



THE **ULTIMATE GUIDE** TO  
**EMPLOYEE**

**IDEAS**

sideways6

“Everything  
begins with  
an idea.”

*Earl Nightingale*



# We exist to build better businesses through employee ideas.

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At Sideways 6, we believe that great things happen when companies listen to their people.

Our technology enables some of the biggest companies in the world to bring employee ideas to life.

Over 3 million employees have had their ideas heard thanks to Sideways 6. Our goal is to surpass 50 million and prove that great ideas really can come from anywhere.



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Grab a drink, put your feet up and enjoy.



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# Ideas from Anywhere

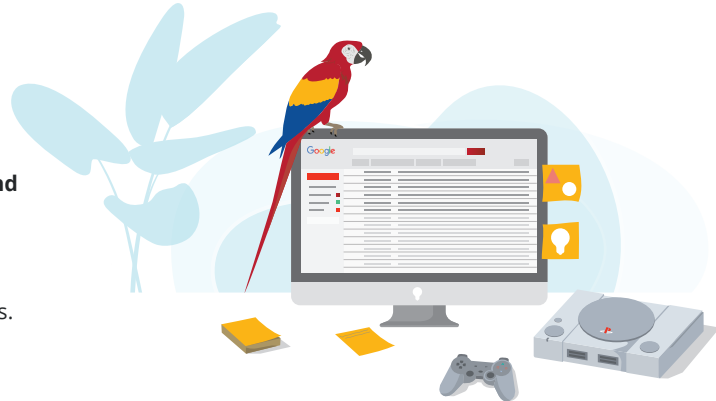
**Here's a question for you. What do the Post-It Note, Gmail and Sony Playstation all have in common?**

Well, they were all invented by employees within large companies. Yep, they were all employee ideas.

Now whilst not every idea your employees have will be a billion dollar success like those, anyone could be holding a crown jewel idea which has the potential to make a positive impact, no matter how big or small.

This guide has been written with the help of some fantastic contributors. They have over 100 years combined experience in finding the ideas hidden within an organization and bringing them to life.

In addition, we've included some inspiring, true stories of employee ideas from the past. I'm sure you'll recognize a few...



If you've ever been to one of the Sideways 6 offices then you'll no doubt have seen the words 'Ideas from Anywhere' somewhere — be that on a wall, pen, notebook, bottle of beer or ironically enough, a post-it note.

It's because we truly believe that great ideas can come from anywhere. Hopefully this guide will help you discover some hidden gems of your own.



**Chris Sheen**  
CMO @ Sideways 6

## CHAPTER 1

# Introducing Employee Ideas

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Why listening to employee ideas matters to your business and your people.



# The Case for Listening

**If you're reading this, then there's a good chance you already understand the value of employee ideas.**

For any company that is looking to innovate, improve and keep its employees happy, listening to their ideas isn't an option — it's essential.

The benefits are twofold: Better companies, happier people.



**Companies who listen to employees do better.**

**21%** more profitable than the competition.\*



**Employees who are listened to are happier.**

**24%** lower staff turnover than the competition.\*

\*Source: Gallup

No one knows a business better than its employees. Harnessing their ideas and bringing them to life is key to helping companies increase revenue, reduce costs, and improve employee retention.

It's crucial that companies of all sizes recognize that valuable new ways of thinking can come from anyone within an organization not just those at management level.



**Organizational hierarchy doesn't matter. A great idea can come from anywhere.**

*Pete Rummell*

*Former Chairman at Disney*



# What Employees Want

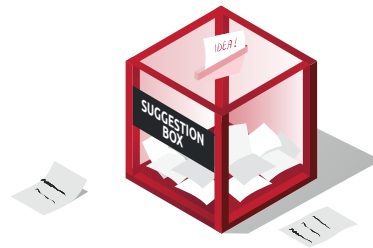
**So, we've established that employee ideas are good for business. But how do employees themselves feel?**

Well again, the numbers don't lie. Results from a survey of over 1,000 employees across the globe revealed that four in five employees (82%) have ideas to improve their business and want them to be heard.

Unfortunately, many companies are failing them. One-third (33%) of those same employees feel their ideas are not listened to and over half (52%) feel their company fails to implement good ideas.

People expect their ideas to be listened to. If your company isn't willing to listen, then at best you've missed out on that idea. At worst, they'll take their idea elsewhere.

4 in 5 employees  
have ideas



A third of employees  
feel their ideas  
are ignored



Over half feel their  
ideas go to waste



*\*Source: The 2018 State of  
Employee Ideas Report*

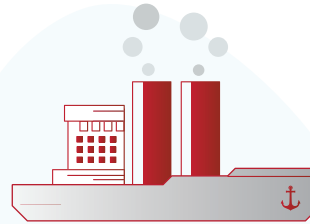
# The 4th Revolution

**Employee ideas aren't just about strengthening businesses and making people happier. They are about surviving change.**

The way we work is changing, and so are employee expectations — we are going through the fourth industrial revolution.

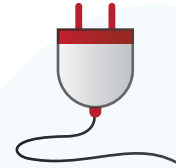
Companies across the globe are rising to this challenge, creating an army of intrapreneurs who feel they have stake and ownership in the business. The aim is to make a big company feel more like a small company. It's about transparency, social responsibility, engagement but most importantly of all, giving employees the ability to steer the direction of the ship.

The world is changing and listening to your employees is vital to surviving and flourishing in this new competitive landscape.



