

A Blueprint for Success

A short and practical guide to Continuous Improvement and everyday innovation.

Employee Voice

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Section 1:

This is a practical *HOW TO* Guide.

Its subject is this:

How to use an online application to motivate and empower employees to identify, share and implement *improvement opportunities*.

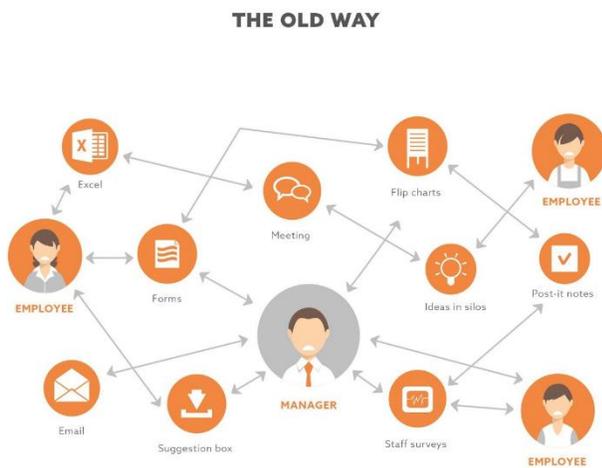
It explains how you use Employee Voice to:

1. Easily have productive conversations about improvement.
2. Incubate ideas which enable marginal gain and transformation.
3. Generate greater employee engagement.
4. Create a Culture of Contribution and Commitment.

Employee Voice is a systematic and very practical way to make the connection between employee knowledge and management leadership.

Problems are surfaced, solutions are sought, suggestions are described, shared, incubated and evaluated.

All in one place.

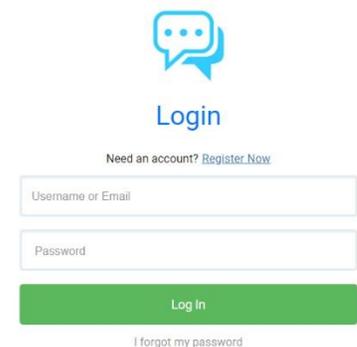


Default Configuration:

Employee Voice platform is delivered set up (pre-populated) with the configuration described below:

1. Subjects of vital importance to Engagement, Continuous Improvement, Productivity and Sustainability.
2. One “always-on” Wildcard *Community - any idea, from anyone, at any time. A place where employees can ‘suggest a challenge’*
3. A *Help and Learn* section with resources to assist participants to get the most from Employee Voice.
4. A Success Story section designed to inform and encourage.

Of course, any configuration is possible, for example new Communities can be added for individual Departments or Projects. It’s easy to do that and then you add the “moderator(s)” who respond to ideas. Moderators could be team leaders or department or subject experts.



The login form features a blue speech bubble icon at the top, followed by the text "Login". Below this is a link for "Need an account? Register Now". The form contains two input fields: "Username or Email" and "Password". A green "Log In" button is positioned below the password field. At the bottom of the form, there is a link that says "I forgot my password".

Welcome to Employee Voice!

This is where we focus on improvement opportunities. We share feedback on problems or bottlenecks or things that need improving. It's the place to share ideas and solutions that will save time and effort and eliminate waste.

2 types of contribution process

In Employee Voice, there are two types of Contribution process.

1. Communities (Wildcard or departmental)

In a “Community”, any idea, on any subject can be posted at any time from anyone. This is about inclusion. Ideas are described and can be categorised. The categories or classifications are in place and consist of general idea categories or classifications. Each classification is connected to an appropriate “moderator/manager” who would be alerted to or could generate a report on ideas.

Of course, any configuration is possible, for example new Communities can be added for individual Departments or Projects. It might depend on the size of your organization. Glasgow City Council with 20, 000 employees uses individual communities for each departments. It's easy to do that and then you add the “moderator(s)” who respond to ideas. Moderators could be team leaders or department or subject experts.

The screenshot displays the Employee Voice web application interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for HOME, TOPICS, WILDCARD, SUCCESS STORIES, and HELP. On the right side of the navigation bar, there are icons for notifications, email, calendar, and settings, along with a Log out button. Below the navigation bar, a user profile section for 'John' is visible, including a profile picture, a 'Hello again, John' greeting, and links for 'View Profile' and 'Settings & Alerts'. To the right of the profile are three main action buttons: 'Submit Feedback', 'Challenges', and 'Communities'. The main content area features a grid of idea cards. Each card includes a title, a description, a user profile picture, a date, and a status label (e.g., 'PLANNED', 'CHALLENGE ACCEPTED', 'IMPLEMENTED'). A 'Create new Idea' button is located at the top right of the grid. On the right side of the interface, there is a 'PERSONAL MENU & SEARCH' section with a search bar and a list of menu items: All Ideas, Popular Ideas, Recent Ideas, Top Ideas, Implemented Ideas, Accepted Ideas, Read Comments, Ideas I'm following, and My Ideas. Each menu item has a small counter next to it.

2. Challenges

Challenges focus on solution generation in regard to specific problems and are undertaken within a specific time period. Challenges can be open to all or by invitation as part of a specific, smaller group, participants being imported.

