

Why Did Xerox Innovation Group Choose

Imaginatik As Its Idea Management Partner?



The Challenge

Xerox Corporation has a long history of providing creative solutions for the workplace. As one of the world's technology leaders, it is responsible for developing the technology behind many of today's common office tools including the computer mouse, the laser printer, and the photocopier as well as inventing the business of digital production printing. Xerox has literally changed the way people do their work.

What Xerox has found is that in this increasingly competitive global market, it's not just the technology that is changing but also the way companies generate and manage the ideas that lead to technological breakthroughs.

Two students from the Rochester Institute of Technology demonstrated how idea management could help Xerox develop and incubate new ideas more effectively. As part of their Master of Science in Product Development program, Xerox employees Nancy Jai and Dave Anderson based their Capstone Research Project on the concept and submitted the results to Dr. Steve Hoover, vice president and center manager of the Xerox Research Center in Webster, NY.

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*- George Gibson Lean Six Sigma Black Belt,
Xerox Innovation Group*



The report convinced Dr. Hoover that Xerox could successfully use this social media tool to stimulate innovation. The theory itself made sense: if two heads are better than one, then all things being equal, 400 heads are even better. Dr. Hoover called in George Gibson, Lean Six Sigma Black Belt at Xerox Innovation Group, to find an effective idea management system that would increase the number of top quality research ideas, provide measurable results, and fit well within its corporate culture.

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The Solution

There are many possible solutions when it comes to idea management. Although the basic idea comes from the traditional company suggestion box, sophisticated software and methodology take it to whole new level. Many "in-house" solutions fail because collecting email suggestions is no more productive than the old suggestion box if there are not ways to effectively evaluate and implement those ideas. Idea management is a comprehensive approach not just to generating ideas, but also to fostering and developing those ideas into viable business plans.

Mr. Gibson researched different idea management solutions to find out which one would best help the company achieve its goals. Ultimately he decided to recommend Imaginatik's Idea Central. "For our application, we found Idea Central to be the best, most integrated, and most comprehensive idea management software available on the market," he said.

As part of the review process, a team from Xerox Innovation Group's research facility in Rochester, NY attended the Imaginatik User Group Meeting in May 2007. This gave them the opportunity to meet with members of the Imaginatik Development Team to gain insight into the software and its capabilities. It was also an excellent chance to talk with other Imaginatik clients about their own successes.

The conference provided Mr. Gibson with one particular "ah-ha" moment. A portion of the conference was held in the Boston Red Sox's storied Fenway Park. Mr. Gibson and his colleague, Ed Stone, observed another attendee – a current Idea Central user – take a phone call about a new event to be launched. Rather than leave the conference, he was able to create and launch the event from the ballpark using his laptop.

The Results

The company achieved impressive results immediately. By replacing a key face-to-face event with an online campaign, Xerox Innovation Group was able to invite all participants from the research facility as well as some from next-in-chain departments. Not only did this broaden the pool, but it also increased participation, with rates as high as 64% of invited participants.

As a result, the Idea Central event generated 10 times the amount of high quality ideas, many of which were integrated into the company's research portfolio almost immediately. A number of others were assigned a carefully chosen team to steward and develop the ideas further.

But much more importantly in the long run, Xerox Innovation Group continues to broaden and deepen its approach to idea management with the help of Imaginatik's expertise and Idea Central software.