

A photograph of a Ladbrokes casino floor. In the foreground, a male customer in a dark jacket is interacting with a female employee in a red polo shirt at a slot machine. The background shows a long wall of slot machines with various game titles and promotional signs, including one for 'Blackjack' and another for 'EARN UP TO £250 FREE MACHINE PLAY'. The floor is wooden, and there are blue tables with red chairs in the distance.

Improved Employee Engagement Paves the Way for Better Customer Experience Innovation at Ladbrokes

THE COMPANY: A world leader in online betting and gaming with more than 2,700 retail shops in the UK, Ireland, Spain and Belgium.

THE GOAL: Understand the organisation's innovation maturity then develop a process plan for rapidly collecting and implementing new ideas.

THE RESULTS: Store-based employees are engaged in improving the customer experience, and employee ideas shape a new shop design. Moreover, a repeatable process for breakthroughs now exists while Ladbrokes simultaneously picks up quick wins.

Collecting ideas from hundreds of employees at large, diverse organisations like Ladbrokes can be a straightforward process. Senior management can run ideation workshops regularly to identify areas to improve. This process is often costly to implement and slow – and in Ladbrokes' experience this process only revealed small, incremental changes to the business. The difficulty is in finding the breakthrough ideas that will translate into real, measurable business value.

With Imaginatik as its innovation partner, Ladbrokes has transformed the way in which it engages employees. What began as an ad hoc idea-gathering exercise is now a structured, repeatable process for engaging front-line employees and managers. That input will help to transform the way in which Ladbrokes serves its customers in many years to come.

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Improving customer experience

Ladbrokes began as a horseracing betting service in 1886. It has grown into a global gaming and betting market with annual Group revenues of £980.3 million and more than 15,000 employees.

In 2012 Ladbrokes' leadership decided to take a more systematic and measured approach to how it innovates. It used Imaginatik's Innovation Maturity Assessment methodology with senior leaders, and out of this work with Imaginatik was able to identify a definition and strategy for innovation that aligned with business goals of improved customer service and online gaming capabilities.

Craig Beccan, the innovation trial project manager, and Colin Smith, a customer experience programme manager, took that new strategy to Ladbrokes employees. They launched an online challenge with Imaginatik's Innovation Central platform to engage more than 1,500 employees across the company. They collaborated on new ideas for improving retail shops – an effort that was already under way in the company's retail division.

"There's no point in running a challenge if you don't have resources for implementation," Smith said. "We knew there was a project ongoing that looked at shop redesigns. We took the good ideas and put them directly into that programme."

From more than 100 new ideas came 30 that were forwarded to the redesign team. The idea originators were constantly updated on the progress of their ideas.

ENGAGING THE MASSES

"You're not talking about a big overhead to do this. There are a lot of smart people out there who aren't being heard."

— **Colin Smith**
*Customer Experience
Programme Manager*

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“We received letters and feedback that getting an opportunity to improve the business was appreciated,” Beccan said.

Looking Forward

With employees engaged and motivated to participate in their company’s future, the Ladbrokes innovation team launched a second challenge to identify new ways to engage customers digitally and in person. More than 2,000 people participated and produced 89 usable ideas.

Beccan and Smith have seen the most success in running large, breakthrough challenges along with smaller incremental challenges to earn quick wins often.

“If you really want people to collaborate this is an efficient way to solve small problems,” Smith said. “This process means you’ve got a genuine place for these ideas to end up. You’re not talking about a big overhead to do this. There are a lot of smart people out there who aren’t being heard.”

Those smart people are shaping the customer experience at Ladbrokes. They drive an exciting new way of thinking that makes others want to contribute new ideas, invigorates their work and ultimately help the organisation’s bottom line.

SHOP REDESIGN CHALLENGE BY THE NUMBERS

153

shops with access to
Ladbrokes Ideas Shop

751

shop colleagues with access to
Ladbrokes Ideas Shop

102

ideas submitted

283

comments

1,045

votes on ideas