



*A series of tips that will
improve your performance
at work in no time!*

Idea Management: Where Do Ideas Come From?

Susan Cain, Ed.D., *Co-founder at The Corporate Learning Institute writes about ideas and their Origin, and how ideas can be managed.*

While management often has lofty ideas, it is the employees who are on the front lines, running day-to-day operations who many have more ideas that create innovation and breakthrough products and services.

Their ideas have transformed many businesses (Post-it notes were developed by 3M employees – not management). Yet, most businesses leave the innovating to upper level managers – and ignore the value of exploring the great ideas in employees' minds. As a result, many innovative ideas go undiscovered.

Fortunately, there is a solution: idea management. Idea Management is a structured process for capturing ideas from across the work force and evaluating those ideas in order to determine which have the greatest potential.

At CLI, we often start groups with an explanation of where good ideas come from, and then introduce the concept of structured idea management and then ask them to participate in an idea management process. We suggest the following steps for structured idea management:

1. Name an issue, challenge or problem to solve or tackle.
2. Give participants a stack of 5-20 notecards.
3. Ask participants to list one idea per card for solving the problem or tapping into an opportunity. Allow 5-10 minutes for participants to record their ideas.
4. At the end of the allotted time, pair participants up to merge cards—eliminating the less desirable ideas. Set a limit on no more than 10 idea cards total.

5. Then have the pair join another pair to merge ideas, and so on until the entire group is huddled around a final choice of their favorite ideas-between 5-10 top contenders.

6. Rank the best ideas: Ask the group to place checkmarks next to their top 3 favorite idea cards.

Take a look at the remaining ideas, and see the number of checkmarks to rank the order of importance for the idea cards.

Helping groups discover where good ideas come from is important and is a very important exercise for increasing innovation, creativity and ownership.

CLI provides coaching, training, and strategic planning services to help your business grow. Contact us for more information on using Idea Management within your organization. Visit us at www.corplearning.com.