8ideas

Challange Driven Innovation and Idea Creation with 8ideas

A new platform for Collaborative Idea development

Optimal use of ideas from employees, customers and stakeholders

Short-cut the time from challenge to solutions

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Introduction

This paper describes a new way of working with idea development and innovation through effective involvement of your organization and customers/users by using a challenge driven tool, 8ideas.

8ideas is an online tool and a business process that motivates and accelerates idea development and innovation in organizations.

With the help of a simple, systematic process, challenges are solved effectively within short time. Solutions are based on a broad involvement of managers and team members that strengthens the feeling of ownership in the organization.
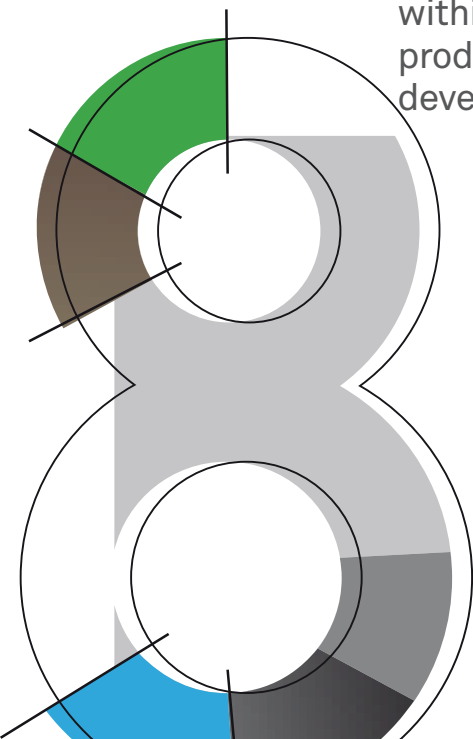
Furthermore, with 8ideas it is possible to involve customers, users, and other stakeholders and give them an opportunity to contribute to find solutions to a specific challenge.

8ideas can be combined with other idea development and innovation methods, such as workshops, brainstorms, methods for identifying user needs, prototyping, etc. GEMBA Innovation offers additional innovation consultancy in a process that is designed to support the effective use of 8ideas.

8ideas is built on international theory and practical experience within idea development and innovation including GEMBA's many years of experience with starting up, operating, and consulting innovation projects and business ideas.

Key-point
Conclusions

- Challenge driven idea development and innovation is a new method that can, within a short period of time, create action oriented solutions for specific, well defined problems.

- The method is facilitated through an online idea management system, 8ideas, which builds on the principles of challenge driven innovation and collaboration in idea development.

- The method out-weights the difficulties with the many traditional methods for idea development. It involves team members in a larger scale, and has a potential for involving customers, users and other relevant stakeholders, in a more effective way; and gives more and better ideas for solutions within a shorter time.

- The method can be successfully used for other purposes than innovation – to generate solutions for challenges within strategy, leadership, HR, sales, marketing, production, learning, knowledge sharing, project development, crisis management etc.

The need for innovation tools that appeals to users

Most managers have admitted that innovation is necessary to secure long-term growth and many studies document a correlation between ability to innovate and long-term success.

Innovation is more than new products, processes and services. It is also larger changes in the way we run our businesses - both in private and public organizations.

Even though the level of satisfaction with investments in innovation is growing, there are still considerable numbers of businesses that are not satisfied with the return of their investments in innovation.

There are many different models, processes and methods that can support innovation, for example open innovation, user driven innovation, Stage-Gate and more. Some are suitable in certain circumstances, others work in other conditions – every organization has to find the model that works best for them.

Most admit that a systematic process for innovation is necessary and that the idea development phase is a central part of the innovation process. It is within the idea phase (also known as the Discovery Stage) the concept, product, or radical change is conceived and defined. A successful idea phase should result in a limited amount of ideas, which are matured sufficiently in order to make a decision for further development and implementation.

