

Utilizing the Wisdom of the Crowd

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I guess you all might be familiar with the book of James Surowiecki ‘[The Wisdom of Crowds – Why the many are smarter than the few and how collective wisdom shapes business, economies, societies and nations](#)’. The book elaborates on the value of, and how to utilize the knowledge within communities to foster knowledge, ideas, initiatives and innovation. It starts with a nice example of a lost submarine in the Atlantic Ocean which is found back after all those concerned are asked to bring ideas on the supposed location.

Gradually, more and more organizations are utilizing the wisdom of the crowds and also consultancy and software firms are cleverly seizing up on that development. This week I coincidentally came in contact with people of [BrightIdea.com](#). A company that offers idea management tools to be implemented on corporate websites in order to encourage community members to come up with new inspiring ideas. Although I really believe in social innovation and co-creating with your customer, I think that any idea management tool won’t deliver the continuous adequate innovation process which are companies looking for nowadays.

Utilizing the wisdom of the crowds is more than generating promising ideas and commercializing them. It’s about generating a platform where communities are really involved and challenged to create, design and develop unique products and services and, at the same time, experience the fun to co-create with their supplier. Please, don’t get me wrong about BrightIdea.com, I think they have done a great job. However I see major opportunities to elaborate on their idea management tool in order to create an even more fascinated way to co-create with your customer, employer or whomever.

- **Fun** | Simply delivering ideas is not that inspiring. Not incentives should seduce potential customers to come up with new ideas, but the opportunity to really co-create and adapt products and services in an interactive and nice way. For instance, in the new [Fiat 500](#) development process were customers involved in the designing, customizing and launching phase in a real inspiring way. It is really fun to customize you own virtual Fiat 500 and give the car the experience you desire.
- **Tempting** | I might even want to say ‘seducing’, because that’s how it should be. The organization should seduce the potential customer to think with him, foster ideas, designs and innovation and at the same time remain the owner of personal ideas. Therefore, a co-creation initiative is tempting when it is transparent and has already reached the critical mass. Think of the several online Lego projects which tempt and involve the youth to share their ideas and designs with interactive and easy software. Honestly, I have to keep myself from downloading the software and design my own lego project this morning! ;)

- **Unique** | Last but not least, co-creation initiatives should be unique. You cannot ask your potential customer to co-create when he (or she) has already done the same ritual with your competitor. In order to involve your customer, you should develop a unique online experience. Make your co-creation initiative distinctive in terms of features, design and communities involved

So basically, the archaic idea management box can be of real value for many organizations on the condition that they are not as static as they've always been. Customers should be seduced in a real inspiring, interactive and unique way. That are the prerequisites for organizations that want to be innovative with their customers' communities on the long run.