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# Employee Innovation Using Ideation Contests

## Seven-Step Process to Align Strategic Challenges With the Innovation Process

*A seven-step process can help shape the design and roll out internal ideation contests that align strategic challenges with the innovation process.*

Juan Ramón Campos-Blázquez, Patricio Morcillo, and Luis Rubio-Andrada

**OVERVIEW:** Researchers and practitioners have shown great interest in crowdsourcing for problem solving. Although scholars have developed several conceptual frameworks that outline the fundamentals of crowdsourcing, few studies provide a detailed process to successfully implement it. Our results from a multiple case study comprising four major Spanish organizations that have implemented ideation contests—Madrid City Hall, Sabadell Bank, Endesa, and Repsol Group—show how internal ideation contests can foster a culture of innovation in which employees can feel accomplished and receive recognition by presenting new ideas and innovative possibilities. We present a seven-step process that describes the key analytical and decision-making components required to lead the design and rollout of internal ideation contests for which the goals are to align strategic challenges with the innovation process.

**KEYWORDS:** Internal ideation contest, Crowdsourcing, Intrapreneurship, Culture of innovation, Innovation management

New types of open innovation (OI) (Chesbrough 2003) such as crowdsourcing have become popular in the last decade. Some OI methods enable organizations to benefit from using external knowledge and technologies in their own innovation process. Inputs can come from sources outside the organization, as well as from employees, especially those without a mandate or function to contribute to the innovation process. Such employees do not belong to an R&D or innovation team. Internal ideation contests, a form of internal

crowdsourcing, have evolved to become a core instrument for internal open innovation (Diener and Piller 2013).

Businesses and scholars recognize the value of internal crowdsourcing (Tucci, Afuah, and Viscusi 2018), but its strategic use by organizations remains limited. According to Boudreau and Lakhani (2013, p. 62), “The main reason companies resist crowds is that managers don’t clearly understand what kinds of problems a crowd can handle better and how to manage the process.” We offer some actionable

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recommendations on how to design and execute an internal ideation contest to engage all employees in innovation, and to foster a culture of innovation through changes in behavior (Dahl, Lawrence, and Pierce 2011). In essence, we offer a way to embed innovation into the corporate DNA (Meyerson 2016). We conducted a multiple case study (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007; Yin 2017) in which we examined the experiences of four large organizations that have implemented internal ideation contests. We present a seven-step process to manage such contests, and we highlight several challenges.

### Crowdsourcing

Over the last decade, the literature on innovation management has focused on new models of open innovation that facilitate knowledge exchange among the different actors in the innovation process (Villarroel and Reis 2010). Crowdsourcing (Howe 2006a, 2006b) is one new type of OI that organizations increasingly value for problem solving and for building a culture of innovation. Brabham (2013, p. xix) defines crowdsourcing as “an online, distributed problem-solving and production model that leverages the collective intelligence of online communities to serve specific organizational goals.”

Although crowdsourcing has developed considerably during the last decade, as a concept, it remains under development (Schenk and Guittard 2011) and underexplored. Many taxonomies of crowdsourcing exist in the literature, including explicit and implicit crowdsourcing (Doan, Ramakrishnan, and Halevy 2011), and external and internal crowdsourcing. We focus on internal crowdsourcing (Simula and Ahola 2014) or intra-corporate crowdsourcing (Villarroel and Reis 2010) with employees in an internal ideation contest.

Zuchowski et al. (2016) suggest internal crowdsourcing has several unique characteristics: “The crowd” consists of identifiable employees; competitive and confidential issues can be addressed; and a need exists for change and culture

management skills. Zuchowski et al. (2016, p. 168) define internal crowdsourcing as “an IT-enabled group activity based on an open call for participation in an enterprise.” Villarroel and Reis (2010, p. 2) provide a more complete definition: “Intra-corporate crowdsourcing refers to a distributed organizational model used by the firm to extend problem-solving to a large and diverse pool of self-selected contributors beyond the formal internal boundaries of a multi-business firm: across business divisions, bringing geographic locations, and hierarchical positions.”