The Boston Consulting Group's study points out three situations that hinder innovation: intolerance towards risk, long development periods, and insufficient measuring methods. Thus, there is a need for tools that support a more systematic innovation process, shortening the time to market launch, and give better opportunities for the management to measure the results of the effort. The key is in a platform and tools that appeals to users - both managers and employees. That is the scope of 8ideas.

Challenge Driven Innovation: Give Us a Challenge!

Innovation is often initiated by a specific technical or commercial challenge, it is seldom driven by the big 'idea box', where people come with their ideas from everything 'between ground and sky'. Acknowledging this fact, the approach Challenge Driven Innovation (CDI) offers interesting insights about the innovation process.

CDI is run through different channels, internal or external, as figure 1 illustrates.

Internal channels include participation of management and employees in the organization, often with wide participation of different departments and competencies.
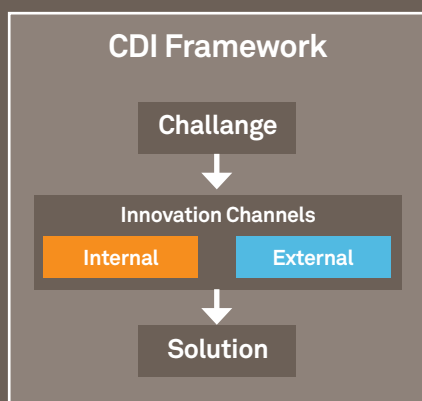

Figure 1 Challenge Driven Innovation (Innocentive, 2011).

External channels include running challenges with participation of customers, users, procurement or as crowd-sourcing, e.g. ideas come in through internet, social medias such as Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn.
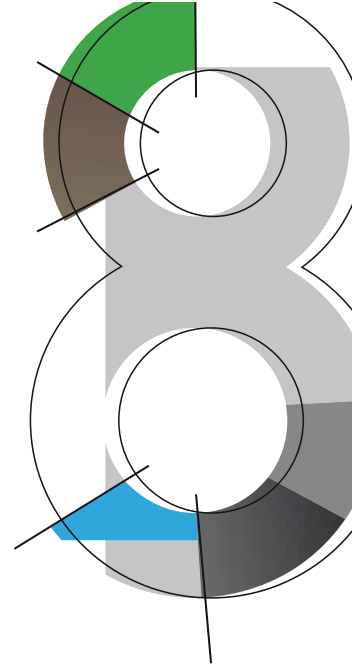
The challenge is a well framed campaign with limited time span, focused on solving a well-defined problem. The goal is to find the best suggestions for the solution through creating and keeping up motivation and intensity over a short period of time. The result has to be operational, so it is possible to take action, as soon as the campaign is over.

CDI gives the organisation an opportunity to balance operation with innovation, and to avoid focusing only on operation, which is a typical obstacle to continouos innovation. With a well scoped challenge, clear defined success criteria, managers and emplyees can handle the start and the end of the process in one go. This gives an opportunity for an extraordinary idea phase, where individuals and teams collaborate intensively in creating new, innovative solutions over a short period of time.

Management has the opportunity of scoping a specific strategic, technical, or commercial challenge; for example new products, product improvements, processes, new working methods, new initiatives in sales and marketing etc. using the power of the organization across silos and disciplines.

Broad involvement of the organization, adding customers, users and stakeholders, gives a diversified perspective on the challenge to be solved and may lead to better and more matured ideas. Furthermore, it has the potential of creating a wide stakeholder ownership to the ideas that are selected very early in the process – ownership that is often necessary for subsequent development and implementation.

Conditions for a successful challenge driven innovation:

- The challenge is well defined and supported with relevant documentation (analysis or similar).

- The challenge motivates and inspires for new inputs, and is communicated effectively to managers, employees and other stakeholders involved in the process.

- Users have trust and credibility to the process, including the selection process of ideas.

- Continuous communication of the process to the participants involved.

- The results are communicated widely in the organisation. Contributors and winning ideas/teams are broadly honoured, and eventually compensated.