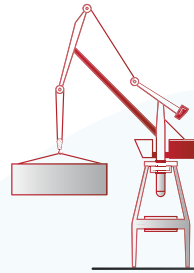
*1st Industrial Revolution*  
**Water & Steam**

Mechanical production,  
railroads and steam power



*2nd Industrial Revolution*  
**Electricity**

Mass production, electricity  
and assembly lines



*3rd Industrial Revolution*  
**Automation**

Automated production,  
electronics and computers



*4th Industrial Revolution*  
**Cyber-physical systems**

Driverless cars, artificial  
intelligence and robotics

# The Anatomy of an Idea

**Sideways 6 has analyzed over 250,000 employee ideas and there is a clear pattern in the types of ideas shared.**

In the majority of cases, ideas fall into four categories: Product/Service, Process/Productivity, Customer Experience and Employee Experience.

We've signposted some examples of each to check out in the book.

## Product / Service

*Ideas to innovate or improve **what** the company does*  
(See p.15, p.45)

## Customer Experience

*Ideas to improve or innovate for **who** the company serves*  
(See p.16, p.17)



## Process / Productivity

*Ideas to innovate or improve **how** the company operates*  
(See p.13, p.39)

## Employee Experience

*Ideas to improve or innovate for the **people** doing it*  
(See p.37, p.50)

## TRUE STORIES

# The Mavericks

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A collection of inspirational stories about individuals who had a bright idea and made it happen.



# The Matchbox Millionaire

**Dotted throughout this book are the stories of great employee ideas that have been brought to life.**

We begin with arguably the most legendary of them all.

In the early 1900s, a factory worker at Swan Vesta, the match company, went to senior management and told them that he had an idea that could save them millions of pounds in production costs.

At first, they simply wouldn't listen, unbelieving that a 'lowly' factory worker could have ideas of such value.

It took the employee months of pushing and persuasion, working his way up through management, before he could get just a few minutes in front of the company's board.



Finally, the time came. He had his moment in front of a very sceptical audience, ready to hear this 'million dollar' idea.

**The idea? To put the sandpaper strike on only one side of the matchbox.**

The idea worked and Swan saved millions. To this day, Swan matches only have sandpaper on one side of the box.

Sometimes the best ideas are strikingly simple.

# The Happiest Meal

Few things are more iconic in kid culture than the brightly decorated McDonald's Happy Meal box.

What you will probably know, is that a Happy Meal consists of a burger (or chicken nuggets), fries (or fruit), a drink and of course, a toy. Usually a Disney one.

What you may not know, is that it started as a simple gimmick. In 1977, St. Louis Regional Manager Dick Brams wanted to come up with a new meal 'just for kids'. He pitched his box-based idea to senior management and they loved it.

Two years later and McDonald's rolled out the first Happy Meal. It was circus-themed and was very similar to today's version.



In the time you have been reading this story (approx. 33 seconds), 2,937 Happy Meals have been sold. 3 million are sold every day.

One myth about Happy Meals is that they are just for kids. This writer can assure you, that's simply not the case...

**“Dear McDonald’s cashier, don’t give me that look. There’s no age limit on a Happy Meal. And don’t forget the toy...” — Anon.**

# Persistence Plays

**The Sony PlayStation has become a global phenomenon, but it was a project that faced much resistance at first.**

In the late 1980s, Sony junior staff member Ken Kutaragi, a self-proclaimed ‘tinkerer’, created a chip to make his daughter’s Nintendo more powerful and deliver a better gaming experience.

He went to his bosses with the idea of creating a new console for Sony. They didn’t like it. Sony just didn’t ‘do gaming’... and many believed it was just a fad and looked down on it.

Refusing to give up, Kutaragi eventually got his idea heard by Sony CEO Norio Ohga. Increasingly aware of the value of the gaming industry, Ohga kicked-off a joint venture with Nintendo.



Eventually, the partnership between Sony and Nintendo faltered due to licensing disagreements, but Kutaragi and Sony continued to develop their own console – The PlayStation.

**“I wanted to prove that even regular company employees could build something big.”**

**— Ken Kutaragi**

The PlayStation was launched in 1994 and has sold over half a billion units since. Kutaragi went on to become Chairman and CEO. And no one at Sony looks down on gaming anymore...

# Mile High Humor

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**If you've heard one flight safety announcement, you've heard them all. That is, unless you fly on Southwest Airlines.**

It all started with flight attendant Martha 'Marty' Cobbs. Tired of passengers ignoring her 'all too familiar' safety announcement monologue, she decided to adlib a few lines of her own.

*"Put the oxygen mask on yourself first, and then place it on your child. If you're traveling with more than one child, start with the one with the greatest earning potential."* Quickly, the cabin started taking notice... and as Marty continued, soon it was in hysterics.

*"In the event you haven't been in an automobile since 1960, our flight attendants will now show you how to fasten a seatbelt." It went on...*



'Marty' rapidly achieved YouTube fame with passengers sharing recordings of her announcements. Management noticed too, and they loved it. It caught on across Southwest Airlines:

***"Our attendants are encouraged to make safety briefings engaging through the use of humor, song, or other individual twists." — Elise May, Southwest***

It's estimated that Southwest's safety announcements are worth \$140 million a year in increased customer loyalty. That's no joke.



# A Tall Order

Sometimes an idea becomes so embedded in our culture that we simply take it for granted.

Founded in Seattle back in 1971, Starbucks went on a mission to become its customer's 'third place'. A relaxing and comfortable environment between work and home.

The Starbucks mission was founded on the idea of selling not just coffee, but a unique customer experience.

So in 2011, when one smart barista decided to add to that experience by writing the names of customers on the cups, rather than details of the order, it quickly got back to head office.

Months later and this 'first name basis' approach became standard at every single Starbucks store.



The company even launched a TV ad to promote its new, more personal approach:

**"From now on we won't refer to you as a tall latte or a mocha, but as your folks intended — by your name. It's only a little thing. We're Starbucks. Nice to meet you."**

Today, this 'little thing' happens 4 billion times a year at 28,218 locations worldwide. Starbucks denies that baristas sometimes spell names wrong on purpose. But we're not convinced...