An employee ideation contest focuses on the fuzzy front end of the innovation process, so that once employees identify the organization’s challenges, they seek original ideas to solve them. Within an innovative and open ecosystem, certain characteristics make employees ideal candidates for this type of initiative: They are experts in what they do; they know how the business works (Simula and Ahola 2014), what issues arise, and how they are managed; and, if they want to be competitive in their roles, they likely have already carried out part of the market research needed to become familiar with the issues relating to the challenge.

### The Case Study

We examined the experience of four major Spanish organizations that have implemented internal ideation contests: Madrid City Hall, a public institution; Sabadell Bank, a financial entity; Endesa, an electric utility company; and Repsol Group, a comprehensive multi-energy provider (see “Case Firms” on p. 21). We adopted a multiple case study design to find out about what the four organizations’ motivations were, what contingencies they implemented to ensure success or mitigate failure, and what they learned about internal ideation contests.

We created basic profiles of the four organizations’ use of internal ideation contests (Table 1). To characterize the four organizations’ ideation contest initiatives, we conducted a literature review to identify an ideation contest’s main elements. We chose the 10 key elements proposed by Bullinger

**TABLE 1. Basic profiles of the four organizations’ internal ideation contests**

Characteristics	Madrid City Hall	Sabadell Bank	Endesa	Repsol Group
Headquarters	Madrid	Alicante	Madrid	Madrid
Number of employees*	28,872	25,945	10,500	28,000
Year of first initiative	2014	2009	2006	2011
Total number of initiatives*	1	54	6	7
Number of annual initiatives	There was no continuity.**	Between 6 and 8	1	1
Type of initiative	Search for continuous improvements and disruptive innovations	Search for continuous improvements and disruptive innovations	Search for incremental innovations	Search for incremental innovations
Scope of the initiative	All employees	All employees at national geographical level (in Spain)	Depended on the type of challenge	Depended on the type of challenge

\*Data from December 30, 2016.  
 \*\*Change of municipal government (elections in 2015).

## Case Firms

### Madrid City Hall

Madrid City Hall oversees governance of the city and municipality of Madrid. Its only internal ideation contest initiative, *Innovando Juntos*, began in 2013 within a team led by Amaya Gil, deputy director of the Social Innovation Office, and supported by Concepción Dancausa, former general manager of the government area of Economy, Treasury, and Public Administration. With this initiative, Madrid City Hall sought to tap into municipal employees' knowledge, creativity, and commitment to seek new ways to improve government services offered.

From June 16 to September 15, 2014, any employee could submit up to three ideas to the platform in response to the challenge posed. Each idea included the following information: title, category, description of the need identified, description of the idea, and foreseeable consequences of its implementation in public services. During Madrid City Hall's campaign, 209 employees submitted 287 ideas. All City Hall employees could vote on the 20 preselected ideas. Five ideas got shortlisted, and at least three projects got implemented, including the app *Bienvenidos a Madrid* (Welcome to Madrid).

### Sabadell Bank

Founded in 1881, Sabadell Bank is a principal player in Spain's financial system and is a leader in personal and business banking. As Miquel Anduig, the bank's former director of Operational Optimisation and Internal Social Network, said, "The phenomenon of employee collaboration in improving the Bank is part of its DNA, but in an organized way, it was born in 1985, fostered by the previous chairman, Mr. Joan Corominas, and the former general manager, Mr. Joan Oliu." The bank created its collaborative 2.0 platform, known internally as BS Idea, in 2009 in collaboration with a Spanish OI platform provider. From its launch up to 2017, employees submitted more than 21,000 ideas, of which more than 700 received prizes. BS Idea has 350 premium users who submit more than five ideas each annually. As of December 2016, approximately 66 percent of those employees, about 11,800 individuals, with daily access to the platform had participated in BS Idea challenges.