Challenges are crucial. They can be run by any Manager/Head of Dept or team leader - safety people, diversity managers, accounts, wherever feedback informs! When creating your challenge, you can select a department or category. IT can be running a challenge at the same time as HR. The key is to run those challenges, get people involved and reach wise decisions.

HOME | TOPICS | WILDCARD | SUCCESS STORIES | HELP

Log out

Help us solve problems John
View Profile | Settings & Alerts

Challenges Communities

Filter Challenges By: My Draft Ideas

All Departments All Categories All Live Closed Archived

Workplace Safety CURRENT

IDEAS 0 VOTES 0 COMMENTS 0

Safety is a core value

The safety of the workforce is our first concern because safety and health are personal to everyone and can have a profound impact on motivation and morale. Our goals is to make sure people aren't worried about getting hurt and they're free to think creatively about other parts of their jobs. How can we improve machine performance and quality? How c...

Closes in 30 days, 9 hours

Post Idea View Ideas

Circular Economy Conversations CURRENT

IDEAS 0 VOTES 0 COMMENTS 0

Circular Economy Conversations

You may not have heard about it, but you will! The "Circular Economy" is about reinventing how products are created, used and maintained. Because the world's resources are limited, there's a very strong argument for ditching the "take, make, dispose" mindset and adopt "make, use, return" as our collective mantra. It's about reinventing business standards to make the world a better place and ...

Closes in 24 days, 9 hours

Post Idea View Ideas

Promoting Diversity and Inclusion CURRENT

IDEAS 0 VOTES 0 COMMENTS 0

Promoting Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity and Inclusion are characteristics of the best companies. Diversity of people enables diversity of thought and new ideas. Inclusion literally means everyone can be involved in being able to influence how they work by suggesting improvement ideas. Diversity of experience leads to a better understanding of customer needs and priorities. That creates a stronger company and more security for ...

Closes in 24 days, 9 hours

Post Idea View Ideas

Your Goals:

Goal Number 1 - Create Ownership

Your first goal is to create the foundations for “ownership”. This is done by involving employees from the very beginning. If you want people to have a stake in the outcome, make them part of the process.

Employee Voice then comes to be “owned” by employees. Not IT or HR or senior management. This is a matter of good communication; of asking for feedback and of making it clear that participants do not need to seek permission to suggest ideas or share ways to improve a process or simply to highlight a problem area.

Employees are *expected* to influence and shape and improve the way their work is done. This is a simple human trait: improving things is natural for homo sapiens!

But here’s an important point to reflect on: we advise that you do not focus on offering rewards for improvement ideas; you must focus on offering recognition!

Research makes it clear: people want autonomy, purpose and influence in regard to how they carry out their work tasks. Feedback and recognition, not token rewards, will endure and motivate and build the culture of effectiveness.

Goal No 2 - foster understanding that work is a process

Improvement ideas are very often improvements to the *process of work*. In fact, being able to describe what you are doing as part of a process is a sure way of being able to identify waste and save time and money.

It is estimated that 85% of the reasons to fail to meet customer (internal or external) expectation relates to deficiencies in systems and process, rather than the employee.

The role of management, informed by those doing the work, is to change the process. That is best done with employee consultation and “consent”.

Otherwise failure to realize gains is high.

Goal No 3 - Encourage identifying of problems

In a trust-based Community like Employee Voice, *Contribution* is not only about Ideas or solutions.

Being able to spotlight problems and identify root causes, impact and implementation issues is also a vital contribution. People knowing something about the methodology of LEAN and 7 Wastes will assist in this. See Appendix for guidance.

Goal No 4 - Make learning material about how to improve easily available

This is accommodated in our **Help** section.

It is about educating, informing and motivating people to use good practice in thinking and seeking out improvement opportunities.

This section - along with Management’s enthusiastic input - makes a significant contribution to making the community sustainable and avoiding slow death, which is always possible...



Growing confidence and senior management involvement will generate a **steady growth** of ideas, both incremental improvement *and* downright inspiring!



Slow death happens if participants are neglected, and the workflow is ignored. But if Managers, Heads of Dept, Team Leaders are involved and engaged, results will be very different.

Goal No 5 - promote behaving like an Entrepreneur

... encouraging *Intrapreneurs* is a commendable aim. People who are willing to think outside of the box have great value. And even their “half-baked” ideas are welcome. In fact, almost all ideas begin in that state!

Measuring Success

It is important to measure success and return on investment.

This will be measured in several ways, for example in relation to Contribution/participation and improvement ideas implemented; problems shared and increased employee engagement and transformation outcomes achieved.

What results to expect?

- Waste reduction (waste being any process or action that is not right first time and/or does not add value for the customer). ... the goal is to *WOMBAT* minimise *Wasting of Money, Brains and Time!*
- More ideas suggested (per 10 or 100 employees) and more implemented and more of those ideas implemented by peer groups (improvements that do not take resources or money - *just do it* ideas!).
- Increase in the Employee Voice “Continuous Improvement Index number”: That is to say, more people saying *Yes* to the question: “*Would you recommend our company to friends and colleagues as one that is open to listening to new ideas and implementing new ways of working?*”

It is worth noting that productivity or process improvement always result in saving of Time. Time is the scarcest resource and success and company profitability requires it to be managed well. The cost of mis-using time is financially - and personally - very, very high. Time can be equated to cost incurred and therefore savings made. Similarly process improvement means that people's work activity can be rebalanced enabling more flexible work disciplines/activity.

