



LIFEHACK LABS

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IMPACT REPORT



LIFEHACK  
LABS



# LIFEHACK LABS IMPACT REPORT

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## INTRODUCTION

Just over a year ago, we kicked off a journey which we called Lifehack Labs. It was designed to be a catalyst program for new youth wellbeing projects and ventures, bringing together 20 young people from around the country, who hadn't met or worked together before.

### **This is the story of what happened since...**

International research suggests that the most common points of failure for new projects and ventures getting into the hands of users and scaling up are breakdowns in teams, poor user-centred design, and running out of funds.

The design of Lifehack Labs paid close attention to building social connection and capital, building capacity in user-centred design, and validating value propositions through prototyping.

The programme was hosted in Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand over 5 weeks in August-September 2014, involved 20 participants, 35+ mentors and provocateurs, 10 partners and countless supporters. You can see the mini documentary [here](#). If you'd like to read more about the actual programme design, curriculum or initial evaluation please have a [read our report](#).

Lifehack is part of the *Prime Minister's Youth Mental Health Project*. We focus on leveraging technology to build the resilience and wellbeing of young people.

Wellbeing is a protective factor against developing mental health challenges and can be part of evidence-based early intervention, as well as having a range of other benefits for individuals, society and our economy.

## THE IMPACT OF LIFEHACK LABS

In reflecting on the programme and talking about its impact we often used the metaphor of splash and ripples.

Whilst we were certain that the programme would create a splash in their life (an experience that they would see as significant), we needed to establish whether we could create a *ripple* – a significant, long-term impact on their lives and the lives of people they sought to serve. Longer term impacts could include examples such as a change of career, a continued improvement in how they approached everyday wellbeing personally or professionally, or something similar of lasting effect.

Results of the  
Lifehack Labs  
Programme



## THE PEOPLE

### Stories from Participants

When people left Lifehack Labs, they knew it was going to have an impact, but they didn't yet know what that would be. Lifehack presented participants with a range of likely scenarios so they could map their path forwards. This might mean finding a team and building an impactful venture, through to developing a new initiative within an existing organisation or simply heading back to their regular life with greater skills for social change.

**Here's some of their reflections on the immediate impact of Lifehack Labs:**



The power everyone has to make change. It just came to me when I saw what everyone was working on.

RYAN

I found being exposed to individuals with a wide variety of skills, backgrounds and experiences the most enjoyable part of the labs process. Collaborating with people I wouldn't normally work with provided an awesome learning opportunity. The time spent at Tapu Te Ranga Marae was the part of Labs I felt was most transformative. Spending time in a communal space and forming close bonds with other participants set the stage for a completely different experience over the following four weeks. Also, focusing on our personal wellbeing and learning different techniques to ensure we kept well was really useful.

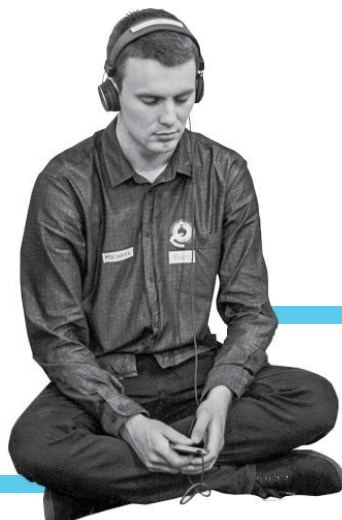
ANONYMOUS

People are integral to solving any societal problems, and I felt like the right sort of people were selected for labs, there was a good balance of skills, gender, location, diversity. But most of all most people brought the right attitude to the process. Also, learning about wellbeing. I had only know about it in a very superficial way, Labs gave me a new lens to look at life through. And a new personal goal – to be flourishing.

NANZ

Being surrounded by amazingly amazing people. I've worked on projects and side projects before with others and have never seen this level of passion and commitment. Being in this environment sparks you to work even harder and have fun doing it at the same time.

MICHAEL



Learning about design thinking was immensely useful. It provided a thorough framework to tackle very complex ideas. Defining the problem is key. And it's not often easy and obvious. Doing a tonne of research to make sure your idea is a valid response to the problem. Team is essential to executing an idea.

UNKNOWN

In a week we got a month's worth of work done, sometimes more. And not just the occasional week, all 5. At least 6 months worth of work done, in 5 weeks. I had thought about being involved with tech and music. But was thinking 10 years down the track.

AARON

Gaining the confidence to be myself. I missed the session on the "inner critic" but I am aware of how much that is true for me. I still have insecurities which are the voices in my head, but I guess through these 5 weeks the good voices have started to be louder and drown out a bit of the criticism at times.