# One Convenient Click

**Sometimes the best ideas are the simplest ones. The ones that make you say 'Why didn't I think of that?'**

As competitors looked back on Amazon's '1-Click' checkout button, many of them must have asked that very question.

Amazon programmer Peri Hartman wanted to find a way to 'make the ordering system completely frictionless' and so built the '1-Click' software. It worked. And in 1997, Amazon patented it.

Not only did the innovation give Amazon a huge advantage on its competition, but it also provided a new revenue stream as it licensed the technology to other companies.

Apple was one such company, incorporating '1-Click' in iTunes and the App Store.



How many times have you impulsively bought a song on iTunes or bought a new book for your Kindle without even a second thought? Instant purchase drives orders. There's no question.

***"When we write the history of ecommerce, the 1-Click patent allowed Amazon to create a very strong position in the market." — R. Polk Wagner***

By the time the patent ran out on September 12th 2017, Amazon's turnover was \$177 billion. That's quite some head start...

## CHAPTER 2

# Campaign Companion

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Your 12-step guide to striking gold with your employee ideas campaigns.



# What is an Employee Ideas Campaign?

In this chapter we'll share some best practice tips from experts who have been running employee ideas campaigns for years.

But first, let's define what a campaign actually is.

An employee ideas campaign is a structured way to engage your people in business innovation and improvement.

Ideas campaigns are most commonly classified according to the type of ideas being sought, the challenge/problem being solved and their duration. For example, is it a three month campaign focused purely on cost saving ideas; or a campaign looking for new product ideas with no fixed end date?

Often a combination of different types of campaigns, run in sync with each other, is the best way to achieve a lasting impact.



## Campaign Duration

**'Time-Bound'** | There is an end-date by which all ideas must be shared, e.g. 'You have 3 months (Oct 31st!) to share your ideas!'

**'Always On'** | There is no end-date to the campaign and ideas can be shared anytime, e.g. '24/7, 365, we're listening to you.'



## Type of Campaign

**'Targeted'** | The campaign is clear and prescriptive on the challenges to be solved, e.g. 'Share your cost saving ideas!'

**'Open Forum'** | The campaign is open to all types and kinds of ideas, e.g. 'Big or small, silly or serious — we want your ideas!'

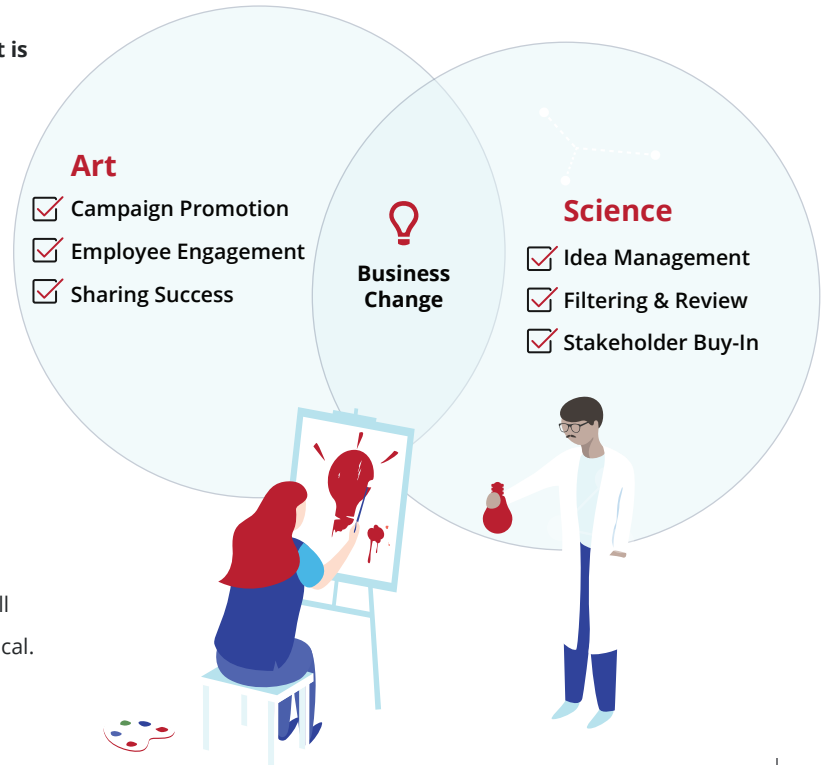
# The Art & Science of a Campaign

**Great campaigns combine both art and science. The art is inspiring employees to participate, the science lies in analyzing the data and bringing those ideas to life.**

The art is in promotion and engagement. Fail to get the art right and the campaign will struggle to gain traction and collect a good number of ideas.

The science is in process and idea management. Fail to get the science right and it will be difficult to take those ideas from 'many to few' and to turn the best ones into real business outcomes.

As you read the expert tips that follow, consider when you'll need to think creatively and where you'll need to be analytical.





# Plan like a Pro

by Justine Lawrence-Piccott, Customer Success @ Sideways 6

**The impact of listening to your employees can transform a business but managing the actual data can feel like you're running a marathon. It doesn't have to.**

Start with a blank piece of paper and create five equal sections entitled Why, Who, What, When and How. Then consider and answer as many of the questions as you can about your campaign:

**Why | Why do we need to change?** What is the problem to be solved? What is the central theme to focus our campaign around?

**Who | Who are we targeting?** Who could have great ideas to contribute? **Who will be involved in the campaign?** Communications, executive sponsorship, expert reviewers.



**Plans are nothing; planning is everything.**

*Dwight Eisenhower*

**What | What do we want?** Small improvement ideas, big product ideas, ideas on anything and everything? **What makes a good idea?** Business impact, cost and ease to change?

**When | How long will the campaign run for?** Three months or the whole year? **When will we manage the ideas?** Once a week or a set time every day?

**How | How does an idea get implemented?** Are there different owners according to the type of idea?

**Pro Tip**

## Start with Why

There are a lot of variables that can impact a campaign. Planning gives you the best chance of success.