Section 2 – Testing, Learning...

When a new system is being considered you are looking to learn and test your beliefs and assumptions about online employee engagement in relation to Innovation.

Of course, the functionality of the software is being evaluated. But you are also learning about:

- The organisational requirements that need to be in place.
- Trust and new ways of working and thinking can be embraced by ALL stakeholders.
- How online conversation techniques can support face-to-face engagement. Employee Voice supports and makes face-to-face meetings much more efficient. This is simply because before that meeting all decision makers have reports on all ideas and have had time to reflect on the benefits and impact of a proposed solution.

Section 3 – Inclusion, Commitment, Communication

Inclusion is paramount and everyone has a role to play - active or more passive depending on the situation. Ideas are the currency of our Community, but votes, comments, highlighting of issues; sharing of draft ideas with colleagues - all are also of huge importance.

Introduction to Employees

Success requires management to make it clear that the key to success will be employee contribution. That is the message to employees.

Here's a possible e-Mail to send to all employees on launching your Idea Community. Used in conjunction with the CEO's communication asking for people to share their ideas and making it clear that good ideas will be funded (this E-mail can also be illustrated within the Community too). It will reinforce commitment to the success of the initiative.

Hi David,

We're looking to boost our rate of continuous improvement and innovation. So, we thought we would use Employee Voice to help us do that. It's a system that allows us to share improvement ideas with the goal of eliminating waste. We could also use it to highlight areas that might be causing us problems.

Your participation is key to success.

Please access your ideas Community here:

URL here

The message to all managers and team leaders and supervisors

The purpose of Employee Voice is to bring talent to the surface. If you're creating an environment where people can't speak up, some of your best ideas will never surface.

The message to managers, who must ultimately judge and implement accepted ideas, is that they must be involved and be responsive. They need to talk to the people describing a problem and a corresponding improvement opportunity.

The worst thing to happen is that people suggest ideas or share problems and they get ignored. Of course the original improvement idea may be wrong, but there needs to be a conversation about the root problem and what its existence implies for customers and processes!

Therefore, it is imperative that people who make decisions and control budgets are involved as moderators, normally within their role as a department head or manager within it.

It is the role of all managers and team leaders to ensure that employees feel comfortable speaking up – without fear of criticism or premature judgement.

Receiving an improvement idea is the beginning of the process, not its conclusion.

It is not very effective if just 2 or 3% of improvement opportunities are implemented. In Toyota, where Lean process improvement process thinking began, up to 80% of improvement opportunities are realized.

User Roles

Managers

A Manager's job is that of:

1. Evaluator and decision-maker related to ideas proposed. And to be a moderator in that they will respond to contributions, having accessed new idea reports on a regular basis.
2. Moderators need to add content to Success Stories and ideally add "quick wins" rapidly.
3. Managers may also wish to embrace a role of "innovation coaches"; that is, encouraging ideas and thinking; becoming better at listening and launching Challenges to gain knowledge, as well as ideas.

Sharing the Employee Voice explanatory PowerPoints with key people which show its scope and power will be useful as a way of getting buy-in and understanding at all management and team-leader levels. These PPTs are also be available online within the Application. And can also be accessed by employees.

[Employee Voice Rationale PPT](#)

[Employee Voice Walkthrough PPT](#)

The CEO's role

The CEO must:

- Give 100% backing to the initiative to have a systematic to listen
- And be the signatory to an introductory E-mail to all participants.
- While also, from time to time, posting encouraging comments.
- While encouraging managers to be innovation coaches

Communication and promotion

It's not rocket science. We'll just say:

1. Internal comms ought to be involved so that they use all their knowledge to promote and inform the importance of Employee Voice and sharing improvement opportunities. They must reward success through recognition.
2. Use Employee Voice to get ideas on how to improve and promote the community.
3. And get HR involved too and link good ideas implemented to employee of the month.
4. Explain the reasons for change and remind everyone that success is happening - just look at all those success stories!