TAHLIA

More than anything, the chance to go spend five weeks with a whole bunch of people with awesome values and drive was a magical experience. I thought we would build a team. I hoped we would build a strong team. Instead I feel like we built a family.

JOHN

The ability to develop my self confidence and be able to be myself, through the use of team building exercises, self expression exercises and the inner critic presentation. Last night I realised why I've loved this Lifehack journey, and it's because "I have found my place".

JADE

There is also stories emerging of some remarkable paths that our Lifehack Labs participants have taken. Here's two stories of many unexpected directions that their lives have headed in.

## One Year On

### Michael's story



Before I started Lifehack Labs I was in a 9-to-5 job working for a Wellington-based web development company. I actually really enjoyed my job while I was there, my team was great and what I was working on could've been a lot worse. But there was something missing. During my time at the company I would spend my spare time working on side projects that I enjoyed doing, mainly making small websites just for fun. At this stage I did this for fun, but wanted to spend a lot more time working on my own projects. I had no idea where to start though.

#### Fast forward one year.

I'm currently working for a social enterprise called Enspirial Dev Academy leading a project for the Mental Health Foundation through our consulting branch. Over the past year I've bought to life a social enterprise and also put this same social enterprise to sleep. I quit my job to go through a social enterprise accelerator called Live the Dream, full time for three months. I've taught students web development skills for four months. My team won a health hackathon with a mental health project. This same team is continuing to work on this and we are set to release a minimal viable product (MVP) in November.

#### So, what got me here?

**Lifehack Labs was the turning point in my life. It gave me the skills, connections and confidence to pursue something I care about.**

Whether that's starting a business, or as simple as supporting the ones I deeply care about in life. It opened my eyes to the challenges of the world, but equally opened my eyes to how I personally

could help solve those challenges. It showed me the positive effect that putting people first can have in a work environment; that bringing your personal life into work situations can actually improve both your personal life and your work life. Lifehack Labs kickstarted a whole new direction in my life.

#### Reflecting back

Lifehack not only gave me the platform to take a leap of faith and explore how my current skills could make a difference, but it wrapped a community of like minded people around me to create an amazing safety net of people who wouldn't let me fail. That has been absolutely key in maintaining my direction and growing my professional skills, as well as my soft skills like resilience to stress and self awareness. I have found my curiosity is building to enter the unknown, fuzzy areas of social change and youth wellbeing more and more, and the opportunities seem to keep coming to make an impact with these new skills and confidence.

### Caroline's Story



Lifehack has helped me shift my efforts from solely working on the problem consequences in the Mental Health sector, to upstream prevention and new solutions. I attended Lifehack Labs as I was interested in what innovation in mental health sector looked like.

#### After Labs

I decided I wanted to continue the venture we started at Labs, and spent the next year working on this part time (supported by Lifehack's Venture Support programme) whilst also going back to my role at the DHB.

## Our Work On “Beast”

We spent a year working on the networks, partnerships, product design and business model of our venture, Beast (a rangatahi-focused ‘mental skills program delivered in high school rugby training). We went through a social enterprise accelerator, won an innovation award and met John Kirwan!

But, sometimes in a rugby game, when you are running for the line, your best chance of a try is to pass the ball. You recognise that the person next to you is the right person to run it in. In September 2015, one year in, we gave the venture a fitness test. We looked at the viability of the venture based on assessment of the team capabilities, product, and business model. We found some strengths, but also some weaknesses. Ultimately we decided it was time to pass the venture over people with experience and connections in sport. We’ve now handed the controls over to some top notch leaders from a local sport club. Plans are underway to launch the program in 2016.

## Working with the DHB

I have been applying some design thinking work in my role in the DHB (mental health services). I knew I needed to start with something low risk so my colleagues would be more likely to give new approaches and ideas a try. I decided to run a user-centered Design Workshop with my Occupational Therapy colleagues to revamp our professional development program. Together we redesigned the way we would improve our practice - this was a breakthrough for several of my colleagues and they’re keen to use this process for other aspects of how we develop our services.

## The Future

Whilst it has been a hard decision, I have decided to move back to the States. It seems full circle with my Lifehack journey because it brings me right back to kuru Bruce’s talk at the marae: “You say your heart is with your family, but where are your feet?”.

I have applied to become a R&D Associate with HopeLab - a wellbeing technology company in Silicon Valley. HopeLab creates technology products to help people thrive. They collaborate with partners to

translate science-based ideas and practices into tech products that support human resilience. I’m onto the 4th round of interviews, and I simply wouldn’t have been able to apply for this role without the experience Lifehack has afforded me. Thank you.