# Sell to Stakeholders

by Bea Tartsányi, Innovation Lead @ Endeavor

## Getting support from stakeholders is key to the long-term success of an employee ideas campaign

The ideal environment is an ecosystem of executive sponsors, management, champions and even naysayers(!).

Starting at the top, convincing an **exec sponsor** (e.g. the CEO or someone well respected) to lead the charge and put their weight behind your initiative will help to drive engagement and visibility across the business.

Some people might express concerns or scepticism with your campaign. These are your **naysayers**. Use their misbelief to make your campaign bulletproof. Ask for their support to improve the areas where they see a risk.

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80% of collaboration efforts fail due to a lack of engagement.

Gartner

Your next step is getting **middle management** on board. They will help you get more employees involved. You might need to have individual meetings with the local market or department managers to achieve the most positive outcome.

Finally, find **champions** who are passionate about ideation and giving people a platform to share ideas. No matter their level, use their passion to share and replicate your promotional efforts.

Pro Tip

### Get C-Suite Support

Stats show that employee ideas campaigns with leadership endorsement garner 30% more engagement on average.



# Focus on Engagement

by Will Read, Founder & CEO @ Sideways 6

**Research shows that 4 in 5 employees have ideas to improve their business. So, in a business of 10,000 people, you'd expect around 8,000 to engage employee ideas campaigns, right?**

Wrong. The average engagement rate in most businesses is just 1-3%. That's significantly less than it should be.

What's the culprit here? Well, it turns out that — much like you and I — the average employee already has quite enough on their plate.

They're already juggling the pressures of their everyday role. Logging into an 'ideas app' or platform might seem like a good thing to do, but it rarely makes it to the top of the to-do list. The way to get past this is to meet your people on their terms.



The way to get good ideas is  
to get lots of ideas.

*Linus Pauling*

Look at where you already have a captive audience of employees and run your idea programmes there. Is there an active Slack community? Great — set up a Bot to ask people for their ideas. Does Yammer thrive in your organization? Perfect, set up an ideas group that's regularly monitored.

Engagement is the biggest hurdle to successful employee ideas programmes — if there's just one area you focus on, make it this.

**Pro Tip** 

## Go Social

Use enterprise social networks as a way of engaging employees across any device, location or time zone.





# Create Constraints

by Armin Kammerlander, Head of Partnerships @ Sideways 6

**At first blush, it may seem that ideas will flourish when ‘anything goes’. But boundless freedom isn’t always helpful.**

“Where shall we eat tonight?” frequently results in overly long reflections. That’s because open-ended questions lead to ‘choice overload’ which can be paralyzing. A more targeted question like “Which Italian shall we eat at?” will instantly produce better ideas.

This funny human quirk has a name: **Creativity by constraint.**

This principle applies in employee ideas campaigns as much as anywhere else. By guiding creative juices in a specific direction, employees are much more effective in generating ideas.

So, what does a targeted ideas campaign look like?



**Constraints are a necessary condition for creativity to occur.**

*Drew Boyd*

At the very best, it is a question that asks for ideas to a specific challenge. Some recent examples from our customers include:

- How can we get more passengers to purchase food on board?
- How can we repair underground water pipes without digging?
- How can we increase workplace safety for frontline engineers?

While 'creativity by constraint' might sound counter-intuitive at first, setting these constraints can not only spur more ideas but the types of ideas that you’re really searching for.

**Pro Tip** 

## **Constraint as a Cornerstone**

Set constraints to spur more ideas and the types of ideas you’re really searching for.



# Ask Open Questions

by Cai Kjaer, CEO @ SWOOP Analytics

**Companies should always be looking for opportunities to ask questions that engage employees, collect intelligence and challenge existing thinking.**

A little while ago, here at SWOOP we set out to explore how deep conversation threads on social networks get when people ask questions, and when they don't. The results were astonishing.

Discussion threads that include at least one question are **2.5 times longer** than those that do not include any questions at all. We also found that 1 in 10 messages include a question, so there seems to be lots of opportunity to ask a few more.

But what could you ask?



Questions can help you broaden your perspective, and make smarter decisions.

*John Van Maanen*

Innovation can be kickstarted by challenging status quo. Why not start that by asking what could be done better? Organizational effectiveness is about doing things smarter. Why not ask 'What are the top 10 dumbest things we're doing around here?'

Change happens when companies ask questions, and are prepared to listen to the answers. New insights are gained, different perspectives explored and new solutions identified.

**Pro Tip** 

## The Right Questions

Build your campaign around the questions you want help answering. Questions provide focus and inspire creativity.



## Nurture the Culture

by Hanna Greenfield, Emergent Tech @ Avios

**For an employee ideas campaign to truly succeed, you need to embed a culture of innovation and experimentation across the whole business.**

At many companies, Avios included, creativity and business change has historically been restricted to a single 'Innovation Team'. This can create an environment where people outside of this team are wary, sometimes even afraid, to share their ideas.

Changing this perception doesn't happen overnight — but there are a number of ways to demonstrate to employees that the company wants to hear ideas from everyone.

**At Avios, we knew we had to speak to people directly.**



**The role of a leader is not to come up with all the ideas, but to create an environment in which great ideas can happen.**

*Simon Sinek*

We started by running '**Innovation Roadshows**', going from team to team talking about digital disruption, the importance of continuous innovation and how people could collaborate.

Next, we set up '**mini idea challenges**' to get people accustomed to sharing ideas and providing feedback on other people's ideas.

When we eventually launched our big "Light the Bulb" campaign (featured on Page 37), we had an amazing response. But only because people now believed their ideas had a chance.

**Pro Tip** 

### **Ideas from Anyone**

Innovation shouldn't be the preserve of specialist teams and departments. Be open to ideas from anywhere and anyone.



