

#MRX Hacker for a day: Re-imagining newspapers

3 takeaways from the IleX2015EU 'Qualitative Hackathon'

"If you give a hacker a new toy, the first thing he'll do is take it apart to figure out how it works" - Jamie Zawinski

A hacker is someone who hacks out computer code, a pioneer who sees new ways to use computers, creating programs that no one else could conceive. When you have a problem and you don't know how to approach it, try to think like a hacker. It will surely bring about new perspectives (and ideas)!

That's what we did (John Griffiths and Anouk Willems) at the latest IleX in Amsterdam February 19. The mission of our hacking sprint was given by Sean Adams of News UK, who set us the challenge of getting media planners and buyers to think differently about newspapers. He explained that the average media buyer comes from a time when advertisers have never had more choice for spending advertising budgets. And while newspapers continue to be a staple advertising channel, the challenge is that the media people who plan advertising campaigns often don't have the habit of reading a daily paper. Something their predecessors have done for more than a century. So how to use #MRX to help them to understand what a great medium newspapers still are?

Advertising for Newspapers: A B2B2C problem

The great thing about this 3 cornered problem is that the ultimate people to convince are not in the client company but a business audience who are already on the receiving end of a ton of research. Conventionally researchers go to obtain the answers from the consumer base. But what we needed to do was to bring about behavioural change in a business audience, and break through the clutter of the research they already receive on a daily basis.



3 learnings from #MRX hacking

Through the day we had the benefit of researchers who had come from very different markets, who often had worked in countries other than their own. We also had the benefit of millennials who came and participated who were able to share their patterns of media usage and also what made newspapers hard to read. We experienced that it really pays off to think like a hacker every now and then. While we can't share the new insights and ideas from our hackathon, here are our 3 takeaways from thinking like a hacker during our #MRX hackathon:



1/ Take it apart and play around. We know there is no shortage of candidate research methods. Stopping researchers diving straight into solutions is *always difficult*. Which was why we first spent time on defining the problem more deeply in terms of how the client perceived the challenge, e.g. why are millennials not reading newspapers, how media buyers plan their budgets. By taking apart the problem one by one, we create a deeper understanding of the underlying factors.

2/ Learn the language of your users. Learn to speak the 'programming language' of your users, and empathise with them. We started the brainstorm on the various methods that we could use to tackle the problem by first articulating what the barriers were for both the media buyers and planners and also for millennials.



3/ Fight authority and go beyond. The enemy of the hacker is boredom and authoritarian figures who use secrecy to strangle the freedom of information. That's why we set aside limitations such as budget and time to really go beyond. To solve Sean's challenge, we concluded that we not only need to address behaviour and perceptions, but also the personal experiences of the media buyers involved. It is dangerous to only fix on one of these. We can only go beyond when confronting them with how different their attitudes or behaviours may be from others they see themselves as being very similar to.

|

Structure:

Context & problem

Challenges

Learnings of the hackathon

- Understanding client problem is crucial. During the hackathon, we arranged speeddates between the participants and the client. Asking the right questions is an art.
- Understanding the barriers of your stakeholders
- Research as an experience – break through the clutter of research, make them part of it.