### Endesa

Founded in 1944, Endesa is the leading company in the Spanish electricity sector and the second largest operator in the Portuguese electricity market. The company has almost 10,000 employees and

serves more than 11 million customers. Its main business is the generation, distribution, and sale of electricity. It is also an operator in the natural gas sector and develops other energy-related services. The company's first ideation contest initiative, called Novare, failed in 2006. Afterward, Endesa's leaders explored several questions: How could the company benefit from the collective intelligence of its employees? How could the company get more and better ideas for its business? How could the company select the best ideas quickly and economically? How could it involve employees in the innovation process? Was there a way to maintain innovative momentum over time? Using Eidos Market, the new internal ideation contest initiative launched in 2011, Endesa addressed these questions. In its first campaign, Eidos Market received close to 1000 ideas posted to two simultaneous challenges.

After 5 years of the ideation contest, Ismael Pulido, Endesa's former head of Innovation Culture, commented, "At first it was thought that these types of initiatives were good for everything, then, for a period, some thought that they were not good for anything, but, perhaps the reality is somewhere in between, and from our experience, we consider that they are suitable initiatives for achieving quick-win incremental innovations."

### Repsol Group

Repsol Group began operations in 1987. Repsol Group's companies carry out all activities in the hydrocarbons sector, including the exploration, development, and production of crude oil and natural gas; the transport of petroleum products, liquefied petroleum gases, and natural gas; refining; the production and marketing of a wide range of petroleum products; and electricity generation and distribution activities. Based in Madrid, Spain, Repsol Group has nearly 28,000 employees of 80 nationalities in more than 40 countries. To be competitive and evolve, Repsol Group relies on the ability to generate ideas and put them into practice in an environment of collaboration and continuous learning. The company's corporate entrepreneurship or intrapreneurship program began in 2011, coinciding with the creation of an innovation network of seven nodes that joins its business units and corporate and technology departments. In 2011, Repsol Group launched Ideas in Action, its first internal ideation contest. During the first five campaigns, 13,500 employees submitted 3000 ideas, from which the company selected 433 and elaborated on 94 for implementation. Elaboration entails developing a business case and pilot proposal, which are prerequisites for implementation.

et al. (2010) to compare each organization's internal ideation contest initiatives (Table 2).

## Methodology

We used a method of constant comparison, cycling between data collection, data analysis, and further data collection based on emergent themes (Corbin and Strauss 2008). We employed a methodological triangulation—multiple perspectives to converge on the phenomenon—to validate the data. Between January 2015 and August 2017, we collected evidence from internal and external documentation reviews,

multiple in-depth interviews with key participants, and from physical, technological, and cultural artifacts used to record interviews and produce photographs.

The interviews followed semistructured, open-ended guidelines and took the form of guided conversations rather than structured queries. In other words, although we pursued a consistent line of inquiry, the stream of questions was fluid rather than rigid (Yin 2017). We conducted 21 formal interviews with different participants: 11 at Madrid City Hall, 4 at Sabadell Bank, and 3 each at Endesa and Repsol Group. We interviewed the project manager in charge of each initiative, as well as some