# Build a Brand

by Alan Oram, Creative Director @ Alive with Ideas

**The identity you create to wrap around your idea campaign should reflect your brand, but it needs to do so much more.**

Branding is about inspiring ideas, generating innovative thinking and building enthusiasm around something special. You're seeking fresh new ideas so make sure the approach to your campaign reflects this.

Give your campaign a strong and memorable name, provide people with something to connect with. Make it sound like something they want to be a part of, even before it's begun.

## Pro Tip

### Ad to the Inspiration

Great campaigns are just like great adverts. So make yours memorable and repeatable.



**Your brand is what other people say about you when you're not in the room.**

*Jeff Bezos*

Here are three top tips for a brilliant brand for your campaign...

- 1 The Rule of Three** | Campaigns often attempt to convey too much information. Condense things into three simple objectives, priorities or actions.
- 2 Watch Your Language** | Focus on using positive, motivating language with an active voice. Use your words to inspire and remind people that every idea counts.
- 3 Make it Visual** | A picture really does tell a thousand words. Help your campaign stand out by using a strong visual approach throughout. Get creative and have fun with it.

Great campaigns are just like great adverts. Memorable and repeatable.



# Let Ideas Marinate

by Donald Bain, Account Exec @ Sideways 6

**Helen Keller famously said: “alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” People are often scared to share great ideas, as a result we all miss out.**

Sharing an idea requires bravery and a delicate spark — the innovator is, after all, opening up to a world that could blow that spark out. But, by itself, that single spark is unlikely to start a fire.

The most successful ideas have grown, developed and pivoted as a result of collaboration, constructive advice and support.

An open innovation culture (see page 27) that gives ideas time to breathe opens the door to collaboration. This is crucial in order to cultivate an idea into something which is robust, valuable and actionable.

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**Great things in business are never done by one person.**

*Steve Jobs*

The initial idea might be a \$1m idea, but with collaboration could become a \$100m one.

**The company 3M, famed for innovation, acknowledges this fact in its own product development. Over 80% of its patents have more than one inventor.**

Just as chicken gets better with a little marination, an idea can benefit as others add a little flavor to it themselves.

**Pro Tip** 

## Encourage Collaboration

Tap into the wisdom of the crowd but not just listening to individual ideas but the conversations around those ideas.



# Keep Communicating

by Andrew Pope, Innovation Consultant @ Innosis

**It's human nature to crave progress. To feel that we're going somewhere. And nothing kills an employee ideas campaign more than a perception of zero progress.**

To create engaging and effective campaigns, companies should share progress at every stage of an idea's journey.

Companies should send thank you messages when ideas are submitted; updates as an idea passes through each stage gate; and confirmation on whether an idea has been approved (or not).

## Pro Tip

### Close the Loop

Give regular feedback so employees know their idea has been properly considered. It will even motivate them to do more.



**There is no such thing as bad ideas.  
Just poorly executed awesome ideas.**

*Damon Salvatore*

- 1 Embrace Transparency** | Don't hide the process. Open it up to the wider organization. Run workshops on ideas under evaluation and invite conversations on ideas submitted.
- 2 Make Feedback Continuous** | Keep individuals informed at each stage, update staff on what ideas are being worked on, why some were dropped and what happens next.
- 3 Make it Visible!** | Have a visible process to show that ideas do go somewhere. Stage gates, feedback loops, assessment criteria... demonstrate that ideas are being progressed.



# Explain the Review Process

by Johnathan Sexton, PMP, CSM



Ideas are like pizza dough,  
made to be tossed around.

*Anna Quindlen*

**For your campaign to be a long-term success, you need to create an understanding of what constitutes a good idea.**

When done badly, employees will put forward ideas and not hear anything back from management about why their idea wasn't implemented. It happens more often than you might think.

This causes employees to lose interest in sharing ideas and to become disengaged from any future efforts for crowdsourced ideation. They simply won't bother in the future.

To get around this issue there needs to be transparency in the review process that will be used for ideas. Let your employees know how, when and by who ideas will be judged. This will give employees a sense that each idea really does matter and is valued.

By explaining upfront what review criteria will be used, employees will have a better understanding of what kind of ideas management are looking for and their ideas are likely to be more focused and relevant as a result.

Even in cases where their ideas are not taken forward, most employees are reasonable and understand that not every idea can be implemented.

**Pro Tip** 

## Clarity on Criteria

Be open about the decision-making process. It will go a long way in keeping employees engaged.



# Recognize Great Ideas

by Gordon Blue, Improvement Analyst @ Centrica

**There are a number of ways to recognize and reward idea contributors, but in my experience, it's best not to focus on the 'incentivization' side of the process.**

Here at Centrica, we get hundreds of ideas from our employees every single month — and have developed a number of different ways to recognize those ideas that are successful.

If the idea is a small change, e.g. new wording on the website, we use our internal recognition process. This sends an automated 'thank you' email to the contributor copying in their manager.

It will also be posted on our internal social network so that others can see, like and comment on the success.



**The deepest craving in human nature, is simply to be appreciated.**

*William James*

If the idea is expected to result in a bigger business benefit, e.g. improved customer service, then the team will arrange for a senior manager/leader to present the submitter with a framed certificate and a small reward such as a retail voucher.

It's less about reward, and more about showing recognition. Most employees are just thrilled to see their ideas used. They take pride in contributing to the organization's success.

**Pro Tip** 

## Reward with Ownership

Consider rewarding employees with the training and support they need to actually prototype their idea.





# Measure Success

by Buki Sule, Product Marketing @ Sideways 6

**Knowing how to measure the success of your employee ideas campaign is vital if you're going to be able to repeat it.**

It's important in proving to both management and employees that everyone's time, effort and ideas are making a real difference to the business. But it's not always easy.

As you get to the business-end of the ideas process, it's helpful to create a structured approach with agreed timescales on when ideas should be evaluated and their potential impact measured.

