Product Forge: Emerging Tech overnight
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 Last month I found myself standing by myself in Codebase (Edinburgh) on a cold Thursday, around me where several individuals all mirroring my shell shocked expression and thinking the same thing 'what the hell do I know about coding, data science, software engineering ….'. This was day one of the Future Health Product Forge, and the answer for me was not a thing, at the time I thought it was a deal breaker but several hours later my perspective had changed.

Product Forge is self-described as the Hackathon with a twist, the twist being that by the end of the event a product, service or technology has been designed or is on its way to becoming a viable product. For me the twist was you didn't need to have high level programming skills or a in depth knowledge of Data Science to help sculpt these projects. At its core the idea is that collaboration across multiple fields is vital for real and long lasting innovation to occur.

This may sound clichéd but it's true, at around midnight on Thursday the 19th of January over 10 groups were formed from the awkwardness of networking and group introductions, after three caffeine fuelled days, and several sugar highs and lows, at 9pm on Sunday the 22nd each group had created, designed, researched and presented a viable product for NHS services to possibly utilise in the future.

Throughout the event Product Forge supplied the working groups with Data scientists, Clinicians, Businessmen and Software/Computer engineers as mentors to help shape their ideas and develop them into their final product. As part of my taking part I made sure to ask those who were regulars to Hackathons and similar events what separated Product Forge from others, the overwhelming response was that the events mentors and the mix of specialisations in all the groups was what made it better. In each group, there had to be a minimum of 4 individuals each from a separate background with one of the four needing to be a developer to help create the groups product. Far from being put off by this forced structure, the individuals quickly began to work together to understand how each specialisation could work within the group and what they could bring to the project as a whole.

I'm supposed to use this blog to discuss emerging tech, but I feel that is just as important to know that emerging tech, services or products can come from a variety of unexpected sources. If you have an Idea and don't know how to carry it forwards, a good start would be to take it to a Product Forge, or event. Get others involved don't be afraid to admit you don't understand business, or design or software development, these aren't ubiquitous talents. Product

development needs multiple minds working on it to increase creativity and ensure your idea becomes the best it can be.

I promise next month I'll talk about tech, so watch the space.