- The process is short and intense.

- People are motivated to collaborate across departments and silos.

8ideas offers a platform for a challenge driven innovation process. By using 8ideas most organizations will easily be able to set-up a CDI-process and get started in finding new solutions to challenges using the benefits of CDI.
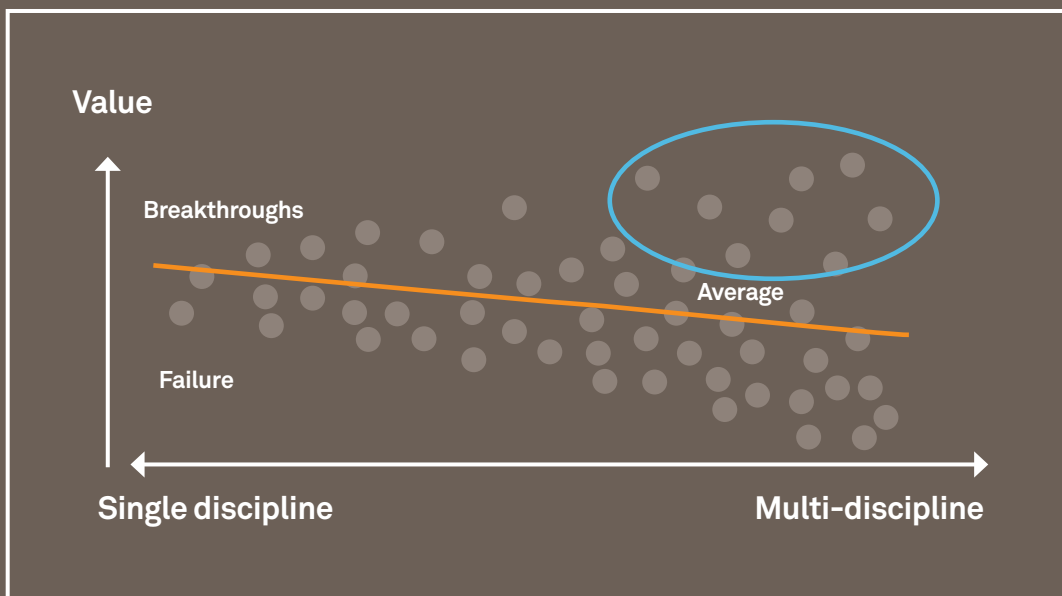
Collaborative idea management

Multidisciplinary collaboration in idea development creates more and better ideas than monogamous competencies. The idea is to create a broad platform with competencies across disciplines when innovative ideas should be created. Diversity in terms of multi-discipline competencies improves the odds of finding game-changing ideas (see figure 2).

This applies internally in the organization and inrelation to users, customers and other stakeholders in the value chain.

Analysis shows that organisations that are successful with innovation are able to involve users, customers and employees in the earlier phases of innovation. They do it to get market insights, uncover user needs, scoping challenges and to co-create and mature ideas to the level where they become feasible. This process might be accelerated by using a platform like 8ideas with effective sharing of insights and value-adding ideas in a collaborative process.

Value

Breakthroughs

Average

Failure

Single discipline   Multi-discipline

Energize idea development

There are different views on brainstorming as a method – ie. a process, where a number of persons are physically present and generate new ideas in a collaborative process.

On the one hand, it is our experience, that traditional brainstorming is a good way for idea generation if the problem is well defined, process is well prepared, participants are chosen and briefed beforehand; and the process is facilitated by a skilled facilitator, that is able to use the right tools and methods. In this case it is possible to create a learning space, where participants enrich each other's ideas and reach new insights, which is not possible, when participants develop their ideas individually.

On the other hand, analysis shows that brainstorming as a method for common idea generation is less productive if the same persons would produce the ideas separately.

They identify that the cause lies in three factors:

- Dominating people hinder the wealth of ideas flowing from others.

