

Case Study:

Teach For America

Summary



Challenge

Teach For America hired us to revitalize their existing Salesforce instance to make their data accessible and actionable.

Process

We led a Hack Day to introduce our rapid prototyping approach by collaborating with TFA to visualize millions of complex data.

Results

In one day, we generated a ton of usable code and built custom interfaces that made record-level data and trends accessible, actionable, and beautiful.

*“(Yurgosky) identified new, **challenging, boundary-breaking** things for TFA — it was all stuff no one had any idea you could do in Salesforce. It was really **unconventional.**”*

Paul Chernick

Senior Managing Director,
Business Analysis at Teach For America

| The Challenge

**Partner up &
disrupt** existing
technology
practices

Revitalize and reframe TFA's approach to managing constituent data, with an emphasis on making complex information accessible and actionable. Create a framework that will drive innovation and catalyze new ways of thinking.

| The Process

With nearly 2,000 users and millions — yes, millions — of records, Teach For America manages a massive Salesforce instance that serves as a source of truth for organizational constituents, including corps members, alumni, prospects, and supporters. While TFA's Salesforce project team is full of dedicated people committed to providing better education for every child in America, product owner Paul Chernick and Salesforce technical lead Nicholas Peeters knew it was time to shake things up.

A chance meeting at a Salesforce developer event connected Paul with Patrick Yurgosky, and the idea of Hack Day was born. They started with a simple premise: **visualize data better.**

But what does that mean?



| The Process (continued)



Both dug deep into multiple ideas that could revolutionize TFA's Person Account page, a core component that's key to those millions of records. "We wanted to create a series of scalable products that could make TFA's constituent data more accessible and easier to understand," Patrick said. "We thought, 'let's break this component apart and reimagine it, then have something tangible by the end of the day.'

"Very often, you exit a hack day with no usable code," Paul commented. "It's so abstracted from the reality of your systems that it would be more work than you put in during that day to deliver something." This Hack Day was different. "Patrick identified new, challenging, boundary-breaking things for TFA — it was all stuff no one had any idea you could do in Salesforce. It was really unconventional."

*"Hack Day **really embodied the Yurgosky approach**, and gave us a chance to share our vision for every non-profit to **have technology that's easy-to-use** and provides the **data they need** to support and grow their missions."*

Patrick Yurgosky – President at Yurgosky

Together, they mapped out potential hack ideas, and divvied up TFA and Yurgosky staffers into well-balanced teams. "We spent a ton of time before the event getting to know everyone's personalities and interests," Patrick recalls. "We really wanted optimal teams that would complement each other and the idea they were given. We approached Hack Day from the thought of not only pushing the technical possibilities and the human possibilities; everyone worked at or beyond their best."

Hack Day kicked off with an icebreaker that involved constructing a tower from raw spaghetti and marshmallows; prototyping and iteration were key to the marshmallow challenge, and key to the projects that followed. Custom-built components ranged from a constituent-interaction timeline, to trend visualization, to a slick search function and an elegant layout redesign. Far from being an exercise in useless code, Hack Day produced features that moved quickly into production, and built a solid core of ideas and methodologies that will inform TFA's Salesforce development practice moving forward.

| The Results

*"In addition to a ton of usable code, **Hack Day catalyzed a different kind of thinking.**"*

Paul Chernick

Senior Managing Director,
Business Analysis at
Teach For America

"It got our team and team leaders more interested in approaching problems from a different angle, and trying to find other ways to solve problems other than put into the SCRUM machine. It got people interested in the idea of iterating. We now have this backlog of really great things we can deliver."



| The Team

TEACHFORAMERICA

A national organization that is growing the movement of leaders who work to ensure that kids growing up in poverty get an excellent education.



YURGOSKY

Yurgosky is an expert strategy, analytics, and technology development company focused on serving nonprofit, higher education, and social enterprise organizations. Yurgosky leverages strategic insight and technology innovation to unlock the performance potential within organizations.

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