questions above. Then write a 2-3 sentence vision statement for this event.

Audience & Teams

Identify and Structure the Participants

Understanding your participant personas is essential to designing an inclusive and effective event. Participants may include developers, citizen developers, business SMEs, or even hybrid teams. Tailor your content, facilitation, and challenge design to meet them where they are.

How you organize teams also affects engagement and outcomes. Consider the benefits of cross-functional teams (e.g., diverse perspectives, holistic solutions) versus functional groups (e.g., speed, simplicity). Decide if teams should be pre-assigned or self-formed based on your event goals.

Guiding Questions

- Who will be participating and what is their skill level?
- What's the right mix of business and technical contributors?
- Will teams be:
 - ☒ Functional
 - ☒ Cross-functional
 - ☒ Pre-assigned
 - ☒ Self-formed

Activity: Sketch 2-3 ideal team compositions, including roles and skillsets.

Challenge Design & Scope

Craft Meaningful Challenges

Agentic Quest provides a ready-made foundation for simulation-based skill-building using agentic automation patterns. Organizations can use these challenges directly or adapt the structure to include additional components like business ideation or internal problem-solving.

Think about what challenges will energize your audience, align with your business, and match the learning or innovation goals of your event. Will you offer only Agentic Quest challenges, or extend into opportunity ideation or prototype development for real business cases?

Also clarify guardrails. Make it clear what technologies, data, or APIs are allowed—and whether participants can build using enterprise data or must stick to sandbox environments. For activities where a real minimal viable product or solution is the expected outcome, planning for the necessary access and training on how to utilize this data is just as important as the rest of the event. Agentic Quests do not require enterprise data and are fully self-contained.

Guiding Questions

- What challenge formats will we include?
- Are challenges scored, judged, or exploratory?
- What tools and systems will teams be allowed to use?
- What are the rules or constraints (e.g., runtime, architecture, data)?

Challenge Type	Purpose	Tooling/Platform	Risk Level	Outcome Path
Agentic Quest	Upskill	Automation Anywhere	Low	Scoreboard
Innovation Ideation	Real use cases	Internal tools + LLMs	Medium	Opportunity backlog

Event Logistics

Plan the Operational Details

Logistics are critical for creating a smooth and engaging experience. Whether your event is in-person, hybrid, or virtual, attendees need to know where to go, how to engage, and how to get help.

Provide a detailed agenda and ensure consistent communication channels before and during the event. Assign support staff, define escalation paths for tech issues, and ensure there's a clear cadence for collaboration (check-ins, demo sessions, wrap-ups).

Key Considerations:

- Event format (in-person, hybrid, virtual)
- Scheduling across time zones (if global)
- Communication platforms (Slack, Teams, Zoom)
- Room setup, equipment, Wi-Fi, and supplies (in-person)
- Support channels and live troubleshooting plans
- Swag, catering, recognition and celebration moments

Logistics Checklist:

- ☐ Event space or virtual platform confirmed
- ☐ Agenda and schedule published
- ☐ Communication channels created and shared
- ☐ On-call support team identified
- ☐ Registration confirmed and reminders sent
- ☐ Scoring or judging rubric defined
- ☐ Leaderboard prepared (if applicable)

Support & Enablement

Set Teams Up for Success

Hackathons run best when there's strong CoE involvement, structured mentoring, and a clear plan for technical readiness. Define who is responsible for what, and ensure support roles are visible and proactive.

Ensure developers have access to systems, accounts, APIs, and any third-party platforms they might need. Assign dedicated technical coaches or mentors to guide teams and resolve blockers. Consider having a command center or help desk during the event.

Guiding Questions (Operating Model | Development & Deployment):

- Who are our technical mentors or support leads?
- What issues should be escalated to CoE vs. resolved by peers?
- Are LLMs, APIs, connectors, and permissions tested in advance?

Support Model Worksheet:

Support Role	Name	Responsibility	Availability
<i>Mentor</i>		<i>Guidance, unblock teams</i>	<i>Hourly check-ins</i>
<i>Coach</i>		<i>Tech deep dives</i>	<i>On-call</i>
<i>IT Support</i>		<i>Access, connectivity</i>	<i>Live desk</i>
<i>Application Data Support</i>		<i>Resolve access and connectivity issues for Enterprise Data application</i>	On-site

Evaluation & Impact

Measure What Matters

A hackathon's impact shouldn't be measured solely by who "won," and in fact some hackathons aren't competitions at all. Look at what was learned, what was built, what relationships were formed, and what momentum was created.

Revisit your Purpose and Goals and consider how you would determine if the event was a success.

Additionally, consider participant surveys, stakeholder interviews, or direct observation. The most valuable output might not be a build prototype, it might be future leaders, pipeline ideas, or increased program visibility.

Guiding Questions

- What metrics will we use to measure success?
- What qualitative feedback do we want to capture?
- How do we track pipeline ideas generated during the event?

Evaluation Action Tracker

Evaluation Activity	Description	Owner	Completed	Key Insights
Participant Satisfaction Survey	Gauge overall experience and engagement	Event Team	☐	
Skill Confidence Self-Assessment	Pre/post measurement of technical confidence	Learning Lead	☐	
Pipeline Idea Submission	Collection of automation ideas for follow-up	CoE Lead	☐	
Stakeholder Feedback Interviews	Understand strategic perception and buy-in	Program Sponsor	☐	
Post-Event Debrief Summary	Lessons learned, next steps, and improvement areas	Event Team	☐	

Activity: Draft 3–5 sample survey or interview questions that reflect your event goals (e.g., confidence gained, value perceived, ideas generated).

Follow-Up & Integration

Extend the Impact Beyond the Event

A successful hackathon builds a springboard, not just a scoreboard. Identify the ideas, teams, and capabilities that should be nurtured post-event.

Celebrate outcomes through showcases or executive demos. Feed promising ideas into your innovation pipeline. Recognize contributions, and invite high performers into future innovation roles, mentorship, or training.

Guiding Questions

- What happens to the top 3 ideas or projects?
- Will there be a follow-up event or team presentation?
- How do we track impact and progress after the hackathon?

Activity: Define post-event actions for:



Top scoring team



Best idea with potential



Most collaborative or cross-functional team

Hackathon Project Plan

Plan Key Milestones to Keep on Track

Use this timeline to coordinate pre-event preparation, execution, and post-event integration. Each phase should include communication, alignment, and readiness checkpoints.

Milestone	Description	Owner	Target Date
Kickoff Planning Meeting	Align on goals, scope, and success criteria	Hackathon Lead	4–6 weeks before
Secure Sponsorship & Stakeholders	Confirm exec sponsors and budget support	Program Lead	4–6 weeks before
Finalize Tech Requirements	Validate environments, roles, and LLM/API access	CoE/IT	4 weeks before
Launch Participant Registration	Open signup, define personas, prep learning	Event Team	4 weeks before
Pre-Event Training Kickoff	Assign AAU content and host intro session	Learning Lead	3 weeks before
Final Challenge Confirmation	Select/prepare Agentic Quest and ideation tracks	Challenge Designers	2 weeks before
Logistics Finalization	Confirm space, tools, swag, food, etc.	Ops Coordinator	1 week before
Hackathon Day(s)	Execute event with live support	All Leads	Hackathon date
Winners Announced (if a competition)	Score, judge, and celebrate top performers	Judging Panel	End of event
Post-Event Debrief	Capture lessons, feedback, and next steps	Event Team	1–3 days after
Follow-Up Comms & Showcases	Share results and integrate into roadmap	CoE & Sponsors	1–2 weeks after