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IdeaFactory

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The TSA IdeaFactory is an innovative tool that has provided a venue for more than 130 ideas to be implemented that have saved money, improved security and training, and enhanced employee morale. Through an open site, employees post ideas related to program-specific categories, participate in agency-wide challenges, and provide feedback on specific topics chosen by senior leadership sponsors. The site now has over 800 official responses from senior leaders and program offices.

The IdeaFactory is a Web-based tool that empowers all TSA employees to:

- Submit ideas.
- Provide comments on how to improve new concepts.
- Rate ideas that should be recommended for implementation.

Ensuring that the workforce is involved in operational decision-making has changed the way TSA does business. The program was launched to address three key requirements:

- To engage employees and ensure that every member of its large workforce at more than 450 airports and other locations could communicate with headquarters.
- To collect constant, fresh input and perspectives on improvements to keep the agency flexible and effectively mitigate security threats.
- To disseminate information about new and existing programs, initiatives and policies to front-line employees and provide a forum for communication between employees.

IdeaFactory Today

April 25, 2014 marked the IdeaFactory's 7th anniversary. The IdeaFactory works extremely hard to keep the program relevant to its users and external counterparts across government. Throughout the years the IdeaFactory has shared information with over 50 government agencies that want to mirror its innovative success. IdeaFactory's vision is to support TSA's mission by fostering a community that engages employees and encourages collaboration to initiative innovation. The strategic plan also identified three key goals:

- Support innovation as a TSA core value.
- Continue to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the innovation process.
- Expand and evolve IdeaFactory outreach, collaboration and communication.

After the initial launch period, the IdeaFactory team enhanced functionality, reengineered the evaluation process and completely redesigned the site to increase community building efforts and make the site more user-friendly. Also, the IdeaFactory team developed a communications strategy to meet the needs of the TSA field employees.

The IdeaFactory Users

Before the launch of TSA's IdeaFactory, and during the course of two years of operation, the IdeaFactory team evaluated and reevaluated the culture of TSA and the needs of its workforce, including conducting audience assessments, need assessments and adjusting for volume of site usage as a percentage of the entire workforce. The IdeaFactory team conducts regular user surveys and focus groups of core users to analyze IdeaFactory users and obtain further data about usage by geographic location.

The TSA workforce is comprised of about 60,000+ employees at over 450 airports and other locations. Approximately 85 percent of TSA's workforce is stationed at non-headquarters, field locations. These employees:

- Perform their job duties without regular access to a TSA computer and seldom check email.
- Have limited time to access TSA "extras," such as IdeaFactory, the TSA blog and other message vehicles.
- Are oversaturated with messages, which generally aren't targeted to address specific peer groups.

On average, TSA receives 300 ideas each month and each idea receives 10 comments and 25 votes on average.

TSA IdeaFactory gets more than 12,000 unique page views from employees every month, and about 5,000 every week. To date over 10,000 submissions have been posted to the site. If you're interested in finding out more contact the IdeaFactory.TSA@tsa.dhs.gov.

Representative IdeaFactory Ideas

Idea	Benefits
	Employee Morale

Communication with the TSA Administrator	Developed a communication channel for employees ask the TSA administrator agency related questions and receive feedback.
Diversity Day	Created an annual Diversity Day to highlight importance and recognize workforce diversity.
Mourning Bands	Created special markings for TSO badges to recognize employees who passed away.

Employee Recruiting and Retention

TSO Referral Bonus	Created a nationwide incentive to recruit transportation security officers.
Job Swap	Created a website that allows TSOs that meet certain criteria to post their interest in swapping job locations.

Security

Public Web Site Clarity	Clarified website content for the term "children" who are allowed to bring liquids through the checkpoint to "infant/toddler."
Cyber Security	Created ways for employees to troubleshoot security related concerns at work and at home.
Training	Updated various training programs with suggestions made by employees.

Efficiency

Travel Expenses	Identified ways to use non-refndable fares for certain city-pair travel

In The Press

July 2010
Center for American Progress
"Capital Ideas: How to Generate Innovation in the Public Sector"
Jitinder Kohli, Geoff Mulgan
The Center for American Progress report, *Capital Ideas – How to Generate Innovation in the Public Sector* includes a section on the IdeaFactory text and screen shot (p. 9–10) in the section titled How to Generate Great Ideas. Source: White House Web site.
Link: http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2010/07/dww_capitalideas.html

February 2010
Federal Computer Week
"CDC, other agencies find social media an elixir for healthier public relations"
Doug Beizer
Summary of the Government Solutions Forum on Social Media and crafting a successful social media strategy.
Link: http://fcw.com/articles/2010/02/24/social-media-tips.aspx

December 2009
NextGov.Com

"Panel: Government Should Educate Workforce on benefits of Social Media"
Gautham Nagesh
Summary of the AFFIRM sponsored panel at GW University speaking on the importance of social media and Gov 2.0 in the government. Includes a paragraph remarks on the IdeaFactory and how leadership buy-in and an effective communications plan were vital to the success of the IdeaFactory.
Link: http://www.nextgov.com/nextgov/ng_20091215_6412.php?oref=rss

November 2009
Federal Computer Week
"6 tips for generating better ideas"
William D. Eggers & John O'Leary
This article is adapted from William D. Eggers and John O'Leary's new book 'If We Can Put a Man on the Moon: Getting Big Things Done in Government' (Harvard Business Press, 2009). It mentions the IdeaFactory as an example of using Web 2.0 to expand the idea pool. It also references an interesting theory known as the Tolstoy facts that suggests people become blind to inconvenient facts, or facts that challenge our pre-existing beliefs.
http://www.fcw.com/Articles/2009/11/16/FEAT-6-tips-for-generating-better-ideas.aspx

October 2009
Government Executive
"The Gospel of Gov 2.0"
Jill R. Aitoro
IdeaFactory is included in a list of Gov 2.0 applications. The article focuses on the struggle to incorporate Web 2.0 and social media into the government – particularly the intelligence community
Link: http://www.govexec.com/features/1009-01/1009-01s1.htm

IdeaFactory Awards
- Employee Involvement Association – Communications Excellence Gold Award 2010
- IABC Silver Quill Communications Management/Employee Communications Award of Merit 2009
- IABC Silver Inkwell Award Communications Plans and Campaigns Award of Merit 2010
- Secretary's Award for Team DHS Excellence December 2007

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