One Innovation Program To Rule Them All

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Innovation Programs are essential for the enterprise – but how can you evaluate whether or not your Innovation Program offers the best-in-class features your enterprise truly needs? And then how do you hit the ground running when it's time to use this Innovation Program?

This ebook explores the characteristics of innovation programs that will keep your efforts moving forward – and the steps you need to keep in mind to achieve successful outcomes.

Getting out ahead of a trend and innovating a worthwhile advancement first is what wins the day. And to do that, businesses need to innovate systematically, not sporadically.

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Innovation Today

Today we see most companies are focused on innovating because they have to be. Potential clients or consumers are fickle and always on the lookout for better, more efficient ways to accomplish things. Companies (both B2B and B2C) know that keeping pace with new trends keeps them competitive, so they innovate … sporadically.

But what many are realizing – and tapping into – is this: Staying competitive isn't enough. Getting out ahead of a trend and innovating a worthwhile advancement first is what wins the day. And to do that, businesses need to innovate systematically, not sporadically.

Systematic Innovation

You're not just collecting ideas for the sake of collecting ideas, you're trying to drive impactful innovation that's relevant to the business, and that all starts with getting an innovation program aligned with your business goals. But first, you need to have a dedicated innovation team and a solid program in place to manage the process from soup to nuts. **Establishing a successful innovation program is the low risk, high reward path to take toward continuous innovation and differentiation.**

BT

"For Every $1 invested by BT on our Innovation Program we have returned $75 to the business."

Case Study: BT Group

BT Group is one of the world's leading providers of communications solutions and services operating in 170 countries with over 100,000 employees around the globe.

The Challenge:

In a global corporation of BT's size and diversity, creating and maintaining a corporate culture of innovation is a real challenge. Too often, complex structures, communication gaps, and lack of management support get in the way of promising ideas. In addition, existing tools constrain the effort to drive outcomes from radical new business ideas.

The Solution:

A large amount of planning and preparation went into the launch of a new innovation program. After extensive market evaluation, BT selected the Brightidea platform to power the program. The company rolled out the initiative to all 130,000 employees globally, setting up a strong rewards and recognition effort for ideas driving value.

The Outcome:

BT increased the quality of the program 100-200%.[1] BT has generated over $250 million between new revenue and cost savings from ideas sourced company wide. **Every $1 invested by BT on their innovation program has returned $75 to the business. And up to 25% of innovation challenges run resulted in an idea being implemented.**[1] BT has also experienced significant improvements on customer loyalty and retention. In addition, the Company now has an engaged and involved employee base that has transformed BT's culture of innovation.

[1](Source: TechValidate survey)

Six Steps For A Successful Innovation Program

There are six steps to improve the Innovation Program Process at your company:

1 Evaluate your existing innovation program

2 Identify your innovation program team

3 Identify pressing business needs & challenge sponsors

4 Source ideas (hackathons, crowdsourcing, internal teams, co-creation portals)

5 Engage internal and external subject matter experts (SMEs)

6 Smash silos to encourage participation

Next we'll discuss each step and then wrap up with some thoughts around future-proofing the enterprise and where we think innovation is headed.

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1 Evaluate Your Existing Innovation Program

Successfully launching an Innovation Management Program is not easy. More than 60% of Innovation Programs lose their funding within the first three years because they weren't able to show measurable outcomes. Also, some businesses decide to use internal spreadsheets as their "program". This approach is neither time nor cost efficient (because it doesn't work and becomes little more than a largely ignored list).

Your Innovation Program Must Scale

Companies are doing a lot of different things to stimulate innovation, and a lot of them are very relevant, but not all of them are scalable. They successfully complete small, one-off projects that do nothing to advance the business.

Customers that use Brightidea have a 300% higher chance of showing reportable outcomes in their first year with the program, largely because they are able to scale for impact. Can your current Innovation Program offer the same?

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75-100% of innovation challenges resulted in an idea that was implemented.[2]

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[2](Source: TechValidate survey)

2 Identify Your Innovation Program Team

Designating three to five people whose job function is managing your Innovation Program might seem like a drop in the bucket at a company with 10,000 employees – and it is when it comes to shifting the mindset and culture of an organization – **but having a dedicated Innovation Team is key to success.** Making innovation everyone's job is a luxury for a place like Google, where everyone is really focused on innovating. If your industry doesn't move at the speed of Google (and most don't) it tends to not work out very well.

Innovation Team members should possess a variety of skills ranging from marketing to change management and group facilitation. And there is a need for both process-oriented people and creative thinkers as you likewise seek to capture and encourage a variety of thinkers/

ideas. The main criteria for your team though, is to be a genuine team that works together to advance ideas and move projects forward to completion.

This team also needs to have the power (and resources) to execute on winning ideas – otherwise, why have them (the team or the ideas)? Their whole purpose should be outcome-driven, so empowering them to get outcomes is entirely necessary.

