

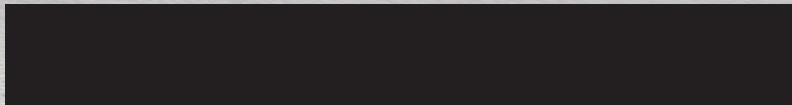
BY CHAD WATT



TECHNOLOGY REVIVES THE IDEA CONTEST AT POLARIS

Polaris Industries (NYSE: PII), the maker of ATVs, snowmobiles, and related vehicles, initiated a 10-year plan in 2008 to boost sales and net income margin by focusing on its customers and innovation. Even before the start of the push, the company had hosted idea contests, which initially required paper submissions.

To reinvigorate its idea contests, Polaris turned to Microsoft SharePoint and innovation software engine Spigit to improve engagement. After implementing that system in 2012, Polaris received 249 ideas, up from an average of 120 per year in prior years. Further, Polaris employees increased their collaboration, voting on good ideas and offering suggestions to improve submitted ideas.



THE SUPER-ADHESIVE THAT DIDN'T STICK

The glue on the back of 3M's (NYSE: MMM) Post-It Note, was initially deemed a failure. The pseudo-sticky stuff was part of an effort by the chemical and manufacturing conglomerate to make a super-adhesive.

The Post-It glue didn't stick for that application, but, thanks to 3M's longstanding practice of allowing employees 15 percent of their time for creativity, 3M scientist Art Fry perfected the product based on an idea that he and a colleague had earlier discussed.

"It wasn't an accident at all," Fry told the Smithsonian Institute in 2008. "It was because we had the division vice president that committed money to develop new products. It wouldn't have happened without that commitment."

STAND UP FOR MEETINGS

Next time you engage another executive or address your team, don't sit down. Meetings can be the most powerful way to energize your employees, or they can be a huge drain on time, resources, and morale. Tips for creating effective meetings abound, but one thing that helps in any context is simply standing up for the meeting. A University of Missouri study from 1999 shows that sit-down meetings were 34 percent longer and produced no better decisions than stand-up meetings. Morning stand-up meetings have become a hallmark of many fast-moving technology businesses.

FROM POSTAGE METERS TO SOCIAL NETWORKS

For Pitney Bowes (NYSE: PBI) to go from its start in 1920 making a newfangled device called a "postage meter" for the US Postal Service to a \$2.6 billion provider of software and hardware focused on document management and shipping, transformation has been crucial.

In the last five years, the company has worked to engage its entire workforce in innovative thinking by applying new technology, including social media, to share, improve, and implement ideas.

The company has deployed two internal online forums to generate new ideas and foster more engagement from the workforce. Since launching its Yammer social networking platform in 2009, more than 6,600 employees worldwide have posted more than 41,000 messages, according to the company website. Its IdeaNet internal web community is built around "idea challenges" giving employees a chance to tackle challenges and implement new strategies.

In its first two years of operation, employees tackled 52 idea challenges and, through 2012, about 1,000 new ideas introduced via the system had been implemented which have generated revenue for the company.

1,000

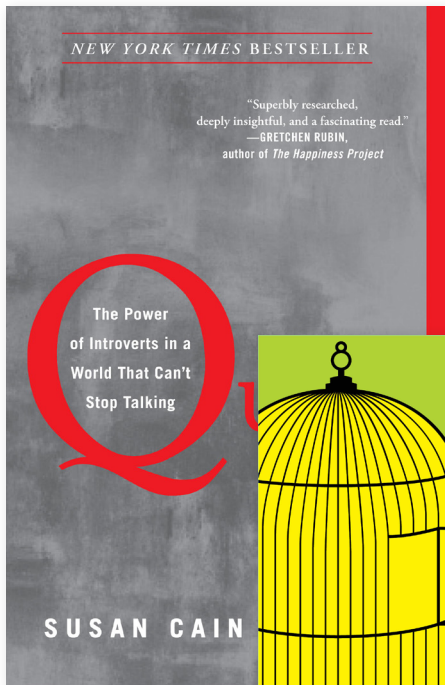
new ideas have been implemented.

A PRIME IDEA GOT ALL THE RESOURCES IT NEEDED

Amazon (NASDAQ:AMZN) struck upon its AmazonPrime service after years of searching for a customer loyalty program that was innovative and different from all others.

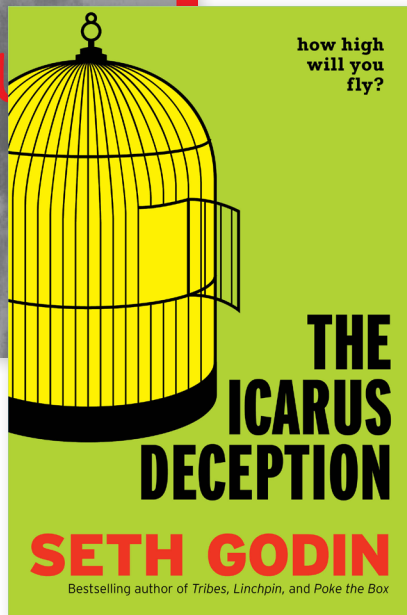
The idea for Amazon Prime came from Amazon's internal online suggestion box and a company software engineer who proposed a free shipping service, according to a 2010 *Businessweek* article on the retail powerhouse's service. Company board members and CEO Jeff Bezos sculpted and improved the idea with Bezos ultimately giving a small team a short deadline and access to all the company's resources to implement the idea before unveiling it on a year-end earnings call in 2005.

Now other retailers, online and offline, have been looking to emulate Amazon's ultimate customer loyalty weapon.



GIVE AN INTROVERT A CHANCE

Author and self-described introvert Susan Cain writes that introverted leaders often deliver better outcomes than extroverted leaders. Research from Adam Grant at the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania shows that introverts are more likely to let their employees run with ideas. Cain writes about the power of introverts in her 2012 book, *Quiet: the Power of Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking*.



WORK AS ART

Author and marketing guru Seth Godin challenges old-school business values of playing it safe, obeying rules, and staying in your comfort zone in his new book, *The Icarus Deception*. He deconstructs the myth of Icarus, that flying too close to the sun and pushing your limits is dangerous, even deadly. Godin challenges readers and leaders to view work as art.

In thinking about art, “good enough” is never acceptable for Godin, who argues that leaders who treat their work as art and strive to create something remarkable will fly higher than Icarus’ father would have ever imagined.

INSTITUTIONALIZING INNOVATION AT IBM

Computing giant IBM (NYSE: IBM) stages innovation-focused events, called “jams” to explore new ideas and focus on solving specific problems. The process of IBM’s jams have evolved since their start in 2001 to more focused and curated discussions, said Liam Cleaver, director of the IBM Jam Program Office, in a company interview.

Innovation Jams in 2006 and 2008 redefined markets and products for the company, but it was the company’s 2003 ValuesJam which was a key inflection point in how employees and managers interact with each other and collaborate to make the company a better place.

At the time, IBM was in limbo, transitioning between its heritage as a maker of business machines and

computers into a software, hardware and services provider. Thousands of IBM employees shared heat and discordant views of the company and where it was headed. As the Jam continued, according to a 2004 *Harvard Business Review* article, the discussion shifted from criticism to construction.

Those thoughts, some harsh, helped newly installed IBM CEO Sam Palmisano move forward with the reinvention of the company.

IBM’s share price today is up 137 percent from the time of the ValuesJam, and the company has extended its Jam methodology beyond the traditional business realm to topics including helping U.S. military veterans excel in college and assisting South Africa in engaging the nation’s underemployed youth population.