## Outcomes: Emerging themes

Key themes emerged from all forms of data gathering from participants. These are the four main areas highlighted by the ‘most significant change’ evaluation (as noted by participants and those that know them):

### Self-efficacy;

increased confidence in themselves & increased motivation to get involved.

### Personal

understanding of wellbeing

### Networks and

Connections in the social enterprise & entrepreneurship community

Greater confidence in **social innovation, design thinking, entrepreneurship and navigating complex problems.**

Lifehack Labs caused both a *splash* and *ripple*.

The immediate effects on the participants were only a small part of the impact, as they reshape their lives going forward.

**So far we can conclude that Lifehack Labs increased the likelihood that young Kiwis will work on the complex challenge of creating wellbeing, through increasing their confidence and capability in social innovation and entrepreneurial practices.**

*Note: We contracted a 3rd party evaluator to establish the impact of Lifehack Labs who undertook a 6-month-long project using Most Significant Change as the core developmental evaluation approach. This took the form of a long interview with each participant at different stages during the programme, as well as during collaborative workshops where participants worked together to interpret the themes emerging from their own data. Finally we combined a long reflective survey with these participatory research techniques to gain deeper insight into the Labs participants’ experiences. Post-programme, the evaluator interviewed a subgroup of the participants’ immediate close social circle - namely managers and life partners.*



## PROJECT & VENTURE OUTCOMES

### One Year On

#### Go Flo

This project which focused on creative expression as a path to wellbeing, has launched an iOS App into the App Store, and the founder is now running a series of hip hop workshops in schools around the West Coast of New Zealand.

He has worked with over 200 young Coasters on topics such as bullying, mental health, identity and belonging.

#### Beast

This venture has now been handed over to professional coaches and teachers, having gone through a social enterprise accelerator in December 2014.

The team developed extensive networks and relationships, developed online content which translated sports psychology and mental resilience concepts into stories for their target audience - young Māori & Pasifika men in high schools. They also won an innovation award from Toi Tangata in 2015.

#### YOMO

After a year of working on YOMO, the team have decided to close down the venture and pursue other projects (also wellbeing related). YOMO produced a series of six podcasts which delivered mindfulness to young Kiwis who were exhibiting stress or anxiety.

### Facilitation Nation

The team from Facilitation Nation have gone their separate ways, however one of the cofounders, Jamie Emery, has stayed involved with Lifehack through the Flourishing Fellowship, and is now launching a residential programme with young Māori girls called Kamp Kaitiaki which is themed on the 5 Ways to Wellbeing & Te Whare Tapa Whā as preventative mental health and resilience strategies. The programme is part funded by Enspiral and are crowdfunding, having also worked with the Ākina Thrive program.

### 'Supporters'

The team parted after Lifehack Labs, however one of the founders is continuing the work through an Honours in Psychology at the University of Canterbury, and has recently found a collaborator based out of UC. She is also due to study a Masters or PhD in the quantitative analysis of behaviour, which will add extra rigour to the intervention.

## PROGRAMME DESIGN

### Multiple paths of success = Exploring alternative futures

Lifehack Labs wasn't designed as a motorway with a primary destination; it was designed to encourage participants to strengthen their connection to working on youth wellbeing, and learn how to best grow a community of like-minds. In this sense, we designed the programme for people to define their own version of success, whether that was personal, professional or team-based.

As such, events have happened since which we could never have foretold, such as participants closing their ventures to become product managers for established wellbeing technology products, and applying for jobs overseas at world leading wellbeing technology companies.

**Takeaway: Humans are at the centre of social innovation projects & ventures - we need to design programmes for deep connection, trust and authenticity if we're going to generate cutting edge collaborative projects.**

### Projects & ventures - the journey or the destination?

Projects and Ventures which emerged out of Lifehack Labs included Go Flo, YOMO, and others (the full list can be seen here).

As part of Lifehack Labs, we provided a menu of ways that the projects and ventures might be supported, including things like support calls, monthly group meetups, a small business-start fund, workshops, as well as some clear avenues to social enterprise accelerators.

Quickly we saw that open ended support would not provide suitable protective factors to enable these projects to thrive. We began to develop a more robust venture support programme that named best practice stages of development for Wellbeing projects, and established the accountability for those

to take place. We also launched a private peer-community for the founders of these ventures, to help them navigate the unique challenges they faced together.

We have seen several unexpected scenarios playing out, such as one of the ventures (YOMO) shutting down and one of the founders being hired as the Product Manager for a more mature wellbeing venture (The Wellbeing Game) and the other being hired as a Design coach at the Auckland Codesign Lab. Another venture, Beast, has been transferred into the hands of rugby coaches, with one of the original founders being hired into a high profile health-technology organisation in San Francisco.