They also need a direct relationship with Innovation Program Sponsors, so the process isn't held up by too many tiers in the reporting structure. Who are these Program Sponsors? They're internal business leaders that sponsor specific challenges so they can move forward. We'll speak to this in more detail in Step 3.

Making innovation everyone's job is a luxury for a place like Google, where everyone is really focused on innovating. If your industry doesn't move at the speed of Google (and most don't) it tends to not work out very well without an innovation program and process.

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3 Identify Pressing Business Needs & Challenge Sponsors

In many organizations, a brainstorming session is energizing – and ultimately useless. An endless number of ideas are generated and beyond experiencing a few stops and starts, most of those great ideas are forgotten or abandoned. Why? The organization loses focus.

Some experience an opposite effect – and one that can be exceptionally painful: Following through on the wrong ideas and squandering time and resources.

The same happens with the ever-popular suggestion boxes. Collecting ideas for the sake of collecting ideas is a colossal waste of time. **You need to drive impactful innovation that's relevant to the business** – and a suggestion box offers little beyond morning meeting fodder.

Choosing Innovations Wisely

Identify your top three challenges – maybe it's building differentiated products, or solving a technical issue, or streamlining the production process (and so on). And then decide which of those three is the number one problem facing your business and solve that challenge first. This provides everyone with a huge incentive to follow through and come up with solutions – and once it's solved, your team will feel inspired to continue down your list of challenges.

Seek out business leaders to serve as Program Sponsors and solicit their input on which problems are important to solve. Only by doing this will you source ideas that are relevant to them and can be implemented by the business. And you need to nail this step because the key to sustained engagement and driving outcomes over time is getting the relationship right between the Innovation Program Team and the

Challenge Sponsors.

The rest of the organization is going to follow the Challenge Sponsor's lead, with incentive to follow through cascading down through the business. It lends validity to the challenge and encourages participation.

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"Brightidea gives us the flexibility to support 15 or more business units at any time, each with their own requirements."

4 Source Ideas (Hackathons, Crowdsourcing and more)

Crowdsourcing is one of the first things your Innovation Program Team should explore, as it is the most effective way to build the Innovation Program's capacity, scale its impact and produce measurable outcomes. Unexpected insights from other places and people are the hallmark of crowdsourcing (see #6 for "smashing silos").

And beyond seeing rapid results, crowdsourcing ideas internally helps Innovation Program Managers learn how Innovation Program Tools work, making external and ongoing challenges (which are a bit trickier to manage) much more successful.

Crowdsourcing ideas is the most effective way for Innovation Program Leaders to scale their impact and produce measurable outcomes.

Customer Input & Co-Creation Portals

Customer input is vital for many companies' Innovation Processes. Allowing customers anywhere in the world to send product ideas, and then vote and collaborate on each other's ideas is smart thinking.

The customer is central to your product success. If they can tell you what they want and how this feature change or new product should function specifically, this co-creation portal just potentially saved you lots of time. Not only that, it has provided another customer touch point, as well as a ready demand for your product or enhancement should it come to fruition.

Using Brightidea's Innovation Platform, BrightWorks, SAP has a program where customers around the world initiate the product enhancement requests at ideas.sap.com, and then vote and collaborate on each other's ideas.

"People think focus means saying yes to the thing you've got to focus on. But that's not what it means at all. It means saying no to the hundred other good ideas that there are. You have to pick carefully. I'm actually as proud of the things we haven't done as the things I have done. Innovation is saying no to 1,000 things."

Steve Jobs

5 Call in the Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)

It's critical to arm SMEs with collaborative tools that allow them to narrow the selection down to the most promising candidate or idea.

Once you have your first challenge in place, it's time to engage Subject Matter Experts to assist with the evaluation process. It's critical to arm them with collaborative tools like ratings and scorecards that track rankings over multiple rounds to refine those ideas. This narrows the selection down to the most promising candidate or idea.

The biggest mistake organizations can make with their Innovation Programs is trying to do too much. A Boston Consulting Group Senior Partner recently said, "Too many companies want to shoot for the moon while their Innovation Programs are barely airborne." **Trying to do too much innovation all at once can lead to falling short on outcomes. Focus on quick wins early to build trust and traction.**

As Steve Jobs said, "People think focus means saying yes to the thing you've got to focus on. But that's not what it means at all. It means saying no to the hundred other good ideas that there are. You have to pick carefully. I'm actually as proud of the things we haven't done as the things I have done. Innovation is saying no to 1,000 things."

Brightidea offers collaborative tools like Pairwise, Scorecards, and Stack Ranking for multiple rounds in refining those ideas. The Subject Matter Experts use stronger and stronger tools to manage those ideas through the pipeline, and present the most promising candidates for solving the challenge.

