**Why do ideas get selected? Idea selection in an online ideation platform**

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**Abstract**

Organizations increasingly implement dedicated web-enabled systems to support the generation, development and evaluation of ideas generated by their employees (van den Ende et al. 2014). These online systems enable more open and collaborative approaches to ideation, as diverse and distributed employees are provided not only with the possibility to initiate new ideas, but also to virtually interact and collaborate among each other to further develop them. This suggests that not only initiators but also contributors to ideas - employees who provide inputs directed at further improving them – might play a crucial role during the idea maturation process because they bring their own competences, expertise and prior experiences in play (Deichmann and van den Ende 2014). While current innovation literature focuses on how to generate variation by expanding the choice sets of ideas organizations can work with, little attention is placed on understanding what happens after an idea is generated. In particular, little is known about the maturation process occurring after an idea is submitted on an ideation platform - where contributors engage in discussing it - and how this affects its selection. This study addresses this research gap by examining the factors affecting organizations’ decision to select a given idea (or not) for further consideration. In particular, whereas prior studies investigate the effect of particular structural characteristics of employees’ interactions on ideation performance (Bjork and Magnusson 2009; Bjork et al. 2011), I focus on exploring the effect of two key factors which have been quite overlooked by current research: (1) the heterogeneity of contributors to ideas and (2) the characteristics of the ideas themselves. First, I argue that contributors’ diversity may play a crucial role in the ideation process, due to the possibility of creating virtual discussions around ideas spanning various boundaries within an organization. Such diversity may constitute an important lever for generating valuable inputs to improve initiated ideas as well as reflect interest from diverse ‘others’ within the organization, hence increasing their chances of being selected by organizations for further consideration. I thus explore the effect of contributors’ diversity on idea selection by considering both contributors' individual characteristics (i.e. functional assignments, geographical locations and status) and the quality of their comments. Second, I argue that organizations’ decision to select an idea is also influenced by the characteristics of the idea itself, such as the type of idea, the degree of elaboration (length) and the positive/negative sentiments expressed by the submitter in the idea description. Based on a rich and extensive dataset of 726 ideas and 2925 comments submitted on an online ideation platform of a large Danish firm over the course of 16 months, I employ a probit model to explore the effect of these two factors on the likelihood of an idea being selected. This database includes records of both selected and rejected ideas and related employees’ discussions. In addition, I match platform data with the organization’s human resources records to obtain employee-level information in relation to their functional assignments, geographical location and position in the formal hierarchy (status). I find evidence to support that both the characteristics of the idea itself and contributors’ diversity contribute to increase the chances of an idea being selected for further consideration. The contribution of this study lies in developing theory about the communication structures that emerge around an idea after it is submitted, when other employees engage in discussing it. In particular, my findings show that contributors’ diversity (both in terms of their characteristics and quality of their contributions) play a crucial role in idea selection. Thus, their diverse inputs are important to further mature and refine initiated ideas before their selection. Relatedly, I shed more light on one of the most critical processes in innovation, the idea development, which has not received much attention up until now. Finally, this study shows that certain characteristics related to the way an idea is formulated on the platform as well as its content also have a significant impact on idea selection. Implications for both innovation management research and practitioners are discussed.

**References**

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