Section 4 – Campaigns and Challenges

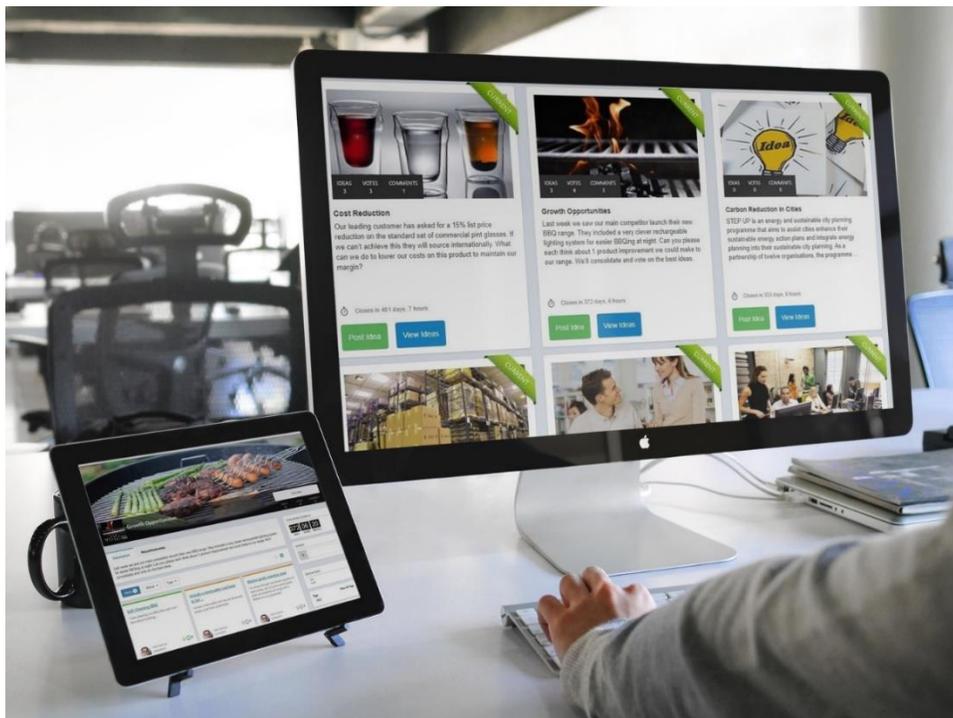
Regular Challenges provide the vibrancy of conversation needed to reinforce the idea of participative Change.

Examples of techniques are summarised below and there's more in the Appendix.

The aim is really to make conversation natural and frequent, inculcating the idea that we all have two jobs - the day job ... and how to do it better!

Challenges are key to creating Idea “Campaigns” and a very good way to begin is to ask what the ideas’ community ought to be called. Branding is important since it shows managerial commitment.

Challenges can be on any subject, looking for solutions or even getting feedback on policy, on best practice doctrine and regulatory procedures.



Question of the Month

Emphasising a *Question of the Month* within an Idea Management System is a useful technique that avoids the idea of *Continuous Improvement* as an onerous additional burden.

The process is simple.

Each month a question is posed and feedback is sought - ideas, insights, observations, experiences, knowledge. This would become part of the creative routine with 30 days to share ideas and issues on a subject of importance.

All contributions are acknowledged automatically and are routed to the right evaluation or decision-making individuals or teams; in short, no contributions will be ignored.

At the end of a given month, contributions are output ready for evaluation. As appropriate, results and developmental updates are shared by management for the previous month's activity.

Here's a simple Challenge. The output is reflection and thoughts. Of course more information is supplied on the 5 S background. Text or video.

What do you think of the 5's as a practical technique for improvement?

Sort, Straighten, Shine, Standardise, Sustain

Challenges are about Focus

In Challenges, managers decide the subject and we suggest that Challenges naturally look for solutions to pressing problems. They are also used to inform and educate; and also to reflect on ways of working or to encourage take up of ways of thinking or Cultural change.

Example Challenges where *opportunities* can be explored.

1. Name the Community - this is a great way to introduce the Application
2. People, Wellbeing & Employee Engagement
3. Sustainability + Environment (sustainability drives innovation)
4. Costs & Process Improvement
5. Customer Service and Experience

Challenges add an element of urgency and excitement to an ideas event!

They say: *“We start now, we end in 2 weeks. Get thinking on this important subject. We want your improvement ideas!”*



Safety is a core value

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Closes in 29 days, 16 hours

[Post Idea](#) [View Ideas](#)



Circular Economy Conversations

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Closes in 23 days, 16 hours

[Post Idea](#) [View Ideas](#)



Promoting Diversity and Inclusion

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Closes in 23 days, 16 hours

[Post Idea](#) [View Ideas](#)



What do customers value?

By clearly defining Value from the customer's perspective, all the non-value activities - which are really waste - can be targeted for removal. In this Challenge, we want you to share your customer stories, your experiences, your insights. We're not necessarily looking for ideas we're



Becoming more Sustainable

Becoming environment-friendly lowers our costs and makes us more competitive because we can reduce the inputs we use. In addition, the thinking process an generate better products or enable us o create new businesses. If we think of Sustainability as innovation's



Your work is part of a Process

The starting point is not to think about improving things by 100%. Let's think about small change; changes to the process - one per cent change! That's your Challenge. The things you do ... the information you give to colleagues ... how can you make it a little better or clearer or quicker

Important advice on the detail of a Challenge

These categories are ideal for Challenges:

1. Operational Effectiveness
2. Growth Opportunities
3. Cost Reduction (Contribution Margin Improvement)

When constructing a *Challenge*, we think best practice would be that a *Challenge* contains:

1. Specific (but brief) detail on the situation that requires improvement.
2. A quantified status of the situation currently.
3. A measure of the desired outcome required.
4. A call to action.

