



Witt-Gruppe

Modern idea management with an efficient software solution



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The company

- One of Europe's leading textile mail order companies for the target group 50plus
- Since 1987, this traditional company has been part of the over 100 year old Otto Group and has a staff of 2500 employees
- Around 11 million customers all over Europe. The annual turnover amounts to about 644 million Euro according to IFRS (2011/12)
- Goals are the expansion of the company's top position in existing business segments and the investment in new markets and ideas

The challenge

- High competitive pressure and dynamically changing markets require the transfer of know-how and innovations
- Diversity of staff from logistics experts to IT-specialists
- Employees would like to have the opportunity to contribute and discuss ideas
- Little experience in the retail market concerning idea management

The outcome

- Implementation of a corporate-wide, modern idea management program with HYPE
- A central idea platform for all kinds of ideas
- High popularity of the idea platform within the Witt Group
- Steady improvement of the idea quality (conversion rate at 10%)

The Initial Situation

The promotion of innovations and ideas from employees is an integral part of the Witt Group's corporate principles. In this context, an employee survey on innovation capacity was carried out in 2008. The result of this survey clearly showed that the employees of the Witt Group were looking for further options to submit ideas easily, quickly, and efficiently, as well as to participate interdepartmentally.

Furthermore, the Witt Group employs many young people, who, in their private life, are used to working with web 2.0 technologies and communicating via social networks. Therefore, the platform had to meet the demands of the young employees regarding function and "look and feel". To keep the access barriers low for all employees, it quickly became clear that the new tool had to be integrated into the already existing intranet of the Witt Group and also had to offer a high degree of user-friendliness.

The Solution

In January 2009, the department "New Projects", headed by Max Otto, was commissioned to establish a corporate-wide, modern idea management system. The goal was to utilize the potential of the employees and to raise awareness about the importance of collecting ideas from all employees – regardless of their position within the organization. After a six-months phase of concept elaboration and market research, the team decided on the software solution from HYPE.

Every employee is now able to submit suggestions of a monetary or non-monetary nature on the intranet-based platform, as an individual or team. The generation of ideas on a modern web 2.0 surface enables the contributors to see other ideas on the platform, to comment, and to rank them. The motivation to participate is increased by a playful approach, which allows users to collect points for different activities. Another important factor for the platform's success is the internal

"The decision was made in favor of HYPE, since HYPE provided the opportunity to implement web 2.0-elements such as discussions, comments, and user votings according to our visions, and because the compatibility with Mac was ensured. In addition, the chemistry was right between the contact persons on both sides from the very first day."

Max Otto

Co-initiator of the Witt program



marketing. Witt developed a suitable name (“Witti.dee”) and a mascot (“Witti”) for the platform, which are used for all marketing actions on and offline. “Witti.dee” is not only promoted by posters, advertisements, and web banners, but also by a public award for the best providers of ideas at a top management conference. There is also a presentation of implemented ideas at events, in the employee magazine, and in the intranet.



Witti – The mascot of “Witti.dee”

Project Preparations

Since the Witt Group had little experience in idea management and as the system was planned to be rolled out successfully company-wide, a lot of work had to be invested in the prior development of a concept and a process. For this purpose, other organizations such as Deutsche Post, Continental, and BayWa, each with years of experience in idea management, were contacted for interviews on their insights and their beliefs regarding the most important factors for a successful idea management. From the answers of the analyzed enterprises, Witt derived the basic direction for their idea management. On this basis, Witt searched for the right tool and decided upon the most suitable from eight software providers. As the project group had already developed a concept for Witt’s idea management, and thus had a clear vision of what they wanted, the adaptability of the HYPE process and the product design were persuasive arguments for the HYPE solution.

Details of the Platform

In terms of design, the HYPE platform was adjusted to the intranet site of Witt and is reachable quickly and without a manual login thanks to single sign-on. The global menu structure of the intranet presence is accessible from every page of the idea management platform. Consequently, the employees perceive the tool as an integral part of the website.

Ideas may be submitted ad hoc as well as related to subject-focused idea campaigns which are always created by a department manager. After the submission, the ideas first reach the status “Idea Workshop” where they can be seen and discussed by other users. The contributors are able to revise their ideas, for instance based on hints from the discussion, before the idea reaches the review phase. The transfer from the “Idea Workshop” to the review phase is carried out by idea managers, who, among other things, appoint the evaluator in charge of the idea.

The ensuing evaluation of an idea by the evaluator can be carried out directly on the platform as well. If an idea is accepted, it is sufficient to conduct a rough benefit calculation and designate a person to be responsible for the implementation. If an idea gets rejected, the evaluator

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is required to indicate his reasons.

The employees receive reward points for the submission as well as for the realization of an idea. The ranking always shows which employees, teams, or departments are currently the most engaged in the program. Once per year, the most successful participants and teams are rewarded financially and materially on the basis of these points – the best teams being awarded with the “witti.dee” challenge cup as more of an idealistic prize. In addition to that, prizes are distributed among the participants of idea campaigns throughout the year, which ensures a boost in the generation of ideas.

A special function within the Witt system are the “call-ups” which, like a little online brainstorming, allow for a quick and loose idea collection from all employees. Of course, these ideas can be commented on and discussed as well.

The Outcome

The idea management platform has been in use for almost three years now and has achieved a high level of awareness within the enterprise. After the characteristic, large wave of ideas within the first six months, the participation rate and the number of submitted ideas were higher than average, but the quality and the turnout quota were comparatively low. In the meantime, the quality of ideas has improved remarkably and the number of participants leveled off to the “normal” six to eight percent; the average conversion rate amounts to about 10% at present.

Max Otto: **“The HYPE platform supports us at Witt in gathering ideas for the reduction of costs, for the increase of profit, for problem solving and for the acceleration of processes. The employees are integrated into the idea process and their voice is heard. Furthermore, employees from all our subsidiaries are able to participate.”**



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