**TABLE 2. Comparison of the four organizations' internal ideation contest initiatives**

Element*	Madrid City Hall (Case 1)	Sabadell Bank (Case 2)	Endesa (Case 3)	Repsol Group (Case 4)
Main goals	Incorporate collective intelligence and experience of City Hall staff to improve public services	Incorporate collective intelligence to detect customer needs and find solutions collaboratively	Benefit from collective intelligence of employees to obtain more and better ideas for the business	Facilitate participation, and encourage commitment and generosity in the form of collective intelligence to stimulate innovation
Media (environment of IT and communication)	Own crowdsourcing online platform + communication plan	Third-party crowdsourcing online platform + communication plan	Third-party crowdsourcing online platform + communication plan	Third-party crowdsourcing online platform + communication plan
Type of challenge (problem specification)	Very generic challenge	Specific challenges	Mixed challenges (generic and specific)	Specific challenges
Participation mode	Competitive	Mixed (competitive and collaborative)	Competitive	Mixed (competitive and collaborative)
Contest period (timeline of participation)	13 weeks**	2 weeks	5–6 weeks	2–3 weeks
Type of innovation (results obtained)	Incremental and disruptive	Incremental and disruptive	Incremental	Incremental
Evaluation (who evaluates the ideas submitted)	Jury	Voting by employees	Invest in ideas (stock market)	Voting by employees
Selection	Employee voting + final selection by a jury	Double filter by two committees	Jury plus business unit	Jury
Reward/motivation (incentive used to encourage participation)	Recognition, training, and possible implementation	Prize for participation (raffle) and prize for the best idea of the year (economic and social recognition)	Recognition + auction mechanism applied to the prizes, where with the fictitious money obtained, it was possible to acquire different prizes	Recognition + possibility that the winning idea can be implemented within the organization
Continuity	Transformation of the ideas into projects by their authors + validation and possible deployment by departments	Participation of the authors of the winning ideas ends with the systematic gathering of ideas. Business units evaluate possible implementation.	Participation of the authors of the winning ideas ends with the systematic gathering of ideas. Business units evaluate possible implementation.	Participation of the authors of the winning ideas ends with the systematic gathering of ideas. Business units evaluate possible implementation.

\*Adapted from Bullinger et al. (2010).

\*\*Determined by summer vacation in Spain (4½ weeks in August).

445 ideation contest program team members and participants. We  
446 conducted separate interviews that lasted around 90 minutes.  
447 We recorded all interviews on an MP4 recorder and transcribed  
448 them verbatim. We also had ongoing dialogue with our main  
449 contact in each organization to clarify any misunderstandings  
450 and to obtain insights by telephone and by email.

451 We also visited each organization's headquarters for several  
452 days. During that time, we held informal conversations and  
453 attended internal meetings where we took detailed notes of  
454 our observations. Our documentation reviews and field notes  
455 were complementary collection methods. Internal sources  
456 included documents such as outlines for submitting an idea,  
457 samples of submitted ideas, winning ideas, and criteria for  
458 ranking ideas and idea selection. We included materials used  
459 to promote the initiative and internal company presentations.  
460 We also compiled information from external sources like media  
461 articles, the organizations' web pages, and external reports  
462 from organizations such as the Spanish Association for Quality.

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465 **Results**

466 Our findings revealed four distinct yet shared reasons to  
467 launch an internal ideation contest:

- 468 1. They encourage all employees to participate in innovation  
469 to obtain more and better business ideas through collec-  
470 tive intelligence. The head of Madrid City Hall's initiative  
471 explained, "What we thought about was how we could  
472 improve the services provided to citizens by taking advan-  
473 tage of the participation and the talent of the public  
474 employees themselves. That was its essence."  
475 2. They allow hidden talent to emerge from within the orga-  
476 nization and identify intrapreneurs. The sponsor of the  
477 Madrid City Hall initiative shared, "In an internal ideation  
478 contest, it can be thought that technicians can be the only  
479 ones who have good ideas. However, this initiative showed  
480 that was not the case as great ideas were submitted by peo-  
481 ple with varied education and from many departments."  
482 3. They favor internal communication, encourage recogni-  
483 tion of employees' ideas, and increase collaboration  
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We identified six components that  
characterize internal ideation contests:  
the challenge, the problem statement,  
governance, the people, the IT  
platform, and the expected outcome.

