

IDEASCALE CASE STUDY

Xaxis

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Accelerating Careers and Solutions with The Xcellerate Competition

Xaxis is the world's largest programmatic media agency, transforming media into outcomes for more than 3,000 brands in 47 markets around the world. It's global client list includes Ford, IKEA, and Mars.

With all of those creative thinkers spread throughout the world, Cecile Blanc, Senior Director of Global Solutions and Innovation at Xaxis realized that **there was no global mechanism to capture and scale the power of their global team's ideas**, so in 2017, Xaxis launched the Xcellerate Program using IdeaScale technology.

Xcellerate is a competition where any Xaxis team member from anywhere in Xaxis' 47 markets can share product ideas that are then selected and incubated over the summer before a winner is chosen and deployed. The goal was to find new offerings, business models, and processes, but also to break down company silos and foster a culture of innovation.

The Xcellerate process begins in the Spring and is promoted across all company communications channels: emails, MS Teams, regional CEOs mention it in their meetings and conversations and different regions compete to serve up exciting solutions. There are six phases to the Xcellerate program:

Submission Phase: This phase lasts 4-6 weeks and everyone across the entire company (no matter their business unit or experience level) can **brainstorm and submit a solution that will improve the Xaxis customer experience.**

Voting Phase: This phase lasts 1-2 weeks in which each idea is open for public voting. **Everyone in the company receives three voting tokens which they can cast toward any idea they want** - splitting their votes between three ideas or giving all their votes to one.

Regional Judging: This phase lasts 1-2 weeks during which **regional panels review all votes and assess ideas against their key criteria** of potential to scale, how quickly it can be taken to market, whether it addresses a clear market need, and more. Once completed, the ideas receive an overall impact score and (if appropriate) each region can recommend up to two entries for incubation.

Incubation: This phase lasts 8-12 weeks during which **Xcellerate teams must finalize their investment request and pitch their solution to clients** in order to gain meaningful feedback on their idea. All participants in this stage are assigned a mentor to help guide their process, remove roadblocks, and provide professional development (for those who aren't sure how to pitch or build a business case for example). Xaxis has also created a library of videos that coach participants through the process and answer any questions that they might have. Subject matter includes "What Is a Value Proposition?" "How to Think About Scaling Solutions" and more.

Pitch Day: Teams pitch to the executive committee who draws from the **dedicated innovation budget** to fund minimum viable product solutions to the team's ideas.

Development & Final Selection: Teams with executive budget support create a **minimum viable product of their proposal**, which could mean creating a new offering, establishing a potential partnership, gathering client testimonials, or otherwise in order to create a final pitch video for their proposal. Once they submit their pitch video, the executives have two weeks to select a winner and runner up. **The winning team gets to fly to the headquarters of their choosing and work on scaling their solution.**

As a result, Xaxis has brought a lot of wonderful new solutions to market over the years, including:

- A way to repurpose and amplify social communications across different digital platforms using user generated content - essentially **finding a new way to make a brand's organic creative work harder for them.**
- **A solution to connect digital out-of-home advertising to store visits** as a way to better identify campaign ROI and segmentation.
- An algorithm to optimize ad space bidding that started out as an excel spreadsheet that is now integrated into their AI platform. **It is now one of the company's most widely used AI strategies.**

The company has also noticed a remarkable improvement to their culture of innovation.

- **Participating Xcellerate team members have gone on to accelerate their careers** as a result of the exposure and creative coaching that they receive in this global competition.
- Xaxis executives think it's a great way to get the whole community engaged and also to surface some great ideas, but also to **note emerging trends and client challenges in the meta data of submitted ideas.**
- **Year over year improvement in both the number of ideas, but also the depth and sophistication of submissions.**

"Xaxis is an inherently innovative company, but this ongoing program ensures we will maintain that innovative status and that we continue to innovate more effectively," says Trisha Sircar, Global Programme Director, **"Our Xcellerate Program has given us more than new ideas, it has delivered a far more engaged group of people who can wear multiple hats,** because they've gone through this process and can now apply that experience to their day-to-day work."