Winning with Social Product Innovation – New Stories of Success from the 2011 SPIKE Awards

by Amy Kenly

There are some tried and true examples of companies that use social models and technologies to make their innovation and product development processes better. Kudos to the companies we’ve all heard about, like P&G’s Connect+Develop℠ with their open innovation model where they partner with individuals, small businesses, universities, corporations, service providers, government funded R&D organizations and more to bring new products to market. Their results have been huge, including new product ideas like the Swiffer™.

Did you know that Connect+Develop℠ has been around since 2002? Yup, almost 10 years and this is still the first example most people give when asked for a success story for open innovation. It’s clearly working for P&G, so why aren’t there more examples?

The 2011 SPIKE Awards have given us some new and compelling examples. They may not be as comprehensive as Connect+Develop℠, but these are pretty young efforts in comparison. Any one of these has the potential to be the next ubiquitous success story, so keep your eye on these rising stars.

- **Diamond Candles** – Founded in January of 2011, Diamond Candles wanted to make buying candles fun again. As a small company, they needed a way to get real-time customer feedback on future candle scents. Instead of relying on traditional market research and trend analysis, Diamond Candles crowdsources idea submission and voting from their existing fans and customers for future scents to develop and bring to market. They take the top 10% of voter suggestions and cross-reference that with market trend analysis to make final decisions on new scents to develop and launch. They are engaging with their fans and getting actionable and real-time information to guide their future scent selection processes.
  [Listen to the Tech-Clarity podcast interview with Diamond Candles](#)

- **Madison Electric Products** – The complete opposite from Diamond Candles, Madison Electric was founded in 1929. They were looking for new ways to develop products that solve problems, meet needs or increase efficiencies, without breaking the bank through research and development. Through their Sparks Innovation Center, anyone can submit ideas for new products. The Madison Electric team assesses each idea’s merit, and the best ideas are then presented to a focus group to help determine which product ideas should come to fruition. Generating nearly 100 submissions thus far, the Sparks Innovation Center is the point of origin for five Madison Electric signature products and another four in the production phase. Furthermore, the center has evolved into a go-to resource for inventors and aspiring entrepreneurs in the industry.
  [Listen to the Tech-Clarity podcast interview with Madison Electric](#)

- **CDC Software** – Even though CDC stands for “Customer-Driven Company”, this is a story about using social tools to improve innovation and product development processes inside the company. With over 1,400 employees and 20 offices around the world, CDC struggled with managing multiple time zones, geographies and languages to deliver new software products and version releases. To address these challenges, they use social networking technologies across the product lifecycle to develop and deliver software from multiple teams in different countries. Their agile product development agile methodology, which uses social media as its collaborative framework, has cut the time of product delivery from 24 months to 12-16 weeks. These cloud social technologies have promoted tight collaboration among their R&D offices across 14 countries. It has promoted knowledge transfer and knowledge sharing among the whole global R&D organization which delivers efficiencies in quality, product delivery times and costs.
  [Listen to the Tech-Clarity podcast interview with CDC](#)

Want to learn more about these examples, along with some expert discussion on trends and the leading practices for Social Product Innovation? Register and view the archived Social Product Innovation Summit until January.

What are some examples you’ve seen (or done) of companies improving or enhancing their innovation or product development processes with social product innovation?

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*What's your view? Add your question or comment*
About the Author

Amy Kenly

amy.kenly@kalypso.com

Amy is VP of Marketing for Kalypso’s Digital Innovation practice. She’s an equestrian, a Red Sox enthusiast, and is addicted to Cheez-Its and Swedish Fish.