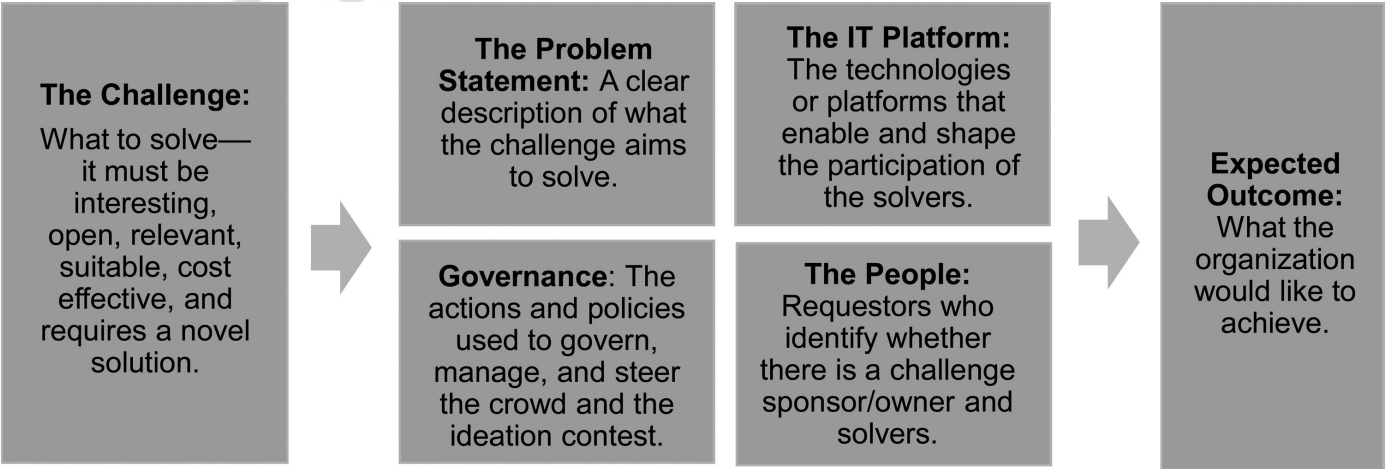
502 between different business units. The director of eMobility  
503 Innovation Global at Endesa remarked, "Communication  
504 is another aspect that has great influence on the dynam-  
505 ization of participation."

- 506 4. They foster a culture of innovation within the organization.  
507 The head of Repsol Group's ideation contest initiative said,  
508 "We are not only seeking economic objectives, but also to  
509 facilitate participation, foster commitment and generosity—  
510 in the form of collective intelligence—changes in behavior  
511 and stimulate innovation, aspects that we consider key to  
512 developing the necessary innovation culture."  
513

514 Although the four organizations we studied are diverse, they  
515 used similar approaches when they implemented the ideation  
516 contests, including creating a program team, identifying a chal-  
517 lenge sponsor, using a specific online platform, and relying on  
518 an effective communication plan as one of the cornerstones of  
519 the contest. The organizations we studied acknowledged that  
520 leadership and people issues (Euchner 2017), as well as issues  
521 that arose while designing the support processes, posed major  
522 challenges.

523 **Cross-Case Analysis**

524 We identified six components that characterize internal ide-  
525 ation contests: the challenge, the problem statement, gover-  
526 nance, the people, the information technology (IT) platform,  
527 and the expected outcome (Figure 1).  
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**FIGURE 1.** Six components of ideation contests

**The Challenge**—Many senior managers in the four case firms did not immediately consider using internal ideation contests to solve their problems. Senior managers identified challenges with selecting suitable problems and drafting problem statements. Miquel Anduig from Sabadell Bank said, “Ideation contests represent a ‘new way of working.’” At Endesa, the head of the initiative said he engaged in “internal marketing”: He held formal and informal meetings in which he promoted ideation contests as an opportunity for the company to leverage internal hidden talents to problem solve.

