Crowdsourcing: an Introduction

The term crowdsourcing was coined by writer Jeff Howe in 2006. Simply put, crowdsourcing refers to the delegation of a task to a community of people. The mass collaboration model of crowdsourcing is at the core of many popular Web 2.0 websites and technologies, of which Wikipedia is the most recognizable. All types of companies and organizations leverage the crowdsourcing principle to generate creative ideas and sustainable solutions for a shared purpose.

Why is crowdsourcing important?

In the context of employee engagement, crowdsourcing can be an effective method for gathering suggestions on how to improve internal operations. The "crowd" in this internal case is the employees, who are given the opportunity to share and vote on ideas as well as engage in a dialogue about those ideas. Crowdsourcing has proven to be both a strategic and viable problem solving model. The real value of crowdsourcing is that it leverages the "wisdom of the crowd". By harnessing the power of collective intelligence and ingenuity, crowdsourcing will most often provide a higher quality solution than one developed by an individual or dedicated team tasked with finding a solution. It is no surprise that almost every agency of the U.S. government is now taking advantage of crowdsourced idea management.

About IdeaScale

IdeaScale is a crowdsourced idea management solution used by businesses both large and small, government, and anyone who wants to collect feedback and create a dialog around the ideas generated by the feedback community. By collecting ideas and giving the community a platform to vote, the most important ideas bubble to the top. More companies and government agencies are using crowdsourcing to greatly increase the quality of feedback for their organization. Web users are gradually coming to expect a platform from which to be heard. IdeaScale is that platform.

Who’s using IdeaScale?

**GOVERNMENT:** The White House, the President’s SAVE Award, the FCC, NASA, the Social Security Administration, Department of Veteran’s Affairs, the International Trade Administration, the City of Seattle, and dozens more federal and state agencies.

**ENTERPRISE:** SAP, Microsoft, Subaru, Avid, Reuters, Oracle, Mozilla, Wired Magazine, Intel, Choice Hotels International, Novell, and many more.

Over 12,000 IdeaScale communities
How do you use crowdsourcing effectively for idea management?

In recent years, idea management--sometimes referred to as ideation--has become a major component in the social campaigns of government, small business, and the corporate world. While crowdsourcing experts and gurus each have their own take on what drives successful idea management, a few core principles are understood:

Be committed with a goal in mind. Plan your campaign with an outline of what you aim to achieve. Establish a realistic goal and maintain focus with milestones of progress.

Be committed with a goal in mind. Plan your campaign with an outline of what you aim to achieve. Establish a realistic goal and maintain focus with milestones of progress.

Show accountability. If you say you’re listening, show you’re listening. Give the community a way of knowing their ideas and votes are not just text on a webpage but that they actually have a chance of being realized. Most idea management tools allow moderators to change the status of an idea from "In Review" or "In Progress" to "Completed" to demonstrate action has been taken.

Respect and reward your community members. Whether it’s public commendation, financial incentives, or “props” via some type of user reputation model that awards badges to leading members, make an effort to recognize the value of your community’s contribution of time and energy.

How many different applications are there for idea management software?

It’s hard to say, but here are a few of the most popular:

**Government crowdsourcing:** The best way to understand the needs of a constituency or community is to give them a forum to communicate.

**Idea management for internal use:** Most solutions offer private communities, where public access is restricted. Others allow participation to be limited to users of a corporate intranet.

**Ideation for the enterprise:** Sometimes big business can be clumsy when it comes to listening to “the little guy”. Idea management gives the collective little guys a big voice and gives executives poignant, actionable insights.

**Open innovation:** Idea management tools are great for business and government. They’re also great for providing innovative solutions to some of the world’s most pressing problems in fields such as science, engineering and economics. These real answers to real problems are affecting huge positive change.

**Community building:** Building a community around a cause and collecting ideas is a great way to build a sense of community. Through the registration process and their resulting activity, you can learn more about your users, and your users have an opportunity to learn even more about each other.