

## THE RISE OF THE FEMALE HACKERS IN AUSTRALIA

By Ina Behrendt, Associate Creative Director and Women in Tech crusader @Razorfish, Sydney

Earlier this month, I attended SheHacks, an event held simultaneously at Google in Sydney and Inspire9 in Melbourne and hosted by GirlGeek Sydney/Melbourne. It was billed as “the first exclusive hackathon for women outside of Silicon Valley”.

The event focused on female computer programmers and others involved in software development, including digital designers, interface designers and project managers.

Events like this are a melting pot of inspiring, tech-savvy, talented, smart people who create a big impact by solving a task in a short amount of time.

What made She Hacks more important is that it helped address the lack of gender diversity in start-ups and science, technology, and engineering fields – I believe it is vital to encourage more women to learn about the variety of career opportunities and get into the tech industry.

The Science Technology Engineering Mathematics (STEM) field is one in which women are still underrepresented in around the world, and it was a positive surprise to see just how many of us came together at the SheHacks codefest to create, innovate and solve challenges in a fun and inspiring environment, while meeting some truly amazing tech-savvy talent.

The night began with some inspiring presentations before getting down to the hack theme – Communities & Neighbourhoods. It was a great networking opportunity, with participants getting on stage to pitch ideas and forming teams based around individual interests and skills.

**And yes, as it's tech, let's look at it by the bits, bytes and numbers.**

**2.** We had just **two days** to form teams, brainstorm and conceptualise together, wireframe, design and code. The teams worked until midnight to come up with an innovative solution before coming back the next morning to continue working before the presentations and frontend/backend demonstrations which were due at 4pm.

**3.** At the end of the hackathon each team had just **three minutes** to present and demonstrate a working prototype of their project. This specific event focused intensively on software projects around platforms, applications, and social media solutions, etc. There was no restriction on the type of software being created or coding language that had to be used.

**4.** There were **four judges** represented by the sponsors of SheHacks on the panel and they were responsible for selecting the winning teams.

**5.** There were **five geeks** per team with most groups including a frontend developer, backend developer, UX strategist and designer. It was great to get some non-technical women from project management participating too.

**11.** There were **11 teams** in total in Sydney who showcased a diverse and innovative range of thinking around the Communities & Neighbourhoods theme. Some of the standout ideas built during SheHacks included the 'My Coffee Run' app that allows you to order coffee and take orders from friends and keep a tab of who owes who, and the night's big winner 'Mission Possible', an app

designed to connect volunteers with coordinators to assist with disaster relief. People's choice was the charming 'Doogle', a dog-dating social platform for pet owners.

**48.** The total number of **48 women from the tech industry** who participated in Sydney and demonstrated their technical and creative talent at SheHacks.

Computing is the new literacy of our modern digital life that rules the world. Let's do more to expose young women to the opportunities in STEM fields. Female hackathons are a first big step and great example to foster stronger interest in women getting involved in the industry.