- Fear to come up with an idea that is perceived as foolish.

- That everyone can come with new ideas, which does not lead to a productive maturing of the best ideas.

The same analysis compares the traditional brainstorming method with electronic brainstorming, and the conclusion is clear – electronic brainstorming solves the shortcomings of traditional brainstorming and increases the productivity dramatically.

The table on the next page summarizes the benefits of electronic brainstorming.

Benefit	Feature
Shorter meetings	- clear structure - electronic sign-in - parralel processing of input - electronic display shares input immediately - electronic voting focuses on discussion
Timescales reduced	- larger meetings - electronic recording - recording of past meetings available
More/better ideas	- anonymity - sharing of input - more open discussion - electronic voting - prioritized ideas - remote participants
Ealier meetings	- different time/different place - electronic meeting
Better documentation	- electronic recording
Greater commitment	- electronic display makes commitment very public - analysis of electronic voting - larger meetings - anonymity when appropriate - electronic recording
Immediate actions	- meeting recordings available instantly - discussions seen to be concluded - free anonymous votes
Cash saving	- different place meeting

Figure 3 Benefits of the online collaboration method (Furnham, 2000).

8ideas has inherent the benefits of electronic brainstorming and facilitates both individual and collaborative, virtual brainstorming. Our experience shows, that in some cases it is advantageous to support virtual brainstorming with carefully designed offline methods, such as Innovation Labs, workshops etc. run by skilled process managers.

1. Invite everyone to engage the entire organization

2. Use the principle of self-organization to handle complexity

3. Embrace collaboration to leverage expertise and a diversity perspective

4. Secure feedback and recognition for a sustainable initiative

5. Integrate idea management into you overall collaboration effort

Furthermore, 8ideas builds on Karlssons experience to make use of collaborative idea management systems through many years at Sony-Erikson (see box 1.).

How 8ideas supports and accelerates idea development
The 8ideas process

2. **CREATION**
participants create
rate and build on
each other

3. **MATURING**
best ideas matured
and weighted
against predefined
criteria

1. **CHALLENGE**
define
provide information
invite participants
launch

5. **DECISION**
present solutions
make a well informed
decision

4. **SOLUTION & REPORT**
collaborative SWOT for the best ideas
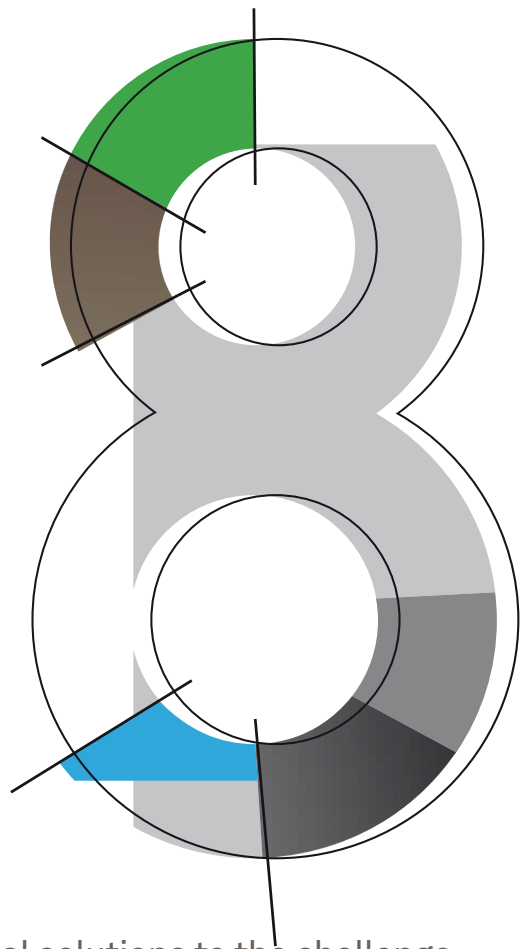draft of the executive summary

1. Challenge

- The purpose is to scope, motivate and kick-off the CDI-innovation process

- The challenge is defined and presented with motivating text, pictures, video etc.

