



CSC Looks To Collaborative Problem Solving

To Get Closer To Its Customers

The Company

A leading consulting, systems integration and outsourcing company

The Goal

Create a platform to leverage collective intelligence—and make the best ideas a reality

The Results

Closer, faster and more fruitful collaboration across account teams and business units

In the 50 years since its founding, CSC (www.csc.com) has become a global leader in providing technology enabled solutions and services, with annual revenues exceeding \$17 billion. Stressing the practical and financial business benefits it achieves for its customers, CSC is driven by an innovative culture, one which takes pride in its employees' capacity to help customers achieve "amazing things."

Whether it's supporting NASA missions, US Army logistics or the UK National Health Service, CSC has a strong track record of working closely with demanding customers to meet some of the world's most complex business and technology challenges. To achieve this success, CSC relies on a talent rich employee base with deep and diverse experience in business, government and academia.

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- Howard Smith,
CSC Collective Intelligence



Complementing employee quality is a highly customer-focused service delivery model, under which account specific teams work closely with—in fact often embedded into—their clients over extended periods, thus developing a deep familiarity with their unique business.

Collaboration challenges

While this delivery model optimizes the internal coordination of CSC's account teams and enables close synchronization with the customer's requirements, it generally requires account teams to operate with a high degree of autonomy and self reliance. One byproduct of this autonomy is a tendency for large accounts to

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develop and maintain their own sets of practices, a pattern reinforced by the difficulty of sharing best practices and related wisdom across diverse markets. The same set of factors also made it challenging for CSC to solicit and manage its employees' best ideas on core strategic issues—such as new revenue sources and cost containment opportunities—and to collaborate as a company in making them actionable.

Charged with putting this capability in place has been Howard Smith, CTO for CSC in Europe and global lead for the new ideation program dubbed 'CSC Collective Intelligence.' Smith aimed for a solution that would enable CSC's diverse communities to engage in collaborations that are highly focused, business led and structured in terms of goal, process and timeframe. Smith and his team in the CSC Office of Innovation found that solution in Imaginatik's Idea Central. After highly successful trials, CSC has embraced Idea Central internally and in public statements—most recently in regard to a CEO Challenge which formed part of the company's 50th Anniversary Celebration. Idea Central is now expected to become the linchpin of how CSC regularly brings the company together to solve important problems.

Achieving results

For example, when the company sought to improve cash management within its North American Public Sector business—among its largest and fastest growing—CSC carefully designed and then executed an ideation event targeted to its finance and procurement experts. It provided an open, easy-to-use forum for people at all points in the process to put forward, critique and build on ideas to improve payables, receivables and other cash flow parameters.

For Smith, the success of the program can be attributed to the disciplined approach that idea management brought to the problem-solving approach—collecting recommendations, scoring ideas and fostering a directed process that inexorably leads to clear decisions and appropriate assignment of actions. The process enabled CSC to prioritize its options systematically, build a plan, galvanize support for it and thus create a visible mandate for action.

In the case of the cash management initiative, the process also—and importantly—brought people together who had not built enough natural alliances or internal networks to help each other through such a complex problem. In addition, the sheer ease and fun of the tool lent a different spirit to the endeavor. Participants became "hooked" by watching the progress of the Collective Intelligence I Collaborative Innovation event, as well as the content being shared. By implementing the new cash management practices that were developed as a result of the Idea Central event, CSC has achieved substantial and ongoing bottom line benefits.

In the two years CSC has been working with Imaginatik, Idea Central has become an important tool for collaborative problem solving in different parts of the company—and in the process has made a significant impact on CSC's culture. This is seen in the way CSC uses Idea Central to tackle not only "big picture" problem solving across the company, but also for tactical brainstorming within specific communities inside the company.

Closer to customers

As the use of Idea Central within CSC continues to evolve, Smith sees the potential in using it to facilitate collaboration between account teams and client communities through an account specific process and roles definition—to sponsor ideation events to solve customer-specific problems. "We see Idea Central as a complement to our approach of working closely and collaboratively with customers because it enables us to structure the account innovation process and to provide access to CSC resources, effectively pooling our knowledge and intellectual capital," says Smith. "By running focused events, we can leverage the best brains from both sides—bringing in partners as required—to solve the challenges facing our customers and enable us to serve them better."

For further reading about CSC's Collective Intelligence program see:
<http://www.imaginatik.com/site/pdfs/cscworld.pdf>