Firstly, assign responsibility and ensure people are accountable for reporting back on ideas. What teams or individuals are going to bring the ideas to life? Make them idea 'champions'.



**Empowerment without measurement is abandonment.**

*Leo Quinn*

Next, set timeframes and give 'champions' a toolkit to measure the impact of ideas. Depending on the type of idea, it might be cost saved, revenue generated or time saved.

Finally, book in time to follow up with your champions to track the status of those implemented ideas and the impact after 3, 6 and 9 months. The estimated impact will evolve and so your reporting on it should too.

**Pro Tip**

## Celebrate Success

Once you know the impact of an idea, share the story loud and proud. You'll inspire the next wave of ideas.

## TRUE STORIES

# Champagne Campaigns

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A toast to some great campaigns to inspire your crowdsourcing efforts.



# A Flow of Great Ideas

**Engagement is a big challenge for anyone running an ideas campaign. It's even harder when most of the workforce is not office-based.**

Severn Trent is one of the UK's biggest water companies, serving eight million people every single day with fresh drinking water.

Severn Trent's innovation team is tasked with finding solutions to dozens of business problems every year. It knows that the answers to these likely lie within the company's 5,000+ deskless, frontline workforce — the challenge is finding them.

The team identified that the key to engaging the workforce was simplicity. It needed to be simple for employees to put forward their ideas and easy for others to discuss them.



Severn Trent decided to go to where employees already were — on Yammer — the company's enterprise social network.

**“We didn't want to introduce 'yet another app'. We wanted to spark collaboration in the places where it happens naturally.”**

**— Lesley Parker, Severn Trent**

With over 1,500 ideas, comments and interactions in just two months, the campaign smashed expectations. Simplicity wins.

# On-the-Go H2O

**Ford motor company has come a long way since releasing its breakthrough Model T way back in 1908.**

Whilst much of its initial success was thanks to pioneering mass production techniques, it's banking much of its future on scaling innovation. And it's looking to its employees for the ideas.

Ford employees share over 3,500 innovations every single year, the majority of which aren't from the R&D Department. One such idea came from engineer Doug Martin, whose inspiration came as he noticed a few drops of condensation dripping from his car.

He started working on a prototype that turns the condensation from the car's air conditioning into drinking water.



Incredibly, Martin found a single vehicle can produce more than 64 ounces of water an hour, about four bottles worth. The water is filtered and channelled to a tap which sits by the gearbox.

***"We believe in driving innovation from all parts of our business." — Raj Nair, CTO at Ford Motors***

Ford believes the innovation has the potential to help water scarcity in developing nations and encourage consumers to buy less plastic bottles. Wat-er wonderful idea!

# Lightbulb Moments

Let's look at the story of Avios, intrapreneurship and magnificent, magical lightbulbs.

As Avios set about creating a culture of innovation within the company, it knew it needed to find new ways to engage its employees and make a real impact.

**"We needed to find a unique way to bring our people together. We wanted to create a buzz and get employees excited about sharing ideas."**

— *Hanna Greenfield, Avios*

Avios, together with IAG Digital, got creative and took the ideas and lightbulbs analogy to a whole new level. The team went big.



They placed large light bulbs all around the workplace with signage encouraging people to #LightTheBulb.

Every time a new idea was posted on the company's enterprise social network, the bulbs lit up. Employees were quite literally lighting up the office with their ideas.

The 'Light the Bulb' campaign brought employees at Avios together like never before. And generated great ideas to boot.

# The \$6.5m Message

**Sometimes great ideas are shared. In Centrica's case it wasn't just one employee with the idea, but three.**

In August 2016, three call centre employees shared an identical idea on the company's internal social network. Manish from Mumbai, Sadia from Leicester, and Wayne from Cardiff put forward "a small change with a potentially big impact."

Centrica had a process in place whereby they texted customers to advise them when the company had tried to phone them, but didn't give the customer the option of texting back.

Why not give the customer this option? Texting could be used to keep the customer updated with the solution to their issue.



A trial quickly confirmed that this simple change had a substantial impact on both call centre productivity and customer experience.

Customer satisfaction increased by 15%. Repeat call centre customer outreach dropped to near 0%. And the estimated business value in savings was over \$6m. Not bad for a text.

**"The insight we get from our employees helps shape the future of change and allows us to prioritise the work we have to do."**

**— Gordon Blue, Centrica**

# Flush with Cash

**Okay, this story isn't the sexiest. But sometimes the best ideas are practical. And sometimes they're about toilets.**

It all started as British Airways reached out to its employees for ideas on how to reduce emissions and cut fuel bills.

From pastry chefs and pilots to cabin crew and cleaners, ideas were generated from across the workforce. Among the hundreds of ideas submitted included replacing glass with plastic for wine bottles, washing engines more regularly and using lighter cutlery for business class passengers.

But the biggest idea of the campaign was to descale the toilet pipes in order to make them lighter. The saving? \$800k a year.



BA's campaign is estimated to have generated savings worth more than £20m - the fuel cost of 550 flights from London to New York.

***"This really has been a team effort. It goes to show that small changes here and there can add up to significant savings." — Jon Counsell, British Airways***

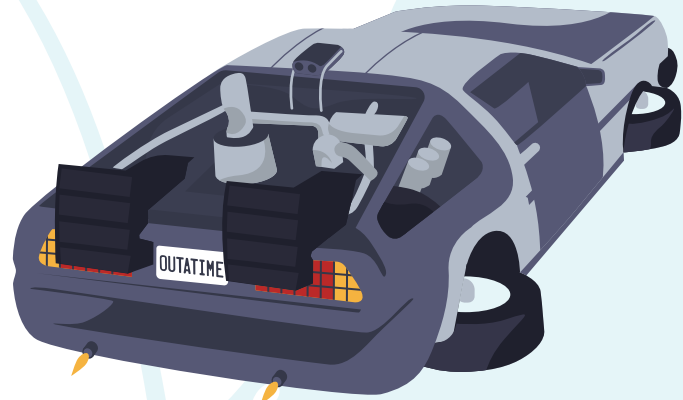
The campaign helped the environment — as well as the bottom line – and just like the toilets, that's not to be sniffed at...

