

# COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE PARTICIPATION THROUGH IDEATION

A CSC POINT OF VIEW

**CSC**



Ideation events are large-scale, collaborative, problem-solving campaigns. They challenge an entire community, which responds through a flexible and threaded discussion.

## COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE: PARTICIPATION THROUGH IDEATION

It's been almost a century since the first suggestion box was created as a tool to encourage participation and invite ideas. How far we've come!

"The Australia 2020 Summit marked the start of a national conversation on Australia's long term future, a conversation I am committed to continuing as we move forward to 2020." Kevin Rudd

Kevin Rudd organised the 2020 summit as 'an opportunity to have a conversation with a wide range of Australians and to listen with an open mind to the creativity and diversity of their ideas'. With over 900 ideas raised, it demonstrated that Australian's are passionate about their country's future and want to engage with government.

Getting a large number of people together is key for diversification and hence balanced participation and quality of ideas. This

can also, however, mean a high cost in management, facilities, travel and people' time and so can restrict how often these types of events can be conducted.

Technology and social media tools, combined with practical process offer new opportunities to continue this national conversation, tapping into the wisdom of crowds without high cost, in person events. The technology reduces the cost and opens up the capability to anyone in Government who would like to increase engagement and participation with an agenda to discuss or a problem to solve.

As well as government, organisations are scrambling to plug the best minds into innovation to leverage their collective intelligence and exploit the wisdom of crowds. Whoever creates the best participation culture has the upper hand in understanding its customers and stakeholders and in driving successful change. At CSC, that's exactly what's happening — not just

with employees, but with customers, partners and across the wider ecosystem of global talent.

How? The approach is called Ideation and is one technique we are using to facilitate participation.

Ideation uses innovative technology to capture, organise, evaluate and rank suggestions with participations of as many as 200,000 people.

Ideation streamlines the process of configuring and launching tailored challenges to large communities, and easily plugs in all the essential experts. The approach securely organises peer reviews so that ideas can be promoted, weeded out, directed to experts and then extended with further participant input. Weighted scorecards help evaluations, and participation scoring helps maintain employee interest levels and involvement.

### IDEATION: THE WISDOM OF CROWDS

Each Ideation event has its own objectives. One event may be to reduce costs, another to grow revenue, yet another to improve a service or transform an important relationship. Beyond these event-specific objectives, an organisation can also uncover additional benefits:

- The real minds and hearts of participants are revealed, as challenges engage their minds and collaboration boosts their spirits.
- Decision makers can access more complete and creative thinking, building better odds for success.
- A fruitful pipeline of priorities may emerge.
- Solutions have a higher probability of success, due to early developmental support.
- Experts can vet ideas openly and promptly.

- A central and accessible corporate memory bank can be created, providing a new form of knowledge management.

Much of this is based on the "wisdom of crowds" notion: If many people jump into a thought process, more and better ideas are offered, and the diversity of options and full spectrum of possibilities are more certain. Taking this one step further, Ideation is structured to be a time-bounded, managed event, rather than an ongoing, online, open-ended rant.

Events last from three days to three months, during which time each participant has a specific role: contributor of ideas, reviewer, expert, sponsor or challenger (one who poses provocative questions).

The event's orchestration relies on good design and a clear time frame. It needs to be clear what the challenges are that need to be solved, the participant groups need to be correctly selected, participants

need to understand the questions and feel subtle pressure to contribute now, rather than waiting or even disappearing and the technique needs to be the right one for the particular objective. Results from Ideation depend on how smart an organisation is in setting challenges and deciding which emerging ideas to target.

### CLARITY AND COMMUNICATION

The Ideation event is typically structured into six phases: collection of raw ideas, idea development, evaluation, recommendations, final decisions and conclusions. This clarity of project planning also fosters collaboration and communication, as it issues friendly reminders to participants who are developing each other's ideas, as well as to experts and reviewers. Communication can range from full broadcast ideas and comments; to offline, direct referrals to experts; or one-on-one reviewer check-ins.



Common business problems where ideation has been successfully applied:

- **Adapting to New Market Realities.** In a safe environment, explore the impact of large scale, damaging industry trends.
- **Bureaucracy Buster.** Identify wasteful processes or procedures to streamline work and reduce overhead.
- **Commercial Launch.** Accelerate product launch of solutions and services; customer and consumer adoption.
- **Customer Echo.** Collect input from employees who 'express' the customer's needs. The employee builds a heightened sense for the market.

Rarely are events simply open-ended "blue sky" thinking. Most events start with a specific idea and seek to improve it. Ideation allows an idea to have a full life – be stated, commented on, upgraded, reviewed, categorised, coupled with or split from other ideas, or discarded. Furthermore, events can be chained together, so that the sub-ideas are fleshed out and then linked with others to drive a larger program of change or development. For example, one event may prioritise problems across the organisation. The next event may take the highest ranked of those problems and start to develop solutions. Finally, an event is also an archive record of the collaboration, which

helps guard ideas – and idea originators – so they're available when needed. Lessons learned are not lost. For example, rerunning an event across different business units, at different times of the year or on different subjects, allows a richer bank of knowledge.

## IDEATION IN ACTION

CSC has deliberately moved through the early adopter phase. We have focused on developing our process and knowledge in how to make the events successful. We have now deployed the tool more broadly as part of our commitment to increase participation and collaboration and excel at innovation.

Two CSC events in Europe yielded cash savings of US\$30 million. More recently, an event was designed to improve the end-to-end cash flow in our North American Public Sector. In another, participants at a major internal conference were asked to identify the "elephants in the room" preventing progress. CSC is also applying Ideation in enterprise risk management (ERM) and to shape our Green agenda and solution offerings.

Other companies have used Ideation to significant ends: Pfizer uses it to connect 25,000 people organisation wide on a range of collaborative tasks, such as drug formulation and delivery. Xerox uses it to support their Lean and Six Sigma programs, in addition to helping drive collaborative leadership forums. Boeing uses it to engage staff for collaborative problem solving, to generate ideas for growth initiatives and to help improve existing processes.

But the exciting story at CSC is how Ideation is becoming a household word, a new attitude about how participation and transparency can help problem solving, support, influence or cause us to re-evaluate existing priorities as well highlight and progress a number of new valuable ideas.

Bringing participation to a wider audience when managed well can only be a good thing. It fosters a new sense of empowerment as people are invited to participate, contribute their ideas and comment on solutions. Leaders have a new way to share broadly and deeply their commitment to a having wider conversation.

To find out more about how CSC can help your organisation, visit [www.csc.com.au](http://www.csc.com.au).

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