



Read more about my LiA experience here - and feel free to connect with me on LinkedIn too!

THE CAUSE:

Zero Gravity is a UK-based social mobility tech start-up that helps students from low-opportunity backgrounds get into top universities and elite careers. I joined the team already familiar with Zero Gravity, who had supported me in my progression to LSE by providing me with university application-support mentors - who were both Laidlaw Scholars!

I joined the Partnerships team wanting to lead a new STEM Mentoring programme in partnership with GSK, recruit and match mentor networks, build the guides supporting each pair, and leave behind a process the team could use after me.



THE LIA:

Listening

Weeks 1-3

What it looked like

Mentor matching across corporate partnerships, outreach, social media content. A wide range of work, and I said almost nothing in team meetings without being prompted first.

What it taught me

The breadth of that early work was what let me find the part I loved. Doing the routine tasks is how you learn what the organisation actually needs, and I could not have known that from the outside.

Delivering

Weeks 2-6

What it looked like

Led a new STEM mentoring programme with a large pharmaceutical partner. Every eligible mentee matched. Built a scheduling resource still in use, and designed a sixth-form engagement calendar for the team.

What it taught me

The matching was the work that reached students directly. The resources were what I could leave behind for the team. The resources that would help advise the team were just as important as the work on the ground with students.

Initiating

From the mid-point

What it looked like

I was told to be more proactive. I started asking for work I had not been offered, which led to presenting directly to the organisation's founder. I also won the company-wide AI hackathon, presenting what I had built and why it was useful in a few clear steps - an approach that came straight from the Laidlaw presentation training.

What it taught me

Being the most junior person had felt like a reason to wait for instructions. However, it was the only thing making my perspective unique. Being new was an advantage for the same reason it felt like a disadvantage everywhere else: I had no assumptions about how it had always been done. Therefore, I questioned things and suggested alternatives.

Advising

Weeks 4-6

What it looked like

A leadership focus group on the platform's interface. I was the only person present who had used it as a student, so I said what the experience had actually been like. As a result, the design of the home page changed.

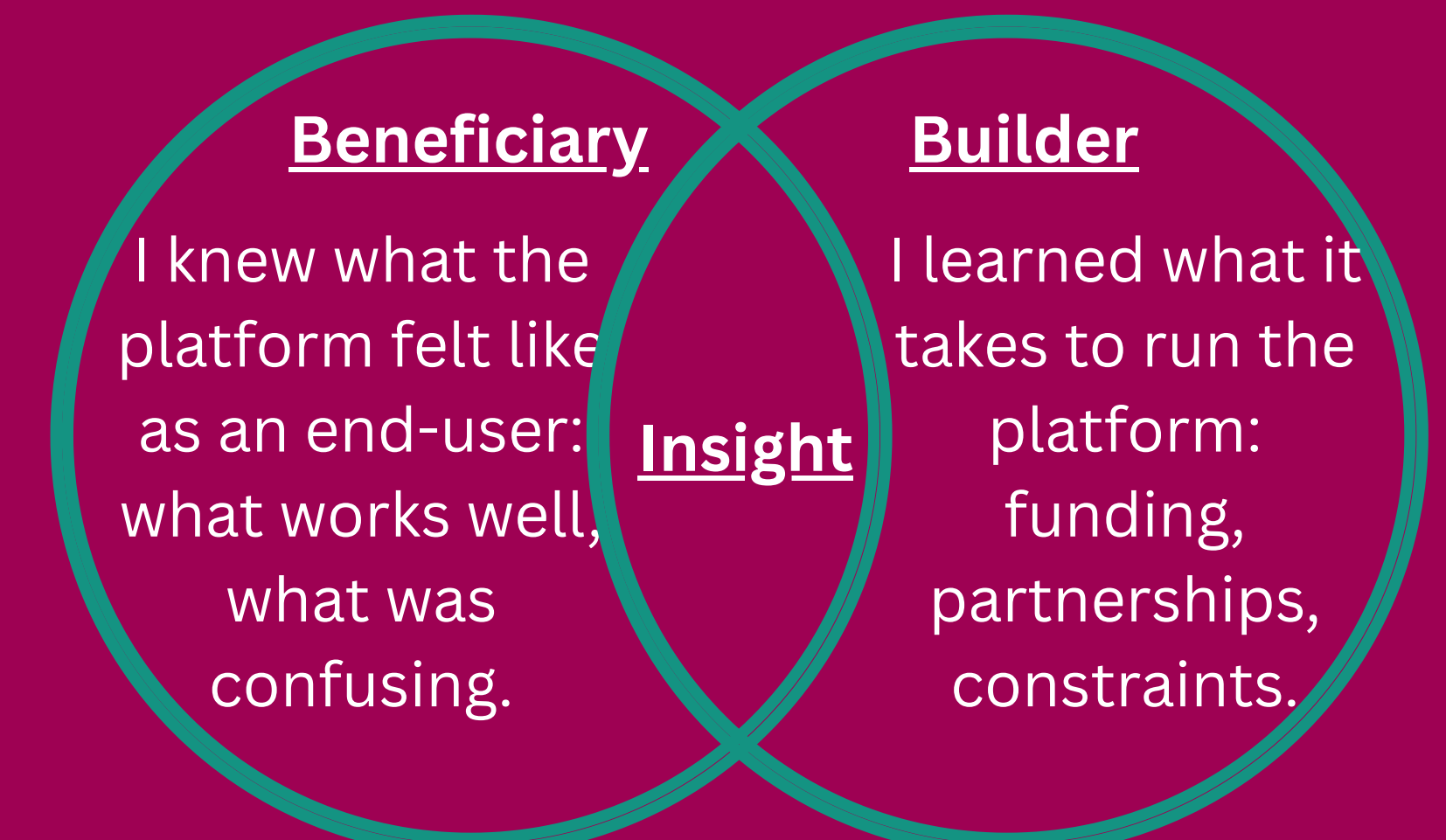
What it taught me

There is a real difference between advising on what could work better and simply criticising. I learned to frame what I knew as evidence, and to think about who was best placed to carry an idea, and when.

THE IMPACT:

100% of the mentee pool matched with tailored mentors, using the Claude Code agent that won the AI Hackathon!

Insight: Being junior did not make my experience less valuable - it just meant I needed to take more initiative and offer it.



As a student, I used this platform and never thought about the work happening behind the scenes. From inside the team, I saw how much of it depends on support from corporate partnerships, and how easily that support can fall away.

These widening-participation programmes are only free for students because companies pay for them. That funding is not guaranteed, so a programme like this can end for reasons that have nothing to do with how well it works. The mentoring that helped me reach LSE through the platform existed only because of support from these corporate partners.

I want my future impact to go beyond delivery, working towards securing support that keeps programmes like this running by bringing in the perspectives of those students they aim to empower. I have started this at LSE, where I am building application-support sessions to help students from the widening participation programme apply for the Laidlaw Scholarship.



Connecting low-opportunity students to resources to support their personal and career development.



Reducing the gap that students who do not have access to a professional network through mentoring and opportunity schemes.



The programme only exists due to the support of corporate funders - link between the private and public sectors.