6 Smash Silos

For any given challenge, you need to choose the audience most relevant to invite and participate. And although you'll want to narrow down ideas, you'll want to think a bit differently around sourcing participants. Two considerations are very important here:

▶ Looking at your audience broadly

▶ Having the capability to do so

Often times, the best solutions arise across teams and business units, and the most unique ideas come from outside of where you'd expect. For example, your business is faced with an engineering problem. Instead of sourcing ideas solely from the affected business unit, sharing the problem with all of the engineers across multiple business units will result in a variety of unique insights.

For any challenge, there are three major pools of users to draw from: employees, customers, and partners or suppliers. But how can your lean Innovation Team reach out to all potential contributors and smash business silos? **Crowdsourcing (as mentioned previously) not only provides quick outcomes, it also gives those small Innovation Teams bionic arms where they can touch large numbers of people and pull them into the Innovation Process.** And enlisting the aid of project managers from different departments is another option to consider – and always a wise choice.

And although your participant pool is broad, your selection criteria will be robust and provide you with an exceptional subset of submissions for SME consideration.

Starting out small makes sense, of course – and tackling those top business challenges (identified in #3) and putting them through the paces internally (from sourcing ideas through scorecarding via SMEs) will help you feel comfortable with your Innovation Program Process. You'll then be ready to bring Innovation Challenges to a larger curated group.

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"Brightidea allows the employee's voice to be heard!"[3]

Case Study: Humana

Humana Inc. is a leading healthcare company that offers a wide range of insurance products and health and wellness services that incorporate an integrated approach to lifelong well being.

The Challenge:

Humana's Insights Integration team initially started with a wiki for collaboration and crowdsourcing. Due to low adoption the wiki was replaced by a custom SharePoint site for idea gathering and management across 34,000 associates. The SharePoint site lacked core innovation capabilities including idea evaluation tools, making it very slow and tedious to manage high volumes of ideas through the vetting process.

The Solution:

In 2011 Humana selected Brightidea as the platform for its branded idea management program called 1DEA. They structured their program as a shared-services model in which the Innovation Team operates as expert Innovation Consultants that are leveraged across the enterprise. Using Brightidea and the shared-services approach Humana has been able to create a repeatable crowdsourcing process that scales across its 35,000 employees.

The Outcome:

Humana's 1DEA program has been hugely successful, with over 20,000 registered users and 4,200 ideas created from 20 challenges since its program's inception. **Millions of dollars in cost savings opportunities have been identified from the program to date.**

Future-proofing the Enterprise

Not tracking "Idea ROI" will prove fatal for enterprises as we become enmeshed in everything "Big Data." As we find ourselves swimming in a vast ocean of data, the ideas will be just as plentiful. **Having a way to capture and track these ideas – and the corresponding data – will be critical, or else your business will drown.**

When it comes to every other business expense, we track the data, track what we invest, track what we get back from our investment, and prove to the business that the activity is worthwhile. Innovation is no different.

The trick, of course, is getting that flywheel going, and helping your business feel comfortable with taking risks and putting money toward innovation. **Providing transparency into the process, through**

Innovation Program Data, makes innovation a more reliable bet.

And when you're charged with managing your company's Innovation Process, you'll need to show results – and guess what? You could probably be showing outcomes already.

Are your projects producing tens of millions or hundreds of millions of dollars in new growth of business, directly or indirectly? You probably don't know for sure.

An Innovation Program clearly ties ideas to actionable results. Thereby providing outcomes that are anything but fuzzy – and will showcase your team's fantastic efforts appropriately. And THAT is the best way to encourage ongoing innovation at your enterprise and ensure your brand will thrive as other businesses scramble to consolidate their people-powered ideas.

CABOT

"Two recent ideas developed using Brightidea will generate tens of millions of dollars for the company."

Beyond Tomorrow, Preparing For The Innovation Grid

Ten years from now, maybe sooner, innovation as we know it will pivot and we envision we'll see an "Innovation Grid" take hold as cloud computing and mobile technologies merge. This Innovation Grid will be a place where ideas are the commodity – and they will flow to meet our ever-emerging supply and demand for the best among them.

The grid will be a place where you can store surplus ideas and take new ideas, with participants being paid (or paying someone for) this thought capital. Sourcing ideas will be taken care of, but moving ideas through to completion will still be a wild card that requires management.

Will your enterprise be ready? Reach out and we'll make sure it is!

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Brightidea is the partner of choice for world-class companies seeking to build transformative people-powered innovation competency and culture.

Brightidea uses crowdsourcing, crowdfunding and unique, specialized innovation management software and services to enable organizations to achieve their highest potential by fully harnessing the creative capacity of their people. We have the only software designed for innovation program leaders — and the experts to advise you on how to build and optimize your innovation program.

Brightidea has worked with over 300 leading global brands including **Accenture, BT, Cisco, GE, MasterCard, and Roche** to achieve tens of millions of dollars of financial innovation impact.

If you are seeking to start a new innovation program or scale your existing program, we would welcome hearing from you.

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Contact us | email us sales@brightidea.com | visit brightidea.com