How this might be applied in each of the three areas:

Operational effectiveness

In terms of breadth of participation in idea contribution for business this is probably the most common. This is typically where everybody feels most comfortable having a say. Some *Challenges* that would provide good examples of this would be:

1. In our warehouse it takes us an average of 1 hour to put away the contents of a 20-foot container. This has dropped from 45 minutes since the last time we measured it. What changes could we make to improve the time spent on inward goods so that our handling would return to 45 minutes?
2. We have been getting steady inquires at the bank branches about our latest credit card offer. However, only 22% of customers are following through with an application. We want to get this conversion to 35%, if you are already getting success at this level in your branch please can you forward your best practice ideas for other branches to adopt.
3. Our telephone operator at the Council help line is getting overloaded with calls about the new tree removal policy. This is lengthening wait times and leading to frustration from rate payers who have urgent inquiries. What is another way we could get information out about tree removal so that we receive less calls?

Growth Opportunities

Every business has growth as an objective but it is increasingly difficult to get. The old adage that ideas can come from anywhere is true but often the problem is that most of the ideas don't fit the strategic agenda and therefore go nowhere. In this area framing is very important. Some effective *Challenges* could be:

1. Our average \$ order value has not grown in the last year. How can we get customers to consistently add just one more product to their order so we can get 5% growth?
2. We are going to run a new product contest and we are looking for 100 ideas. If your idea gets commercialised you'll receive a cash bonus of \$USD2000. The guidelines for qualifying ideas are attached, as soon as we receive 100 ideas the contest is closed so get thinking!
3. Last week we saw our main competitor launch their new BBQ range. They included a very clever rechargeable lighting system for easier BBQing at night. Can you please each think about 1 product improvement we could make to our range. We'll consolidate and vote on the best ideas.

Cost Reduction

This is becoming increasingly important as companies find themselves competing in global markets against suppliers with a much lower cost base. Also, customer price increases are very hard to get accepted so when input costs go up often the increase needs to be offset by an internal saving. This is a particularly effective *Challenge* because cost reduction often requires detailed product and process knowledge that resides with people that are responsible for the production process. These people are often not in the same physical location as Brand or Finance Managers and rarely share common face-to-face forums.

Some *Challenges* that would fit this criteria:

1. The cost of manufacture of our best-selling office chair has increased by 7% but we have no chance of a price rise. Please forward your ideas for reducing raw material or production costs. Please can I have these by the end of next week.
2. Sometimes business overhead costs seem trivial but in reality our stationery and photocopying costs are currently running at \$1500 per week. I would like to challenge everyone think about the costs associated with administration and put forward an idea for saving 10%.
3. Our leading customer has asked for a 15% list price reduction on the standard set of commercial pint glasses. If we can't achieve this they will source internationally. What can we do to lower our costs on this product to maintain our margin?

They need not always be serious in their subject matter.

Ten 10 dumb things we ought to stop doing !

This might seem frivolous as a subject for a Challenge, but results can be dramatic.

This is an option for an anonymous Challenge perhaps?

Challenges are undertaken within a fixed time frame. They can be organisation-wide or by invitation only within a separate group. Ideas can be attributed or anonymous.

Appendices

What are the values or principles that govern Employee Voice?

Employee Voice seeks to empower employees. To promote autonomy, a sense of purpose and of individual responsibility.

There are four principles involved:

1. Employees - the people who do the work - know best how to improve a process or identify a problem.
2. They have the right, indeed the obligation, to influence the way work is done. This benefits the company; it also benefits employees because when one feels powerless then disengagement and apathy are in the ascendency, with consequent reduction in productivity and in competitive advantage.
3. Techniques can be taught that make the process of Continuous Improvement, or Innovation or *Intrapreneurship* sustainable.
4. Contribution is not only Ideas; it is any type of involvement - sharing problems, voting, commenting.

The participants' Contribution form

This must be simple but constructed in such a way as to make any contribution clearly understood. This is the beginning of any improvement journey.

Submit Feedback

– General Feedback

Type of Feedback (?)

Idea

Title (Required) Maximum 200 characters

Description (why is your improvement idea needed and important? Maximum 2000 characters)

<> ¶ **B** **I** U ~~S~~ ☰ ☷ ⌵ ⌶ 🖼️ ▶ 📄 🔗 ☰ —

Impact & Effort (?)

Select

Choose Categories (Required)

- Cost Saving Customer Service
 People & Diversity Revenue Generation
 Sustainability Waste Reduction

Add tags (?)

📎 Add file or drop files here

This idea will be displayed using your Real name.

To post as anonymous, please tick this box

Alert me when new comments are posted.

Post Idea

Cancel

Save Draft

A well-designed Contribution form also seeks to empower the employee in terms of implementation. For example, giving the author the option to state the impact or difficulty to implement is an empowering option; it is also the start of an evaluation process and can be reported on.

Impact & Effort (?)

Select

- Select
- Low impact, easy to implement
- High impact, easy to implement
- High impact, hard to implement
- Low impact, hard to implement

It also stimulates conversation and what may seem a difficult idea to implement may not be so, given a few “*what if we did this ...*” discussions.

Anonymity is also enabled, by Admin, on this contribution form. As is uploading documents or adding a hyper link or adding an image.