The leaders of the ideation contest initiatives in the four case organizations knew the costs involved—the communication plan, the posting fees, and the proposed reward. The challenge should meet several criteria: be relevant to the business; aim to address only suitable problems where an ideation contest would be worthwhile and cost effective; target something that requires a novel solution or improves an existing process; and be as open as it is interesting. The greater the number of conditions requested, the lower the volume of ideas submitted. The four case organizations used challenges as a modality for approaching strategic innovation questions.

**The Problem Statement**—This component helps to describe more clearly the challenge the organization aims to address. To draft the problem statements the organization must disentangle problems from their internal organizational or departmental context and incorporate the problem solvers’ perspective (Wallin, von Krogh, and Sieg 2018). The program team and the challenge sponsors must collaborate to translate objectives into idea challenges, so they can get more from employee participants. The problem statement consists of a small paragraph, usually four lines, that explains why the problem is relevant for the company that is presenting the challenge. It also contains keywords that help guide innovative ideas toward the desired outcome (new products, services, business models).

**Governance**—This component comprises actions and policies used to govern, manage, and steer the crowd and the ideation contest. As suggested by Zuchowski et al. (2016), and based on the four cases analyzed, the main crowdsourcing governance tasks are management of corporate culture and change; incentive design; task definition and decomposition; quality assurance; community

management; and management of regulations and legal implications. In ideation contests, the program team, as requestors and organizers, typically performs these tasks.

**The People**—Individuals take on the role of requestors, who identify whether there is a sponsor/owner of the challenge, and solvers. Senior managers assume the role of sponsors; they take budgetary responsibility for the ideation contest initiative and promote the campaign. The sponsor should be at an operational level where ideas get implemented. In addition, company leaders should encourage the commitment of middle managers to ensure they support the participation of employees in their respective departments. According to Dahl, Lawrence, and Pierce (2011, p. 23), “Middle managers play a unique role in the community, since in addition to being participants, they review, prioritize, and implement ideas. In some cases, they also initiate challenges or advocate to senior management for the launch of a particular challenge.”

**IT**—This component refers to the technologies or platforms used to enable and shape the participation of the solvers. It comprises two groups: generic social IT platforms (multipurpose tools such as social networking sites or wikis), and specific crowdsourcing IT platforms (Zuchowski et al. 2016). In the four organizations we studied, a specific online IT platform—generally outsourced to an external supplier for the duration of the campaign—supports all the ideation contests. An organization uses the IT platform to post descriptions of the challenges, present the ideas, and then get employees to vote, before the ideas get reviewed by a specific jury.

**Expected Outcome**—This component refers to what the organization would like to achieve. Multiple outcomes are possible, depending on the type of challenge: product innovation, process innovation, marketing innovation, business model innovation, and organizational innovation. Each type of outcome can range from incremental to radical in nature. In the three organizations with the most experience using ideation contests, we noticed that their campaigns evolved from process improvements challenges to address key strategic questions.

