



Seeing tomorrow's ideas...Today

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consulting

Vol. 6, No. 7, July/August 2009

Focus on Innovation

Focus on Innovation is a monthly electronic newsletter designed to provoke thoughts and ideas on how to bring innovation to life within the organizations in which we work.

For Those on the Run

From designing ad campaigns to vetting new product ideas to solving difficult problems, the Internet can serve as a powerful resource for innovation. This month's newsletter points to a variety of online tools available to help with the innovation process.

Online Innovation Tools

"There are some basic differences between the pre-Internet innovation networks and the Internet-enabled collaborative innovation networks of today. Members of innovation networks of the pre-Internet age had a fundamentally different attitude toward authority, transparency, and meritocracy. But the biggest difference is the existence of the Internet, which gives today's community members immediate global reach at very low cost; it allows teams to collaborate at a level of transparency never before possible."

- Peter A. Gloor, 2005

Today's technology makes it possible to enlist ever-larger numbers of non-technical people to do ever-more complex and creative tasks, at significantly reduced cost. The Internet can be a powerful resource for any innovator, and there are a variety of online tools available to help with the innovation process. Although this list is not all inclusive, here are a few websites worth checking out:

In General

- [InnovationTools](#): a website designed to help busy executives to be more innovative in their businesses is like a "one-stop shopping" website on innovation.
- [Creating Minds](#): A list of tools for creating ideas, either individually or with other people.

Opportunity Identification

Identifying opportunities to innovate and for finding areas of need and untapped demand can be challenging, here are three websites that might help:

- [Trendwatching.com](#): Learn about trends happening in the business world today that you could align yourself with to take advantage of their popularity. Every trend highlights the

opportunities for business that lie within.

- ePinions.com: Reading consumers' reviews and complaints about certain products tells you which problems could be valuable to solve.
- PewResearch.org: An incredible database of research polls conducted across dozens of categories on hundreds of topics. Their reports uncover trends that can be used to pinpoint new opportunities.

Brainstorming

Once you have identified opportunities, the next step is to brainstorm solutions to address that need. Whether you use open innovation or internal resources, there are many good websites to help you:

- **Online communities for innovation ('crowdsourcing')** are beginning to become an important platform in which groups form to (collaboratively) develop radically creative ideas. Crowdsourcing can be looked at as an application of the wisdom of crowds concept, in which the knowledge and talents of a group of people is leveraged to create content and solve problems (to learn more about crowdsourcing read [Wired 14.06: The Rise of Crowdsourcing](#)). [Wikipedia](#) is one of the best known examples of the concept at work. Online open innovation tools include:
 - IdeaJam.net: IdeaJam is a place where people can post and share their ideas, and gauge the marketability, popularity and viability with input from others.
 - IdeaScale.com: IdeaScale offers a way for companies to solicit ideas and allow customers to rate, discuss, and brainstorm for the company.
 - BrainReactions.net: BrainReactions.net can be used to survey your target audience asking them what new products or services you could create for them. Private online brainstorming rooms are also available to brainstorm ideas with whoever you want to invite.
- [Creative Whack](#): Creative Whack is a marvellous online adaptation of Roger von Oech's popular Creative Whack Pack card deck, which is in turn based on the author's two best-selling creativity books, *A Whack on the Side of the Head* and *A Kick in the Seat of the Pants*. When you visit this Web page, it randomly displays one of 64 creative whacks, complete with the whimsical illustration from the card deck. If you click the refresh button in your browser, another creative whack will be displayed.
- [Watizit](#): An online version of an idea-generating technique called brainlining. Developed by Dave Dufour, a speaker and creativity expert, Watizit uses ambiguous graphics to push you to generate free associations, which can then be used as creative triggers to help you solve your problem.
- [Mindjet](#): online tool for mind mapping and interactive visual collaboration. People can work individually or collaborate in real-time to organize, manage, and communicate ideas and information while solving real business problems.

What's the Bottom line

Online innovation tools may, if managed correctly, increase companies' innovation outcomes considerably, even though they can not yet be considered a full substitute for interpersonal creative activities.

This newsletter was adapted from two online articles: *Online innovation tools* by Anand Chhatpar, CEO of [BrainReactions LLC](http://www.brainreactions.com) and *Free creative thinking tools on the Web* by Chuck Frey creator of <http://www.innovationtools.com/index.asp>.



Please feel free to pass this newsletter on to others.

If you would like more information about the ideas and topics listed in this issue, contact Judy Laws, Ph.D. at jlaws@foursightconsulting.com.

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