 Add file or drop files here

This idea will be displayed using your Real name.

To post as anonymous, please tick this box

Alert me when new comments are posted.

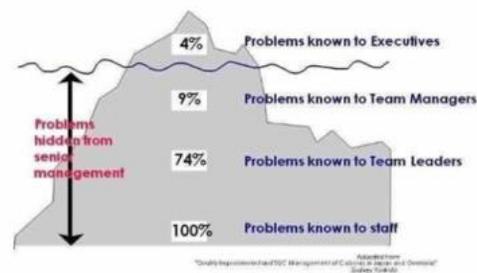
Post Idea Cancel Save Draft

The form is dynamic: contribute, classify, route, report.

It is simple yet also strategic.

Encourage and reward identifying and reporting of problems

Employees, while they may not know the best solution, they do know the problems. In a trust-based Community like Employee Voice, *Contribution* is not only about Ideas or solutions. Being able to spotlight problems and identify root causes, impact and implementation issues is also a very important contribution. The principle of LEAN will assist in this.



Type of Feedback (?)

Idea

- Idea
- Problem Described
- Customer Story

The Iceberg of Ignorance

More on Challenges

A question is posed, which should not be too general, normally in terms of what “ought” we to do.

In the Challenge Description there is an emphasis on defining the issue as clearly as possible and providing any important background information about the scope and size of the problem.

It can be valuable to identify the challenge team or decision makers. There can also be a place for anonymous contribution too. This is enabled on the idea submission form. Those not responding can be prompted to take part. As noted earlier, the purpose of a Challenge may be to get an idea across or to encourage reflection about something.

Think small. Small is beautiful

Effective innovations start small and they should not try to be clever. Innovations try to do one specific thing. Starting small allows for adjustments. Starting small keeps the requirements for people and money to be fairly modest. Innovations must be handled by ordinary human beings.

Sources of Innovation Challenges

Purposeful, systemic innovation begins with the analysis of opportunities. Regular management-led conversations and scrutiny of these seven sources of opportunity will drive innovation conversations. Innovators are not risk focused but rather are *opportunity-focused!*

1. The organization's own unexpected successes and failures, and also those of the competition.
2. Incongruities, especially those in a process, such as production, distribution, or incongruities in customer behaviour.
3. Process needs.
4. Changes in industry and market structures.
5. Changes in demographics.
6. Changes in meaning and perception.
7. New knowledge.

The imperative is to reach out to look, to ask, to listen.

Catalytic Questions and a Question Bank

“Catalytic” Questions

Catalytic Questioning is a systematic approach to uncovering the right questions.

When people are brainstorming catalytic questions, they are not sharing thoughts about possible solutions to the issue. Instead, they are identifying questions which might be helpful to ask about the issue.

These are questions that start to unlock entirely different solutions and perspectives. It has been proven to be an effective technique. The fact is that **well-chosen questions have an exceptional power to focus attention on what really counts.**

The beginning point is the same as with any Challenge session: a thorny or challenging issue is laid before the group. (Here, again, it's profitable if the issue is worded in the form of a question.)

Thus, the primary question might be, "What can we do to recapture our lost market share?" The brainstorming question might produce questions like:

- Has the market moved away from a preference for our type of product?
- Does our web page need a fresher look?
- Are we providing adequate value for the price that we charge?
- What lessons can we learn from successful new competitors?
- What's morale like in our marketing department?

The rules for conducting a session like this are:

Whatever anyone contributes is recorded with no further commentary or critique. And during the brainstorming time, no evaluation of any input is made. The idea is to let one idea fire off another idea.

With catalytic questions, the non-evaluation rule means that the group does not start offering possible answers to questions which are tossed out. The purpose of the conversation at this point is to generate questions, not seek answers for them.

The goal is to create a catalytic effect as one question triggers another and another, etc.

This process inevitably surfaces great questions, questions that otherwise might have never come to mind.

Ideally 35 to 50 questions are generated and from them 2 or 3 are chosen to be the normal Challenge question.

Some great Challenge Questions

These are all just starting points, common business questions that have a wide variety of approaches. The key is to build Community and Involvement centred on these questions, guided by the principles of consultation and the values of transparency, equality, inclusion and workplace democracy.

What Questions Should We Be Asking?

Allow the crowd to set the agenda. After all, they're going to be the ones that want to talk and want to share their ideas - let them tell you where to begin.

What do our customers VALUE?

(This question is courtesy of the management consultant, Peter Drucker). This "may be the most important question," Drucker advised. "Yet it is the one least often asked."

This insight is especially relevant in an age where customers have more power and choice than ever before. Unless there is a relentless quest to figure out what they want and need—and the only way to do this is "to go out to look, to ask, to listen," Drucker said—it is easy to be left behind in relatively short order. Think BlackBerry, for example.

"What is value to the customer is always something quite different from what is value or quality to the supplier."

How can we make our Organisation more sustainable?

Sustainability drives innovation. One of the key requirements in organisations today is operating with a minimal carbon footprint. And avoiding waste - which can be defined as *any* activity that does not add value for the customer: a wrong delivery or invoice... something taking too long to deliver... in other words waste isn't just scrap!

