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IDEA MANAGEMENT IN THE INNOVATION PROCESS

Viewpoint and
replies on previously
published articles

Keywords

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Abstract

The employees of a company often want to make themselves useful and to make life easier at work by providing potentially useful ideas, aimed at eliminating problems or to exploit the opportunities. Without the ability to obtain new ideas, an organization stagnates, declines and eventually is eliminated by the competitors who have new ideas. To materialize the idea into an innovative product, it is desirable that it corresponds to the company's goals to be achieved with the existing technology and resources in order to reduce the investments. Thus, it appeared the need for an idea management to bring order in the set of ideas and to create a transparent and effective mode in attracting and management of these ideas. This paper proposes, starting from a number of scientific approaches in the literature, to address to the idea management as a complex model and to identify which are those dedicated IT solutions that could help going over various phases and sub-phases of such a complex model, particularly useful for the management of a company.

1. Introduction

Every day, the employees of a company see a lot of problems and opportunities and wish to come up with ideas on how to address them. Usually, there is the belief that the manager must think and the employees must do. Most employees have a lot of ideas and wish to talk about them and to see them implemented. Interestingly, employees' ideas are generated in different places and often these places are not within the company. That was highlighted in an article published in 2010 by the prestigious institute Fraunhofer IAO from Germany which did a classification of places that help the generation of ideas (Rogowski, 2010):

1. Outside the company (76%) that means:
 - In nature (hiking, cycling, climbing etc.) – 28%;
 - At home (eating, cooking, watching TV etc.) – 14%;
 - On holidays/ travelling – 13%;
 - On business trips/on the way to the office – 11%;
 - During the recreational exercises/ At clubs – 9%;
 - Somewhere else – 1%;
2. Inside the company (24%) that means:
 - During boring meetings – 10%;
 - During interesting meetings – 6%;
 - In workplace – 4%;
 - During work break – 3%;
 - When using creativity techniques – 1%.

When the employees' ideas are implemented, they feel involved and appreciated, and it will increase the manager's respect for the employees.

A manager should not hesitate to request ideas from the employees, also from the customers or from the suppliers. In this respect, the study published in 2007 in Germany, conducted by the consultants Frank Lauster and Michael Jünger, on the beverage industry, for more than 100 medium-sized companies with up to 500 employees in various market sectors, showed that the major sources of innovation were represented by customers (78%) and employees (73%), the competition being placed last, mentioned by only 2% of the respondents (Frank & Jünger, 2007).

The way from idea to its successful commercialization on the market, as an innovative product is long and is dotted with various filters, of internal and external nature.

In 1992, Yuzo Yasuda published a book about Toyota's system of ideas, entitled 40 Years, 20 Million Ideas. It is about how Toyota has received more than one million ideas per year from its employees, and has continued this process for over ten years (Robinson & Schroeder, 2007).

In 1999, in Germany, Idea Management was initiated by Deutsche Post DHL for the first time. As a result, DHL has integrated the concept in

about 30 other countries from Europe, the Asia Pacific and America's regions (Deutsche Post DHL, 2014).

In 2010, Deutsche Post DHL received the award for having Germany's best idea management from the Centre of Idea Management at the German Institute for Idea and Innovation Management.

The success of Idea Management at Deutsche Post DHL is represented by the active engagement of the staff. In 2010, more than 214,000 suggestions were submitted, theoretically nearly every second employee from a group of 470,000 persons (representing the workforce of the organization) submitted an idea or suggestion for improvement which were implemented in 2011. In the past decade, it has begun to speak more and more about a new concept namely: idea management (177,000 results after the exact phrase on the Internet) (Deutsche Post DHL, 2014).

Idea Management is the practice of systematically gathering business ideas with the aim of selecting important concepts, with impact, that generate both tangible and intangible benefits for an organization. Idea Management is a structured process of generating, capturing, discussing and improving, organizing, evaluating and prioritizing of valuable insight or alternative thinking that would otherwise not have emerged through normal processes (Karlsson, 2010).

Idea management describes a formal process for the company to request quality business ideas from its employees, and in some cases from its customers and suppliers.

Idea management can be seen as a structured process for the collection, handling, selection and distribution of the ideas. It may include support for gathering, storing, improving, evaluating and prioritizing ideas by providing methods and tools, such as templates and guidelines. Idea management is an integrated part of the innovation process.