- The challenge owner defines the time, participants, and criteria for rating the ideas.

- The challenge owner launches the challenge.

2. Creation

- The purpose is to create many ideas in a short period of time.

- People are invited to participate.

- Participants develop, comment and collaborate on each other's ideas online.

- Ideas are rated from 1-10 (1 being 'not interesting' and 10 'very interesting').

- A list of top rated ideas is generated and ideas are selected for maturing.

- 'Game-changing' ideas might be chosen by the challenge owner.

3. Maturing

- The purpose is to mature the selected ideas for potential solutions.

- Idea owners re-scope their ideas taking into account inputs and comments from others.

- In a collaborative online process, ideas are matured, further developed and commented.

- Ideas are rated up against the criteria set by the challenge owner.

- A list of top rated ideas is generated and ideas are selected for the next step.

- 'Game-changing' ideas might be chosen by the challenge owner.

4. Solution and Report

- The purpose is to choose the potential solutions to the challenge.

- The idea owner summarizes the idea description based on inputs in the maturing phase.

- A collaborative SWOT analysis is conducted online.

- The idea owner finalizes the idea description taking into account the SWOT results.

- Report is created in a format that is easy to present to Management.

5. Decision

- Challenge owner has a number of potential solutions to the challenge, ready for decision-making

- 'Game-changing' ideas might be picked up for a new, separate challenge.

- Challenge is closed, the best contributors are honoured and the results are communicated in the organization.

The organisation can start to develop/implement the chosen ideas.

Box 2. A Case

A company in the financial sector had recognized a need for reaching a new target group. They defined the challenge: How do we become relevant for target group X – what are their needs, what is interesting for us to deliver to them? After 8 weeks of a CDI-process using 8ideas, they got five elaborated solution propositions.

Through the CDI-process they uncovered the target group needs through interviews, focus groups and an ethnographic study. They found a number of spoken and un-spoken needs that the company could satisfy. With this knowledge, they kicked-off a challenge with a broad participation of 500 employees – from sales, marketing, HR, finances, IT, business development, etc.

After four weeks they received more than 2.500 ideas and comments. Management chose the 25 highest rated ideas for maturing. Furthermore, three ideas were chosen as potential 'game-changers'. A task-force was virtually attached to maturing these three ideas.

After three weeks the 25 ideas were matured and evaluated according to the manager's criteria. Five ideas were elected to be winners – and the contributors were symbolic compensated. The 5 ideas were re-scoped by the idea owners, and a group of people were invited to make a virtual, collaborative SWOT analysis for each idea. After 1 week the 5 solutions were presented to management.

Before management made their decision, they did a rapid prototyping of the 5 solutions. The prototypes were presented and tested with the target group. The company executed two development projects and launched an innovative concept for the target group after 6 months.

The benefits of using 8ideas

Benefits of using 8ideas are:
- A platform for challenge driven innovation that fits most innovation models (ie. Stage-Gate).
- A systematic innovation process, if it's not present in the organization already.
- Broad involvement of employees, management, and other stakeholders in idea development.
- Short time from challenge kick-off to solution.
- Cost saving compared to similar offline processes.
- Report with the final ideas incl. SWOT, ratings, contributors and more in a presentable format.
- Identifying contributors (Innovation Champions) among participants.
- Global access to deliver, develop and comment ideas 24hours.
- Multilingual challenges can be run parallel across countries.
- Easy to use for the challenge owner and the users.
- No interference with present IT-systems – 8ideas are cloud-based, hosted on secured servers.
- No license fee – you simply rent 8ideas for the period you need.

Other uses of 8ideas

8ideas can also be used for solving challenges in areas such as:
- Strategy and business development.
- Voice-of-customer, customer satisfaction and lead-user involvement.
- Learning, training and knowledge sharing.
- Project development.
- Crisis management