## CHAPTER 3

# The Future of Employee Ideas

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How technology and cultural change will shape the next generation of employee ideas campaigns.





# Man vs Machine?

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**“In the future, robots will be doing our jobs for us” is one of the most common sentences we hear from futurists, business people and technology leaders. But how true is that?**

We believe that in reality, it's about collaboration between man and machine. For employee ideas, artificial intelligence (AI) will make it easier for us to do our jobs and make better decisions, quicker.

AI will help companies to shortlist ideas based not just on human judgement, but big data, ensuring great ideas aren't missed. AI will lead to greater efficiencies — merging 'duplicate' ideas and spotting trends in topics and conversations for example.

Machines might help the process, but the ideas will be man-made.



**Artificial intelligence is a tool, not a threat.**

*Rodney Brooks*



# Multimedia Moments

**As technology evolves, so too do our behaviours. We're sending each other more audio and video messages than ever before and we predict this trend will enter the workplace too.**

WhatsApp reports that over 400 million audio and video messages are sent on its platform every single day — double what it was 5 years ago. With high definition recording devices in our pockets and smart speakers in our homes, we're becoming increasingly used to speaking rather than writing or clicking.

We predict a time when employees are able to share their ideas whenever inspiration strikes, and by whatever medium they like. Video, audio, images, drawings... whatever gets the idea across in the quickest and clearest way for it to be reviewed.



Some companies are already pioneering the use of Amazon Echo to allow employees to share ideas. As the technology becomes more commonplace and accessible the trend will only continue.

For frontline workers, it could open up new ways to share their ideas while out in the field or on the road, doing this with ease with everything automatically transcribed into an idea management platform to be reviewed.

The future is coming, and it's a conversational one.

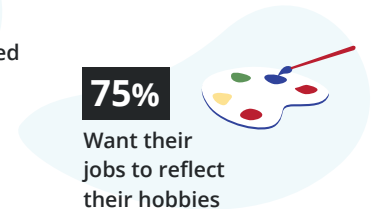
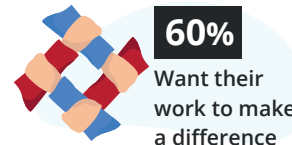
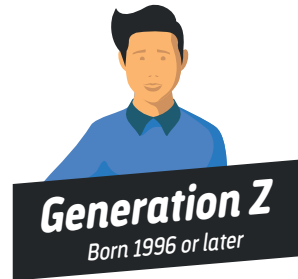
# Say Hello to Generation Z

By 2025, Generation Z will account for 27% of the workforce. Born in 1996 or later, 'The iGeneration' have a higher expectation than ever before as to how they are treated by employers.

Generation Z have an entrepreneurial mindset and expect companies to give them the autonomy to drive meaningful change. The businesses that win will be those who embrace this and give them a chance to shape the future. To make them intrapreneurs.

**If they don't feel appreciated, they're going to move on. This generation doesn't care about being loyal to the business.**

*Marcie Merriman*



\*Source: Huffington Post

## TRUE STORIES

# Collaborative Cultures

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Stories that prove the best ideas are often shared. Companies just need to listen.



# Made to Stick

**Simple and effective, the Post-it Note is a key part of any desk-bound worker's armoury, and it's another fine example of employee ideas in action.**

3M scientist Spencer Silver's invention — a sticky, but not solid, adhesive — went without use for years until Art Fry, a fellow 3M employee, needed a bookmark that would stick to the paper without damaging the pages.

Partnering with Silver, they began developing a product.

Once they found themselves writing messages on their new notes to communicate around the office, they realized the full potential of the idea.

Fry supplied the entire company with the new adhesive notes. Everyone loved them.



**"I thought, what we have here isn't just a bookmark. It's a whole new way to communicate." — Art Fry**

Post-it notes now generate some \$1 billion annually and dominate the self-stick note market.

Now that's what I call 'sticky business'.

# Popular Popsicles

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The Magic Castle hotel in Los Angeles isn't a lot to look at. It's a little dated, the pool is small and the rooms are 'cosy'.

And yet. It is the #2 rated hotel on Trip Advisor for the whole of LA. One place ahead of The Four Seasons Hotel, Beverley Hills!

How did this humble hotel collect over 3,000 rave reviews? Well, it owes a lot to a great employee idea and a cherry-red phone.

A group of smart employees came up with the idea of the 'Popsicle Hotline'. Located right by the pool, anyone can pick up the phone and order themselves a popsicle in any flavour they like.

The popsicle is then delivered by a butler (white gloves and silver tray included!) right to their sunbed — or even to the pool!



Realizing they could never compete with the big budget hotels on amenities alone, this employee focused on delivering a unique customer experience instead.

**What started with a popsicle hotline has evolved into free snack menus, breakfast magicians and even a free laundry service.**

Magic Castle's employees think differently. And it works.

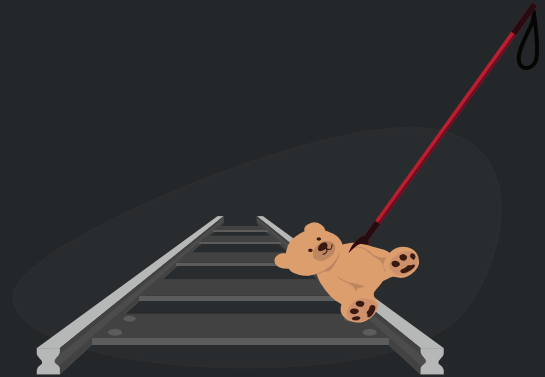
# Rail-Time Retrieval

**Have you ever been affected by train delays? That was a stupid question... of course you have. They're infuriating.**

What you might not know is that a huge number of those delays were not the fault of staff cutbacks from greedy train companies, or even that unexpected cold snap... they were because people had dropped personal items onto the track!