How Can We Be Healthier?

In addition to being “green” many companies are looking to source new ways to create a healthier environment for their employees or end product for their consumers. Asking what to do in order to make things healthier is a great line of questioning to begin the discussion.

Who Is Willing to Work on Which Projects?

We are in the age of the micro-volunteer (made easier due to an always-on digital environment). Perhaps there are those in your network who would like to take part in the work that you have to do (the work that they are already discussing). Reaching out to the crowd and assigning ownership to specific tasks is a great way to keep the whole network working with you.

What New services should we offer? How do we develop our existing service offering?

Organisations that look to their consumers first to not just develop a service but let their network know what is happening during each stage of development, will also have a powerful marketing tool on their hands. But remember: communication is key.

What Online Content Do we have to share?

An organisation’s network usually has multiple pieces of collateral that they are going to share digitally anyways. They might as well share them with you so that you take their feedback or promote them if they help spread a valuable message. Sometimes it’s video, sometimes it’s information, sometimes it’s just the voice of your customer or employee - but it can lead to very important materials that become part of the life of your business.

What expertise or experience do you have?

Of What Are You the Expert? An organisation's network is often their most valuable knowledge base, building a responsive, collaborative audience will often create a living archive of knowledge not just for you, but for your whole community. It eliminates redundancies and helps to generate positive feelings among your subscribers.

What Do You Have In Common with Each Other?

Building a profile of the network of employees allows organisations to identify talent and better understand what they have to offer. Allowing a clustered network to form around particularly innovative ideas makes it possible to generate an environment of collaboration.

Here's some more great Questions ...

(All Courtesy of the Management Consultant Peter Drucker).

What is our business, and what should it be?

"Nothing may seem simpler or more obvious than to know what a company's business is," Drucker pointed out in his 1973 yet "the right answer is usually anything but obvious." Why? Asked seriously, "the question causes controversy, argument and disagreement," Drucker noted. "It requires judgment and considerable courage. The answer rarely follows what 'everybody knows.' . . . It should never be made quickly; it can never be made painlessly."

What is the task?

No one ever would have asked this question to a 1950s blue-collar laborer. That's because "in manual work," Drucker observed, "the task is always given": A car rolls down the assembly line, and someone bolts on the fender.

But today, when knowledge work is predominant, tasks can be far more difficult to define.

The key to improving knowledge-worker productivity, Drucker wrote, begins bottom-up ... with asking knowledge workers themselves:

What is your task? What should it be? What should you be expected to contribute? And what hampers you in doing your task and should be eliminated?"

What are your ideas for us to try to do new things, develop new products, design new ways of reaching the market?

More than ever, it's imperative that all employees make innovation a priority, not just the R&D staff or the "new products" team.

The Challenge is thus described: "We are here to listen. I want to hear from you what your aspirations are, but above all, where you see opportunities for this company and where you see threats."

Such gatherings, Drucker added, "are one of the most effective ways to instill entrepreneurial vision throughout the company."

Who in this organization depends on me for what information?

“Each person’s list will always include superiors and subordinates, but the most important names on it will be those of colleagues, people with whom one’s primary relationship is co-ordination.”

This notion rings even more true now, as traditional command-and-control structures slowly give way to more fluid and flexible arrangements at a growing number of enterprises. Asking this question—and making sure that the information you deliver to your peers comes in the right form and at the right time—is a central part of what Drucker termed taking “information responsibility.” *After determining who depends on you for information, the follow-up question is also crucial: And on whom, in turn, do I depend?*

What would happen if this were not done at all?

There’s never been a more apt moment to ask this question, what with every manager these days struggling to preserve his or her most precious resource—time.

In his 1967 classic *The Effective Executive*, Drucker recommended that everyone keep a detailed time log, tracking how minutes and hours are actually spent. Mark down events as they occur; don’t rely on your memory. After three or four weeks, analyze what you’ve recorded and ask what the result would be if a certain activity weren’t undertaken in the first place. “If the answer is nothing would happen,” Drucker wrote, “then obviously the conclusion is to stop doing it. It is amazing how many things busy people are doing that never will be missed.”

Dumb Ideas? Let's encourage them. Dumb things we do? Let's abolish them.

We've all had "dumb" ideas. But some are not so dumb in fact!

Take the publisher who came up with the *Dummies* books back in 1991. I bet lots of his colleagues thought that was a dumb idea. John Wiley, a serious scientific publisher of world renown, selling books aimed at *Dummies*? The very idea!

Now with 200 million Dummies books sold, I guess it wasn't such a bad idea after all.

Dumb Ideas Challenge

At OrganisedFeedback we've come up with our own *dumb idea* and we'd like you to embrace it.

We'd like to suggest that you jump-start innovation by offering an *Amnesty for Dumb Ideas* that exist in your organisation.

And by *dumb* we mean things that no longer add value to colleagues or customers and need to be stopped. *The Dumb Ideas Challenge* is an invitation to seek them out; to hand them in, pile them up, to look afresh at what is done and how it's done and dump what's out of date and doesn't need to be done any more!