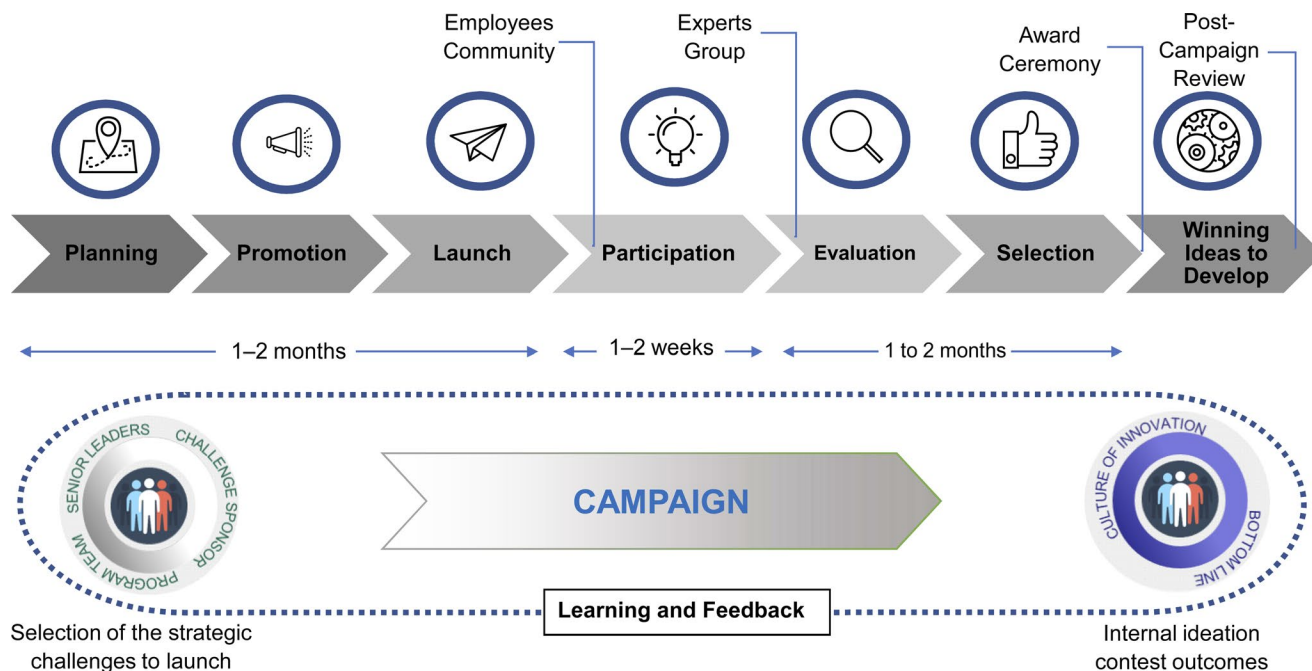
## Seven-Step Process to Align Strategic Challenges With the Innovation Process

Our main conclusion is that an internal ideation contest uses a systematic and focused gathering of ideas that leads to a structured process (Vukovic 2009) supported by the use of a specific online IT platform (Figure 2).

The process comprises seven steps:

1. **Planning:** In this step, the program team does the following tasks: explains the objectives; identifies the number and type of challenges and formulates them with a challenge *sponsor* or *owner*; decides who is eligible to participate; stipulates the time period for presenting ideas; decides who will be part of the jury; establishes the reward model; and defines the criteria for evaluating the ideas,

An internal ideation contest uses a systematic and focused gathering of ideas that leads to a structured process supported by the use of a specific online IT platform.



**FIGURE 2.** Seven-step process to align strategic challenges with the innovation process

and, on occasion, the criteria for the new projects derived from the initiative.

2. **Promotion:** This step is a critical phase supported by a detailed communication plan (Linke and Zerfass 2011). Promotion usually begins 1 or 2 weeks prior to the contest. It includes a campaign (video, leaflets) that outlines the challenge, intranet announcements, and merchandising products (napkin dispensers, postable notes, custom pins, and buttons) with the initiative logo, and inspirational material (market studies, trends, insights) that may also be uploaded to the platform. The communication plan is one of the cornerstones of the contest, as it encompasses the whole process, invigorates employees, and encourages participation.
3. **Launch:** On the challenge(s) launch day, each employee receives an email inviting that person to participate. The organization also usually has a presentation of the challenge(s), including information about the launch.
4. **Participation:** This step begins with a *divergent* phase, the objective of which is to obtain the greatest possible number of ideas. The organization encourages all employees to present ideas, whether they have a corporate email account or not. For example, Repsol Group provided alternate means for employees, such as gas station workers, who do not have access to the Internet at work. A telephone service was available so they could submit their ideas. The ideas submitted should include the following: the author's name and title; the description of the idea, including what challenge it aims to solve; the expected results of its implementation; and, in some cases, additional documentation. The presentation of ideas usually lasts from

2 to 6 weeks (Boudreau, Lacetera, and Lakhani 2008), but there is a tendency to shorten this period. According to the Sabadell Bank, Endesa, and Repsol Group program teams, usually 99 percent of the winning ideas correspond to ideas submitted during the first week.