The scope can range from being limited to one internal unit or to cover the entire organization, including the external stakeholders, such as customers and partners. Idea management can be time-limited to idea generation campaigns or permanently to handle ideas.

2. Idea management process - Literature review

Idea Management examines aspects related to manage ideas throughout the innovation process.

Idea Management is implemented as a process, supported by software, and it involves a group of process experts, together with the support of the management team and the employees' engagement. According to Summa (2004), the phases of an idea management process include:

Idea generation or *ideation* is the creative process of generating, developing, and communicating new ideas, where an idea is understood as a basic

element of thought that can be either visual, concrete, or abstract;

Idea gathering, where ideas are systematically collected and documented in the idea management database, an organizational memory necessary for the idea evaluation;

Idea evaluation is a critical step in the innovation management, which should be linked with the organization's strategy and vision;

Idea development is the most critical phase in the idea management process, based on cross – functional teams which refine the ideas and transfer them into the innovation process, as a result a formal development project is established;

Idea implementation should be handled in a separate process and continue throughout the whole life cycle of the product. In this phase, the organization can obtain a competitive advantage;

Idea follow-up and rewarding the innovator should always be included in the idea management process. The follow-up of ideas entering the innovation process creates valuable knowledge and should be stored in the organization's memory, to be used for managing idea generation and management processes in the future.

Another way to define the phases of an idea management process is as follows (Iversen et al., 2009):

Inspiring and involvement: it implies a group of people within and outside the organization during a limited time; it defines and presents a certain problem; it distributes information (for example, how other industries have solved similar problems);

Generation and capturing: through brainstorming activities and individually; a web tool is used to describe idea or solution; and the fields are pre-defined in accordance with a specific problem;

Development and enrichment: it is a collective work of adding pictures, comments, links in a web tool; the idea manager plays an important role in facilitating the idea development, such as putting together the similar ideas; only the interesting ideas are selected for prototyping;

Evaluation and selection: the evaluation criteria are established in accordance with a specific problem; a review group evaluate all ideas; the ideas are selected by the initiator of the campaign based on the advice from the evaluation group;

Implementation: the initiator of the campaign is responsible for the implementation of the selected ideas;

Post-implementation learning and feedback: the idea manager conducts interviews with the selected idea owners, the review group and the initiator of the campaign; the idea manager draws up a "Lessons learned" report; the idea manager adjusts the process according to the feedback.

According to Malik (2014), the phases of an idea management process refer to:

Idea genesis and gathering: it implies and encourages participation of all employees. Developing ideas by supporting collaboration, rating, voting. Requesting ideas related to a specific topic. Managers can see the ideas that are being collected and used for the company's benefit for short or long term;

Idea evaluation and selection: it means to share the ideas, experiences and to make decisions in a collaborative manner which can help in developing idea further, recommending it for implementation;

Idea feedback and recognition: the feedback is necessary not only from the other employees but also from the managerial team which has to identify the owner of the idea and to recognize his/her effort;

Idea implementation: the recommended idea is part of current or future innovation activities. Allocating resources to the ideas and the implementation of them. Making successful stories as lessons learned for the organization;

Idea bank: keeping the ideas for future use, it is about the successful ideas and their implementation for learning.

3. Proposal for the process of the idea management

A more complex approach of the idea management process, developed by the authors, comprising the following steps:

Inspiring and involving employees by management: The concern for innovation should be sent to employees by the managers. The aim is to realize that the idea of every employee is important. The message of the managerial team must reach outside the company, to other stakeholders, for example: customers, suppliers, in order to involve them. This step can be completed providing examples and best practices from other industries. The employees should know about the system and the policy of nonfinancial and financial rewarding. Compliance and policy development by the managerial team gives the foundations for generating ideas;

Idea generation: The managerial team should identify several areas of interest for the company and lead the employees to them, in order to identify potentially useful ideas without a limitation of these areas. The company's management should initiate campaigns of the ideas. It is intended that the ideas generated to solve recurring problems and/or exploitation of the opportunities. Techniques are used to stimulate individual and group creativity. The focus is on the involvement of a number of ideas and of a greatest number of the employees. It is recommended that the introduction of new techniques for stimulating creativity to be gradual after the previous techniques have proven useful;

Idea capturing: The employees' ideas have to be recorded and this must be done in a way more

visible to them. The means of capturing ideas include: the dedicated software platforms, the monthly and quarterly evaluation sheets, the boxes for ideas and so on. Using a standard form to outline the details of the idea, it would allow an analysis on the same criteria of the idea by the evaluators, and would be a useful tool;

