On March 3, the UK’s Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) published a report entitled, “Fostering innovation through collaboration: The evolution of the FCA TechSprint Approach” (the Report).

In the Report, the FCA explained that since April 2016 they have been holding TechSprints, which are also known as “Hackathons,” which involve bringing together computer programmers, interface designers and other experts to collaborate intensively over a short period of time on a software project. The purpose of this is to take advantage of the FCA’s “convening powers,” both as a regulator and RegTech thought leader.

The seven TechSprints held so far ranged in size (from 40 to 200 participants), location (the most recent TechSprint was held in London and Washington DC, in parallel) and subject matter but were consistent in their application of the following “working principles”:

- The solution or approach should enhance a firm’s regulatory compliance outcomes or promote enhanced outcomes for consumers;
- The initiative is led by industry and characterized by multi-firm collaboration and participation;
The solution is developed in an open and transparent manner;

- The initiative is made public, ensuring that other participants with genuine interest and contributions to make can be involved;

- The FCA can participate in the discussion but are not being asked to endorse the solutions developed; and

- Experimentation and the learnings this provides are of value and should be facilitated where possible.

The body of the Report describes the process of planning a TechSprint, from choosing the subject matter and participants to briefing the teams and judging the final output. Overall, the FCA reported that these TechSprints are a successful tool for exploring innovative solutions but noted problems relating to, for example, “maximizing post-sprint momentum.”

The Report is available here.

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