Call for Cooperation

Creability: On-demand Creativity and Innovation Capabilities for Teams

A HSG Best Practice Project on Team Creativity through Visual Techniques

Prof. Dr. Martin J. Eppler, Martin.Eppler@unisg.ch, www.mcm.unisg.ch   September 1st 2011

1. Project Goal

With this project we aim to identify, evaluate, and deploy the current *best practices in group creativity tools* and help organizations *use* them effectively for their diverse teams and innovation efforts. In the project we will give special emphasis to a new generation of (analytical) creativity techniques that rely on visual support and take real-life innovation constraints into account. Application contexts for these tools are strategizing, product, service or business model innovation, project management, and business development.

The following questions will be addressed in the project:

1. What are the best, proven, state-of-the-art creativity techniques that can be easily applied in every day group tasks? What are their underlying principles?
2. How can these techniques be used without extensive prior training or elaborate infrastructure?
3. How can their immediate success be evaluated?
4. How can some of these techniques support virtual teams in their online idea generation?
5. Which factors determine the sustainable implementation success of these techniques?

These questions will be addressed in close cooperation with corporate partners; their own priorities, challenges, and application contexts will be integrated tightly into the project scope.

2. Benefits of the Project for Participating Organizations

If a company decides to join this project as a partner, it will profit from the following services, results, and insights:

1. Know about the pitfalls and disadvantages of traditional brainstorming and clustering techniques and how to overcome them through visual techniques, such as Ideafireworks, Ideaquarium, Paths to Success, C-Sketching and others.
2. Have access to a ready-to-use toolbox of proven creativity tools and techniques and on-demand coaching support to apply them.
3. Acquire train-the-trainer knowledge and material to convey the essence of these tools to others (i.e., team leaders)
4. Develop creativity as an organizational *capability* that can be used in any context (even online) without great setup costs.
5. Exchange experiences with other companies on the effective use of visual creativity tools for management, engineering, or design teams.
6. Show the benefits of creativity tools to upper management through rigorous ex-post evaluation.

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In addition to these benefits, the project also can also enable the corporate partners to kick-start or continue an internal community of practice on creativity techniques and thus further foster creativity as an organizational capability in their company.

3. Project Approach: Staged Phases
The project methodology that we will follow consists of five sequential steps. These five steps are:

1. Identification and evaluation of best practice creativity techniques through a literature review, expert interviews, case studies, and testing
2. Pilot sessions with creativity tools with partner company teams
3. Evaluation and follow-up of team creativity sessions
4. Design of an on-demand creativity toolbox and method set
5. Training and deployment package for the corporate partners of the best techniques and principles

In parallel to these five steps there may be bilateral meetings with corporate partners based on their specific innovation needs.

4. Cost, Staffing, Duration and Partners of the Study
The total cost associated with this project is 80'000 CHF. With this amount of external funding, we can setup a team and cover the expenses associated with the project. These costs will be covered through *four corporate partners* that contribute **20'000 CHF** each for the project. The partners will come from different industries to ensure lateral learning and a competition-free discussion environment. The project's duration from initiation to completion is **ten months** and is envisioned to start in **January 2012**.The partners will meet at least three times in workshops to learn about best practices and exchange their ideas and experiences.

5. Prior Experience and Expertise of the Project Team
The project is managed by the Chair of Communications Management at the University of St. Gallen, Prof. Dr. Martin J. Eppler and his team. The team has conducted several creativity-oriented projects with profit and non-profit organizations. Books on creativity methods by the team include *Sketching at Work*, *Wissenswege* (Ways of Knowing), and *Management Atlas*. Their research on visual tools has been featured in magazines such as BusinessWeek or the Harvard Business Review.

6. Contact and next Steps
To know more about this cooperation opportunity please contact martin.eppler@unisg.ch directly for a discussion on the project and what it can do for your teams and their creative problem solving, innovation, and idea generation capability.