Acknowledgement of the receipt, establishment and communication of the schedule with milestones to be completed: The employee receives a message, possibly an indicative that proves that he/she is in an evaluation process and he/she is congratulated and encouraged for the effort undertaken. The employee must feel that enters a transparent process, with equal opportunities for each participant, which leads to a result. It is important for the employee to know at what stage is his/her idea;

Building the technologies portfolio: The portfolio of technologies is one of the main tools needed for proper allocation of resources in various projects aimed at materializing ideas. The existence of this portfolio is essential in the evaluation stage of the idea. Curran (2009) pointed out four steps to configure the portfolio of technologies: establishing a database of all the technologies currently in use within the organization, mapping each technology in the database according to its lifecycle stage, analyzing and assessing the technologies in the portfolio, and finally revisiting and updating the technologies portfolio periodically;

Idea refining: The ideas once registered, support further developments, through the possibility of involving other employees by the comments made. The software solutions allow the ideas to be made visible to the other employees. The focus is on identifying those ideas that arouse the interest and the comments of the group. The initiator is interested in forming a team to see the usefulness of the idea and its potential. An idea that supports further developments and, gradually, moves towards the concept phase, allows getting a better result in the evaluation process. It is recommended to include not only rewarding the initiator of the idea. The people, who have contributed to the development of an idea, should be recognized and even to receive a bonus;

Idea prioritization: Through the voting process, both the employees and the top management can reduce the number of ideas, at the most important, so they can spend more time for evaluation. The ideas must be in accordance with the objectives and strategies of the company;

Idea evaluation: Usually, the main criteria taken into account in the evaluation process are: the effectiveness, the originality and the feasibility of the idea. The evaluation criteria are known in advance by the employees. Both technical and commercial factors are intervening in the analysis of the feasibility, such as: the availabilities of the

company (the human and material resources, the existing equipment and technology, the financial resources), satisfying the performance level required by the market, the potential and the market size, the economic and environmental regulations, the probability of the commercial success, the company's image, the product life cycle;

Idea selection: The idea is judged based on each criterion and receives notes from each participant in the selection process. The classification of the ideas is based on global score obtained, also the original ideas, the most feasible or, for example, the ones which obtained a score over the average in terms of two criteria, can be detached;

Building the ideas portfolio: At the end of the evaluation phase, the ideas can be grouped into categories, such as: immediately useful ideas, ideas to be explored in more detail, ideas that constitute a novel approach to the problem, useless ideas, at least for now. In turn, these may be grouped into processes developed within the company. It is good that every idea to be recorded in a database, which allows quantification of the effort undertaken and thus a global picture of the process is obtained. An idea useless today may become useful in the future. Accessing and browsing the database by the employees enable them to come up with new ideas, which are not found on the platform, this leads to financial and time savings for the company's management;

Building the projects portfolio: To achieve performance in innovation, the company must intervene on the possible interactions between the different projects in order to optimize the consumption of the resources. This is done through a project portfolio management, which manages the existing projects making sure that there is a diversity of their ideas, first ideas should not only target specific areas of interest to the firm. It is useful to record the selected ideas that can turn into projects when additional resources are obtained (Khaled & Hadia, 2014);

Idea development: At this stage the focus is on project management. Once selected the idea it goes to the organization of the people that can help its development, to establish alternatives, to provide the necessary resources. It prepares the list of project team members. Depending on the potential of the idea, a multidisciplinary team may be formed, and it should include the initiator of the idea. It seeks to organize independently the project teams. In some cases, it may require some discipline on the process, such as: the existence of terms, checkpoints and stages placed in time which generates filters for passing or not. In these situations, the team members have to understand the importance of these constraints. The project team must be given the permission to make mistakes. It must be acknowledged that these teams can fail early and inexpensively. It is desirable to

have no favourite projects, ideas and knowledge stored or "interdepartmental accusations", which can block the transfer of knowledge and collaboration among departments. The existence of the rewards and incentives for the team members and other participants is very important. It is recommended not to be only one variant of development. Real alternatives must not be removed prematurely, because the beneficiaries can be interested in some of them. Idea development may ultimately bring improvements at the level of a product and/or service, method or process or can refer to something completely new;

Idea implementation: Putting the idea into practice usually involves several people, possibly compartments. This requires good communication and knowledge of the roles. A new idea is implemented successfully; this is one of the definitions of innovation. The purpose of implementation is obtaining value, profit;

Post-implementation, learning and giving feedback: The result of transposition of the idea in practice should be followed up in time. It can see how the idea contributed to the final result. What were the gains, savings due to it? Indicators such as: good ratio of output (for example: revenues, savings) to resources (for example: time, funding) can be used. Some companies go so far that the initiator of the idea receives a percentage of the earnings. The permanent contact with the initiator of the idea and with the development team, the recognition of merit are very important aspects for the success of the future campaigns of the ideas.