Transport for London reports that 195,000 hours of delays every year are down to their clumsy customers (our words, not theirs) and two of their employees decided to do something about it.

The 'Track Retrieval Device' was designed and built by rail track maintenance workers John Raynes and Paul Allen.



The 'TRD' is designed to be used without turning off the power supply to the tracks and without staff having to step down onto the track. It can pick up bags, cell phones and even teddy bears.

**"We wanted to create something versatile. It's got different sized hooks, magnets and even a suction cup. The Swiss Army would be proud." — Paul Allen**

And those pesky delays? Reduced by 18% in the device's first year.

# Mr & Mrs Mouse

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**Sometimes the benefit of listening to employees goes beyond finding new ideas. It can mean stopping an idea in its tracks.**

Wind the clock back to a sunny July 12th 1984 and new Disney CEO, Michael Eisner, has just heard the news he has been waiting for. Time Magazine are to run a cover story on his idea.

The excited Eisner had pitched what he believed was a great promotional idea to reenergize the brand: Marry Mickey and Minnie Mouse. On paper, it was genius.

But when Eisner gathered Disney's team to discuss the idea, one employee pointed out a huge flaw with the idea. As soon as you marry them, you freeze them in time. Married in 1984.



The employee explained that as soon as you define their age, the icons lose a lot of their meaning to a lot of people.

When Eisner heard the explanation, he gave up his passion project. He listened, the idea was killed, and respect and trust in him from his team grew. Colleague Peter Rummel summed it up:

**“Just because you’re the top guy doesn’t mean you always have the best idea; an idea can come from anywhere, you just have to listen.”**



# Van Diesel

**When one company is bought by another, it can provide risks but also great opportunities. This story is about the latter.**

Shortly after catalogue business Argos was bought by UK supermarket giant Sainsbury's, the company asked its employees for money saving suggestions aided by the new collaboration.

While out on his rounds, Argos delivery driver Mark Heslehurst realized that one idea was staring him right in the face. As he pulled into his usual petrol station it dawned on him that Sainsbury's had petrol stations that could be used instead.

What would the cost saving be if van drivers only filled-up with Sainsbury's fuel he wondered...? The answer: \$2 million a year.



As with many great ideas, it turned out that Mark was not alone in spotting the opportunity, with a number of other employees also suggesting the fuel-based initiative.

***"It did seem quite an obvious thing to do but I guess the best ideas often are!" — Mark Heslehurst***

Unsurprisingly, the idea was implemented and to this day you will never see an Argos delivery van in anything but a Sainsbury's petrol station. Unless it's to buy a sandwich...

# Twenty's Plenty

There's little debate that much of Google's incredible success is thanks to its ability and willingness to innovate.

But how has a company of such size (85,000+ employees at the time of writing) continued to innovate as it scales? Much of the answer lies in a management philosophy called '20% Time'.

Google's employees are encouraged to spend a fifth of their time collaborating on projects outside of their day-to-day work.

**"This empowers them to be more creative and innovative. Many of our significant advances have happened in this manner." — Larry Page**



These projects include the development of AdSense, Google News, Google Transit and even Gmail. The latter was initially developed as an internal messaging system and has more than one billion monthly active users.

'20% Time' projects are estimated to account for over a quarter of the company's \$75+ billion revenue.

Many companies, including LinkedIn and Apple, have copied the 20% model. But at Google, a culture of innovation is ingrained.

## CHAPTER 4

# In Summary

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A bright future for intrapreneurs and companies who listen to their people.



# Ideas Are Everywhere

**Business leaders are always looking for the next breakthrough idea — that game-changing stroke of genius that will put them ahead of the competition in one move.**

Whilst employees can come up with big, game changing ideas — like the McDonald's Happy Meal or Amazon's 1-Click — most often, they come up with small ideas or ways to improve things.

But it's these small changes that can make the biggest difference.

Think back to the Swan Matches story earlier in this book. Tasked with the challenge of saving the company over \$1m a year, would a management consultancy have come up with the single-sided sandpaper solution? Almost certainly not.



Coming up with that idea needed experience, product expertise, and a close working knowledge of the current process. It was the kind of idea that only an employee would have come up with.

**“No idea is too small. Any idea has the potential to change things for the better.”**  
— *Richard Branson*

The key is to empower people to see the potential in ideas and provide them with the tools to bring them to life. I really do believe great ideas can come from anywhere. Hopefully, now, you do too.



**Chris Sheen**  
CMO @ Sideways 6



# Campaign Checklist

Your 12 steps to building an employee ideas campaign that rocks.

- 1 Plan like a Pro**  
Define your why, who, what, when and how.
- 2 Sell to Stakeholders**  
Gather support from across the business.
- 3 Focus on Engagement**  
Make it easy for employees to get involved.
- 4 Create Constraints**  
Inspire creativity by setting limitations.
- 5 Ask Open Questions**  
Provide focus by challenging the status quo.
- 6 Nurture the Culture**  
Build trust with a culture of innovation.
- 7 Build a Brand**  
Drive engagement by making it memorable.
- 8 Let Ideas Marinate**  
Develop better ideas by letting them breathe.
- 9 Keep Communicating**  
Share progress at every stage of the journey.
- 10 Explain the Review Process**  
Share exactly how ideas will be judged.
- 11 Recognize Great Ideas**  
Acknowledge and appreciate good ideas.
- 12 Measure Success**  
Understand and share your winning metrics.

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Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful,  
committed people can **change the world**.  
Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

- *Margaret Mead*



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