WAZOKU

Evaluating Ideas

➔ The importance of evaluation

Often, when tasked with having to innovate, companies make the mistake of believing that idea generation is the only area that needs focus. While this is important, the evaluation of those ideas proves to be as crucial in ensuring that innovation processes deliver positive results.

In this guide, using Wazoku's experience in running innovation programs with our customers, we'll outline the aims of evaluation and look at where evaluation fits into the innovation process. We'll also share some tips that we've discovered along the way, in terms of both personnel and criteria, as to how to optimize idea evaluation duties.

➔ What is the purpose of evaluation?

In simple terms, the purpose of an evaluation is to decide which ideas are progressed through an innovation process and which are rejected. It is the quality assurance of the innovation world, put in place to make sure that investment of time and personnel isn't wasted on ideas that offer no benefit to an organization.

One of the main reasons that existing innovation programs deliver negligible results is because the evaluation element was being overlooked. As part of Wazoku's Challenge-Driven Methodology, it forms part of a process proven to deliver results that companies wouldn't have achieved otherwise.

➔ Where evaluation fits in the innovation process:

The question of where in the innovation process to evaluate is a tricky one. It isn't a one-size-fits-all recommendation, and its positioning often depends on some of the following factors.

It's vital to understand that evaluation isn't just a Yes/No decision made at the end of a Challenge. Typically, it's a more staged process that involves different stakeholders at different intervals. This staged process features an initial filtering stage to ensure duplicates or incomplete ideas don't progress, followed by a more considered selection later.

> **Effective evaluation is crucial to the long-term success of any innovation program**

It's also customizable, in that it can adapt to the different kinds of Challenges being run or the different kinds of ideas being searched for. For example, if a business is looking to explore new goods or services, the evaluation stage would come at a different point than if they were looking to optimize their existing ways of working.

Peer Evaluation

Internal and external crowds aren't just there to contribute ideas. Increasingly, these crowds are being utilized to evaluate ideas as well. This is known as peer evaluation.

In recognizing that ideas can and should come from anywhere, the same can be said of who is involved in the evaluation stage. After all, those directly affected by the implementation of any new idea are best positioned to recognize its potential effects.

These evaluations don't have to take the form of extensive feedback or conversations with other evaluators. The Wazoku platform, as an example, supports users' ability to rate or vote on ideas that they like or dislike. This produces an element of prioritization for management and an understanding of how widely an idea is supported.

Selection Criteria

The final element to plan is the criteria against which proposals are judged. This must be discussed before a Challenge goes live, as ideally these selection criteria will form part of the initial brief that users build ideas around.

The kinds of questions that should be considered here include:

What are the critical criteria for taking an idea forward? For example, the time needed to implement or the budget required to deliver.

Which benchmarks already exist relating to feasibility? If an idea has failed in the past, what has changed that would allow it to succeed now?

Once these selection criteria have been established, a method of consistently evaluating ideas should be created. A tactic that Wazoku has seen prove useful is having a rating system. Divided into different sections – budget, timescale, priority – this system means that all ideas are judged to the same standard, and they all must achieve a certain 'score' before they can progress.

About Wazoku

Wazoku is a pioneer in open innovation, crowdsourcing, and innovation at scale. For more than two decades, we've been helping our clients deliver sustainable and scalable innovation practices. As both for-profit and for-purpose, our software and expertise have been used to gain competitive advantage and overcome humanitarian crises around the globe, all of which are underpinned by the belief that anyone can be an innovator.

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