4. Idea management software

The tools for the idea management have evolved from the electronic version of the mailbox, to more advanced web-based systems which allow users to share comments, drawings, images and ideas.

Among the benefits of the e-mail for the idea management are counting the ease of use, the low costs, and the wide audience.

The main disadvantages of the e-mail for the idea management are unstructured – it can be submitted in any format; unfocused – it is hard for people to focus on the important business topics; disorganized – ideas become a long chain of letters, difficult to check the evolution of an idea; crushing volume – because of the highly volume of the messages, this mean of communication can cause stress and overwork for those involved; no idea sharing – it is hard to share ideas; and security risk – the ideas can be forwarded easily, causing problem of losing the intellectual property for the company; impossible to evaluate ideas – there is not a platform which can support the evaluators to sort out and comment on the ideas in order to present them in a structured manner (Thomas, 2009).

As it can be seen a system that cannot manage ideas, provide feedback and allow collaboration among employees, it is not desirable in an organization oriented on the innovation process.

The requirements for the idea management software refer to (Summa, 2004):

- possibility to build idea campaigns;
- support for electronic attachment;
- search capabilities;
- ability to integrate with other systems;
- user and group management;
- support for variety of platforms;
- collaboration;
- enable both predefined and ad-hoc reporting;
- alarms/ support for push technology notifications;
- transparent evaluation;
- web access;
- idea classification;
- idea valuation/ scoring;
- process definition/ workflows;
- group submissions;
- problem posting;
- idea development;
- gathering ideas from partners, customers and other stakeholders.

Capterra is a free service which helps the managerial teams to choose the adequate software solutions for their needs of the idea management that will allow the organizations to improve, grow and succeed.

Capterra is a platform with over 300 categories of software for the idea management.

"IdeasMine" is a collaborative idea management software, more exactly, a simple and operational system which gathers ideas from all employees. One of the most important features of "IdeasMine" is simplicity. As a result, it is very easy to start, to understand, and to manage ideas. Nowadays, this is not only one of the best tools to collect the contributions from the company's workforce, but is also the best way to help the management team to implement them for visible, long-lasting and faster results.

The ideas will be defined by the user by category (quality, ergonomics, cost etc.). They will be taken over by a responsible and will successively have the following status: emitted; in study; in progress; and accomplished (in order to provide specific software).

The idea is issued in the chosen category. The responsible of the project receives an information e-mail, then, he/she assesses the validity and admissibility of the idea. Each employee may make a comment. The status of the idea can be modified depending on its progress. A synthesis of the ideas and a dashboard allow having a global vision on the progress of the ideas.

"Vetter Online Suggestion Box" is an online suggestion system that helps companies to get ideas from their team members; the quality ideas are kept, tracked and sorted. The system engages workers, drives innovation and boosts back lines. There is a free one month trial (no credit card required) on all plans but it is recommended a demo to have a view on what the system can do.

"Vetter" is an online suggestion box that helps managers to obtain more ideas from their employees by simplifying comments. The inter-office platform enables users to submit ideas and suggestions, which are vetted, or rated by fellow employees, for approval. Once an idea has been rated by fellow users, the initiator of the idea is revealed to the manager and the idea will be highly considered.

The employees have the option of adding comments to an idea and sharing those comments directly with the manager. In 2012, 94% of the employees within companies that used Vetter's Suggestion System participated in submitting ideas. Then, the management can sort the vetted ideas and it can get a better understanding of what changes the employees might wish to make. The employers can also use "Vetter" to launch Idea Challenges, which alerts the employees when the company is seeking out a creative solution to a specific problem.

With this system, staff can log in and can submit suggestions, and then star ratings are given by their peers. If the suggestion has two stars or more, it means it has been "vetted" and it is passed on to a manager. The initial submission is anonymous, so the staff can be unbiased about the idea, and the initiator of the idea is credited once the idea has been approved.

