Community engineering for innovation: ideas competition as method to nurture a virtual community for innovations

Abstract:
‘Crowdsourcing’ is currently one of the most discussed key words within the open innovation community. The major question for both research and business is how to find and lever the enormous potential of the ‘collective brain’ to broaden the scope of ‘open R&D’. Based on a literature review in the fields of Community Building and Innovation Management, this work develops an integrated framework called ‘Community Engineering for Innovations’. This framework is evaluated in an Action Research project – the case of an ideas competition for an ERP Software company. The case ‘SAPIens’ includes the design, implementation and evaluation of an IT-supported ideas competition within the SAP University Competence Center (UCC) User Group. This group consists of approximately 60,000 people (lecturers and students) using SAP Software for educational purposes. The current challenges are twofold: on the one hand, there is not much activity yet in this community. On the other, SAP has not attempted to systematically address this highly educated group for idea generation or innovation development so far. Therefore, the objective of this research is to develop a framework for a community-based innovation development that generates innovations, process and product ideas in general and for SAP Research, in particular, combining the concepts of idea competitions and
virtual communities. Furthermore, the concept aims at providing an interface to SAP Human Resources processes in order to identify the most promising students in this virtual community. This paper is the first to present an integrated concept for IT-supported idea competitions in virtual communities for leveraging the potential of crowds that is evaluated in a real-world setting.

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