5. **Evaluation:** This step is the convergent phase, which can take place during the presentation of ideas or at a later stage. Depending on the online platform's features, employees can vote for their favorite ideas or invest virtual money (like Endesa used). A jury, which usually consists of a small group proposed by the program team, completes the first peer review (Bullinger and Moeslein 2010) using a series of simple, clear, and weighted criteria—namely, novelty (originality), appeal (potential for the business), and feasibility (possibility of making it happen). The factors of novelty and appeal tend to have greater weighting.
6. **Selection:** Once the jury chooses the shortlisted ideas, an organization's steering committee created for the occasion usually selects the winning idea(s).
7. **Winning Ideas to Develop:** In this step, the winning ideas get developed. This step can last up to 1 month. We observed that the development of winning ideas varied in the four organizations we analyzed. In the Madrid City Hall case, employees who had submitted shortlisted ideas received training to convert their ideas into projects and to subsequently present them to a jury. In the case of Repsol Group, the authors of the winning ideas decided how much they wanted to or could be involved in the rest of the innovation process; if they decided to be involved, their dedication varied. For Sabadell Bank and Endesa, the phase of transforming ideas into projects, and their

subsequent validation, are the sole responsibility of the business unit where they are likely to be implemented.

Reward is an important element to encourage employees to participate. The main incentives for participants are to let them contribute to something that matters, the possibility of gaining extrinsic outcomes such as money and reputation, and the possibility of their idea being implemented. The number of winning ideas varies. Awards can range from inspirational ones, such as donations to a charity, to training courses, to simple monetary prizes, such as gift vouchers (Boudreau, Lacetera, and Lakhani 2011; Boudreau and Lakhani 2013; Piller and Walcher 2006). According to one interviewee, "The best reward, along with recognition, is the implementation of the winning ideas."

A *postcampaign session* takes place, in which the program team compiles everything learned from the campaign and identifies key success factors and areas for improvement.

### Ideation Contest Outcomes

The four organizations we studied realized remarkable results from their internal ideation contests. The internal ideation contests have helped the organizations develop a culture of innovation and have positively impacted their bottom line. The four organizations realized incremental and disruptive innovations. Sabadell Bank obtained the most significant result—namely, a new financial service that has provided it a benefit of between 1.5 and 2 million euros year after year.

Internal ideation contests have helped the organizations build a culture of innovation by squashing the idea that innovation occurs only in research centers and innovation departments. Internal ideation contests encourage participation, create an environment for collaboration, provide a favorable climate for communication between departments, and leverage collective intelligence, thus stimulating an entrepreneurial spirit within the organization.

In the initial campaigns, some of the challenges did not produce value. The program teams identified three main reasons why: They failed to work out the framing of the problem adequately with the sponsor (it was too generic to produce actionable ideas); the design and execution of the communication plan were poor; and they failed to involve middle management.

Sabadell Bank, Endesa, and Repsol Group continue to rely on internal ideation contests. They have adopted a test-and-learn approach, which has helped them to reflect during the postsession campaign on what worked, what didn't, and possible improvements. The test-and-learn approach allows the program team to identify strategies for continuous improvement.

### Conclusion

Through our analysis of the four organizations that use internal ideation contests, we identified a seven-step process that has great practical value. Organizations can use the design and rollout of these initiatives, and thereby align strategic

challenges with the innovation process. While no methodology can guarantee success, a strong methodology can provide a feedback loop for continuous improvement and learning. We recommend that managers considering using an internal ideation contest encourage their employees to act as true innovation agents. The key to success lies in training and supporting effective teams of professionals so they know how to analyze, interpret, and adapt an initiative in line with lessons learned during implementation.

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