**Takeaway: Entrepreneurship is often a medium to longer term direction, where the skills and capabilities built during one venture's progress are then best applied to the second or third project that person works on. Lifehack Labs kickstarted the entrepreneurial journeys of 20 young Kiwis, many of whom are now pursuing wellbeing-related initiatives which weren't generated in Labs themselves.**

It is increasingly clear that the skills, capability and leadership that people in the Lifehack community are adopting are pushing the envelop of youth wellbeing forward in Aotearoa.

### Venture outcomes

The analysis of the ventures since Lifehack Labs confirmed that 8-10 participants were actively involved in ventures after 6 months.

Two ventures went into social enterprise accelerator programme, Live The Dream.

**Takeaway: the survival rate of Labs ventures is comparable if not higher than other catalyst or accelerator programmes (according to anecdotal evidence from Live The Dream, Smart Energy Challenge and Startup Weekend). Lifehack Labs was designed as a pre-accelerator programme, so 2 out of 5 of the ventures going forward into an accelerator validated this model.**

## Patterns emerging:

- Teams who went through Lifehack Labs had a consistent focus on culture and team wellbeing compared to other non-Lab teams (comparable ventures in entrepreneurship community).
- Wellbeing interventions need to pay more attention to their product and business model design than other start-ups which sell commodities
- Tailored support is needed for teams designing wellbeing interventions. This may include making language of mainstream methodologies (such as Lean Startup) more relevant, adapting existing methodologies with additional checks for ethics/safety, or suggests entirely new approaches which are suitable for youth wellbeing.

**Takeaway: projects and ventures are indicators of a healthy, thriving, entrepreneurial community who are committed to a cause and making a change. These people see their projects and ventures as embodiments of their current state of learning and understanding, but they are only a vehicle to the changing state of society. If they see a better way of changing things, then the project may be put aside in favour of the ultimate goal — finding the best ways to improve youth wellbeing.**

**Designing new interventions for youth wellbeing is a specific niche which many existing design and entrepreneurial methodologies do not suit. Lifehack is well positioned to be a vehicle for best/good practice approaches to develop youth wellbeing projects.**

## SUMMARY

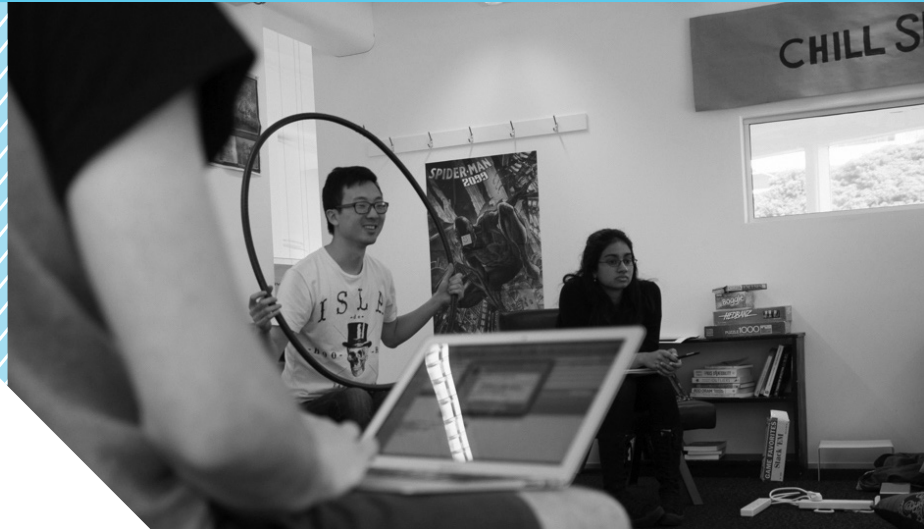
Lifehack Labs was an important part of our work in 2014, and generated a wealth of insights, new directions, and established Lifehack as an organisation which went over and above the mandate to run some weekends around the country to get young people involved in the discussion about youth mental health.

Lifehack Labs was a unique initiative in Aotearoa New Zealand, and as we shared our story, we found that it was ground-breaking around the world.

The value generated by Labs operates on many levels, but we have seen incredible ripples in participants' lives and their communities. The projects which emerged were exciting starting points for many of the participants, and many of them have taken these learnings back into their work, on into new projects, or evolved them into more impactful ideas over the following year.

The learnings from Lifehack Labs 2014 were used to shape Lifehack's Flourishing Fellowship in 2015, launch our Venture Support program, and as a foundational part of our nationwide community of people working on youth wellbeing.

The ripples of impact from Labs will be ongoing, we look forward to following the journeys of the courageous young Kiwis.



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