"JenniUSA" uses the ideas campaign to the innovation process management. The ideas campaigns are structured events designed following creative problem solving methodology combined with business analytics. The result is an effective approach for generating ideas in a collaborative space and then evaluating them in order to identify and combine the ideas with the greatest benefit potential. An ideas campaign is a simple yet effective way to structure the innovation process in order to achieve maximum of the innovation potential over the long term.

Some important features of "JenniUSA" are presented as follows:

Idea submission: The users easily submit ideas on a configurable submission form, also the volumes of text can be edited and there is the option to attach files. The ideas can first be saved as drafts and users can choose to be anonymous. The ideas can be submitted from the mobile devices;

Supporting documents: The images, documents or videos can be attached to ideas;

Idea clustering: "JenniUSA" can automatically cluster similar ideas in order to avoid redundancies by defining keyword search;

Idea edits: The owners of the idea will be allowed to edit their ideas;

Spontaneous Jenni: "JenniUSA" allows submitting spontaneous ideas for the area of interest.

The managerial team can choose the voting scheme that works best. The community can identify the popular ideas through specific algorithms of voting. There are multiple sorting options whereby ideas can be sorted by type, title, owner, date last updated, status.

The managers can create and build proposals from one or multiple related ideas, using tools such as Crystal Report Writer. The users can configure and save the proposal templates and they can email alerts adapted to specific objectives. Also, they can add tags to ideas and proposals for an easy organization and search. In order to avoid repetition, "JenniUSA" has an automatic idea clustering feature with collection folders to efficiently organize any number of related ideas through keyword search.

During the final phase, new evaluation questionnaires can be created. The configurable evaluation forms can meet specific objectives. The complex ideas can be evaluated through multiple rounds of evaluations and track aggregated results. At a time, the invitations can be sent out for one or multiple proposals to evaluators and create new collections.

The Jenni Cloud service customers can post specific challenges to unique problems, they can post a reward for the one who solve the problem, they can analyze popular voting and they can have expert advice on selecting the best ideas. So when people try to solve problems, to meet goals, they do not limit to the problems in their domain. It is desirable to develop an own core of experts from – engineering societies, academia, medical community, even government.

"OpenideaL" is an online idea management system for those organizations who share with their clients strategic decisions and of planning of future products and services. It is a tool for the clients community, for expressing their opinions about these products. "Clients", in the scope of "OpenideaL", may be the employees within an organization, the customers of a commercial entity or the citizens of a municipality.

The aim of the discussion is the customers' idea who are interested in the implementation of this idea by the organization. The ideas can refer to the development of a new product which address to customers with special needs, or can refer to policy decisions and so on. In fact, the ideas can be about the expectations and the hopes of the customers for the organization.

The important aspects of this valuable software solution for the idea management are presented:

Add a new idea: There is a form for creating new ideas that includes: the title, the description, and the category. The form presents similar ideas while they are typed, in order to reduce the similar ideas;

Idea page: The ideas are displayed with: the creation date, the author, the category, the number of comments;

Idea edit: The site administrator can edit all of the idea's details. He/she can apply a "process status", marking it as an idea that worth to be checked, it can block the additional comments, it cannot publish the idea or it can remove it completely;

Comments display: It is about comments from all previous forms;

Ideas tagging: It allows addition of tags from a predetermined list, editable by the site administrator;

"Worth checking out": This is a mechanism to determine the level of the activity around the ideas, using an algorithm which weighs the number of comments, the number of votes, and the time passed since the last activity. The "Worth checking out" component helps the evaluators to determine which ideas are the more successful ones;

Notifications: A member in the website can manage a list of preferred ideas, and can subscribe to notifications from the website. In addition, the user can receive updates on the latest activity over its own ideas;

Voting: It can be displayed the number of the votes and it allows an up or down vote on each idea. Each member can vote one time on each idea;

User points: For each activity on the website (adding an idea, commenting, voting) the user earns points. The number of the points for each action is configurable;

Abuse/Inappropriate content: Any content/comment/user can be flagged as inappropriate. When a configurable threshold of reports has been reached, the site manager receives a notice, and he/she is able to approve/disapprove it, he/she can block a user, or close the discussion for further comments and votes;

Sharing: The ideas can be shared on Twitter and Facebook;

Popular ideas page: The ideas sorted by popularity can be displayed;

Last ideas page: The ideas sorted by chronological order can be displayed;