Is this a risky thing to do?

No.

That's because with a *Dumb Ideas Challenge*, the CEO introduces it. He or she endorses it, legitimizes it and invites *involvement*. The CEO's invitation throws office politics out of the window and when that happens creativity has free rein. The CEO invites - not demands - employee thoughts on saving time and money and offers an opportunity to talk about things that just should not be done any more or done in that traditional way.

Help / Learn

This is Your Best practice section

This section makes a significant contribution to the *Sustainability* of your ideas Community, such that ideas do not dry up and are also of a high quality. This section can be built over time. That is, you can add Content as required. Its purpose is to offer explanation on how to use the system and also good advice in relation to thinking systematically about identifying areas for improvement. So, it is largely to do with encouraging best practice in thinking, related to waste elimination and ways to identify the best improvement projects.

Meet Tim Wood and other Lean “practices”

Lean is a way of doing things by removing unnecessary steps in processes - known as waste - so that the customer gets the most value.

It focuses on looking at work tasks always as part of a **process** - a connected process in fact, where actions or their consequences don't take place in a vacuum. It encourages clear thinking; it advises all of us *not* to jump to solutions! But rather to think about the problem, to think about its root cause and only then consider and test and evaluate the options for change.

Here's a good quote to make you think:

"If you can't describe what you are doing as a process, you don't know what you are doing!"

Here's some key areas where we can focus to remove waste:

Let's introduce Tim Wood – this is where we can find waste!

Transport
Inventory
Motion

Waiting
Over-production
Over-processing
Defects

Suitable cases for Improvement are often prompted when there's ...

1. Too many enquiries that can't be resolved first time
2. Too much rework
3. Too many complaints
4. Too many things not in your control
5. process steps with long processing times
6. Excessive delays between steps
7. Excessive checking
8. Steps with high inventory
9. Supply chain issues

13. 5 S's

Cleanliness, as we all know. is next to Godliness ...

In simple terms, the five S methodology helps a workplace remove items that are no longer needed (sort), organize the items to optimize efficiency and flow (straighten), clean the area in order to more easily identify problems (shine), implement color coding and labels to stay consistent with other areas (standardize) and develop behaviors that keep the workplace organized over the long term (sustain).



- **Sort** identifies the tools, supplies, and resources pertaining to work performed in a particular area, and removes the unnecessary equipment and items.
- **Set** organizes what's left in a work area to ensure workers find what they need, when they need it.
- **Shine** promotes regular cleaning, inspection, and maintenance; this makes it simpler to spot potential problems.
- **Standardize** records any improvements so they can be sustained going forward, and shared with other teams or departments.
- **Sustain** seeks to maintain what's been accomplished through regular assessment, open communication, and continuing training — and by repeating the 5S cycle, as necessary.

The 5 Whys

5 Whys is an iterative interrogative technique used to explore the cause-and-effect relationships underlying a particular problem. The primary goal of the technique is to determine the root cause of a defect or problem by repeating the question "Why?" Each question forms the basis of the next question. The "5" in the name derives from an empirical observation on the number of iterations typically required to resolve the problem.

The vehicle will not start (the problem)

1. *Why?* - The battery is dead. (first why)
2. *Why?* - The alternator is not functioning. (second why)
3. *Why?* - The alternator belt has broken. (third why)
4. *Why?* - The alternator belt was well beyond its useful service life and not replaced. (fourth why)
5. *Why?* - The vehicle was not maintained according to the recommended service schedule. (fifth why, a root cause)

The questioning for this example could be taken further to a sixth, seventh, or higher level, but five iterations asking why is generally sufficient to get to a root cause.

The key is to encourage the trouble-shooter to avoid assumptions and logic traps and instead trace the chain of causality in direct increments from the effect through any layers of abstraction to a root cause that still has some connection to the original problem. Note that, in this example, the fifth why suggests a broken process or an alterable behaviour, which is indicative of reaching the root-cause level.

It is interesting to note that the last answer points to a process.

This is one of the most important aspects in the *5 Why approach* - the *real* root cause should point toward a process that is not working well or does not exist. A key phrase to keep in mind in any 5 Why exercise is "people do not fail, processes do".

Change means negotiation or how to *Get to Yes*

A new idea implies change.

Because of that people are affected and have their own views and concerns. They may like an idea, but not the changes needed to implement it. Or they hang back to see if others like it. They may not like the idea because they can't envisage it in operation or don't fully understand it.

Of course, they may just be comfortable with the way things are just now, even though in the big picture and in the long run things would be better because of it.

In other words, when it comes to innovation, there are more ways to say No, than Yes.

And if we want to create change, it's worthwhile recognizing that we are all in a period of persuasion. Negotiation and listening is the name of the game!

And *Getting to Yes* is your intended outcome. That's your goal.

Getting to Yes is an excellent book on negotiation by Roger Fisher and William Ury of Harvard University.

It describes 4 principles to reach a goal and get agreement. We highly recommend them:

- 1 - Separate people from the problem to be solved
- 2- Focus on Interests, not positions
- 3- Invent options for mutual gain
- 4- Always use objective criteria