In-process ideas page: The ideas which have been promoted to any status (by the site managers) and they enable filtering by status; those ideas can be displayed;

Launched ideas page: The ideas which have completed the chain of statuses and are considered "Launched" (at the end of the life cycle of an idea) can be displayed;

User profile page: The user's name and ideas can be displayed;

My page: It displays my name, my ideas list, ideas to which I contributed (voted, commented). Also contains general operations such as Edit profile, password, subscribe to notifications etc.;

Ideas and members search page: Also, the popular search phrases are displayed;

Featured ideas: These are manually selected by the site manager;

Community leaders: The members with the highest number of points can be displayed;

Head to head: It features two selected ideas, and asks users to vote for one of them;

Analysis control panel: It enables filtering the information in various ways, and it creates graphs;

Find and merge similar ideas.

An integrative analysis of the four software solutions is found in Table 1- Appendix.

Choosing an idea management system is the task of a team, which will be created in this scope.

Among the mistakes is counting the team's haste to select from the potential providers of the systems before defining what features and functionality are desired for the idea management system in order to meet the predefined goals.

A critical feature may be missing, such as integration with a Customer Relationship Management (CRM), a Supply Chain Management (SCM) or other system, on which an organization already has.

From the list of the identified software suppliers, the company should focus on three suppliers in the final selection stage and it should do an analysis of their offers, based on a series of internal requirements. In the event that unexpected problems related to additional costs, deadlines arise, there are quick replacement options.

In this respect, it is advised to test the software to see how employees get used to it and how they perceive its usefulness, and to identify the compatibility issues with the legacy systems within the company.

5. Conclusion

The idea management technology is a new type of software for the companies that can make possible the implementation of an innovation strategy. The new web-based applications allow companies to require targeted ideas from all the employees, regardless of their geographic location, and gather them into a centralized online database. Also, the idea management systems provide structured processes for sharing and evaluating ideas, so the managers can quickly identifies those ideas with the highest potential.

The idea management software tools are designed to help the employees to focus on specific business issues within the organizations.

Nowadays, the idea management systems are much easier to set up and administer, because of the databases continuously updated, through managing an evaluation process that automatically reminds the evaluators about the deadlines and the unevaluated ideas.

Sometimes, the smallest ideas can make a meaningful difference. The key is to listen. The worst thing is asking for suggestions, without listening.

The company implies a team to manage the flow of the suggestions among the staff and the departments, and the managers who decide on the valorisation of these suggestions.

Without a circle of continuous communication and feedback, a suggestion scheme can fall. Many software systems may track or renew the status of an idea for the staff and for the managerial team. The public recognition of the good ideas cannot stop only to the financial rewards (Faragher, 2013). An ideas scheme has to be celebrated. When an employee sees another person receiving recognition for an idea, there is the possibility to emulate that. There is a difficulty in demonstrating the return on investment for some engagement initiatives of the employees, but through the revenues generated by the suggestion schemes and the savings made, it can make a real difference.

The idea management systems are working with key metrics, such as the percentage of ideas submitted versus those that have been implemented, reflected by the new revenues generated or the cost savings obtained by the implemented ideas.

It is still difficult to state that there are idea management software solutions on the market that meet a highly complex approach targeting the process of the idea management as it is proposed in this paper, but it is obvious that the software vendors are making major progress in this direction.

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Appendix

Table 1
The comparative analysis of the idea management software solutions

	IdeasMine	Vetter Online Suggestion Box	JenniUSA	OpenideaL
Features checklist				
Activity dashboard	x	x	x	x
Analytics	x	x	-	x
Archiving & retention	x	x	x	x
Brainstorming	x	-	x	x
Collaboration	x	-	x	x
Creator tracking	x	x	x	x
Email notifications	x	x	x	x
Idea ranking	x	x	x	x
Project tracking	x	-	-	x
Status tracking	x	-	x	x
Training	x	-	-	-
Free demo	x	-	-	-
Average ratings				
Overall	VG	VG	VG	VG
Ease of use	VG	G	VG	VG
Customer service	VG	G	VG	VG
The most popular price	N/A	149 per month	N/A	400 per month
Vendor's details	AL Consulting Group	Vetter	JenniUSA.net	Linnovate
Website	www.ideasmine.net	www.getvetter.com	www.jenniusa.net	www.openidealapp.com

Notations:
N/A = Not an Answer
G = Good
VG = Very Good