Innovation Games®
Overview

2011

The seriously fun way to do serious work – seriously.
Background

Innovation Games are proven techniques for working with all groups of customers to create innovative products and services. They are a means of fueling innovation by understanding what your customers really want.
What Makes Innovation Games Unique

- Game playing provides a relaxed less rigid environment for participants.
- Each game leverages research from cognitive psychology and organizational behavior in unique ways.
- They utilize verbal, written, visual and non-verbal forms of communication thereby providing greater volumes of information.
- Some games provide wonderful player generated artwork which can be retained and shared with others.
How Innovation Happens

- **Traditional Market Research**
- **Innovation Games**
An Overview
Selecting The Game

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Product Box

**Activity:**
Ask your customers to imagine that they’re selling your product at a tradeshow, retail outlet, or public market. Give them a few cardboard boxes and ask them to literally design a product box that they would buy. The box should have the key marketing slogans that they find interesting. When finished, pretend that you’re a skeptical prospect and ask your customer to use their box to sell your product to you.

**Goal:**
Identify the most exciting, sellable features.
Product Box In Action
**Goal:**
Identify what customers don’t like (about your process or system).

**Activity:**
Draw a boat on a whiteboard or sheet of butcher paper. You’d like the boat to really move fast. Unfortunately, the boat has a few anchors holding it back. The boat is your system, and the features that your customers don’t like are its anchors. Customers write what they don’t like on an anchor. They can also estimate how much faster the boat would go when that anchor was cut. Estimates of speed are really estimates of pain.
Speed Boat In Action
Prune The Product Tree

**Goal:**
Build a product according to your plans.

**Activity:**
Start by drawing a very large tree on a whiteboard. Thick limbs represent major areas of functionality within your system. The edge of the tree – its outermost branches – represent the features available in the current release. Write potential new features on several index cards, ideally shaped as leaves. Ask your customers to place desired features around the tree. Observe how the tree gets structured – does one branch get the bulk of the growth? Does an underutilized aspect become stronger?
Prune The Product Tree In Action
**Spider Web**

**Activity:**
Put the name of your product or service in the center of a circle. Ask your customers to draw other products and services, ask them to tell you when, how, and why these are used. Ask them to draw lines between the different products and services.

As your customers reviews when and where they user your offering, you can capture the various inter-relationships that exist between the different products and service that they use throughout the day.

**Goal:**
Clarify the operating context for your products and services.
Spider Web In Action
Start Your Day

**Activity:**
Ask your customer to describe the daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly events that are related to their use of your product on pre-printed, poster-sized calendars or a simple timeline on poster paper. Ask them to describe events in time frames appropriate for your project. Special events that are unique to an industry or sector (like a conference), or days in which everything goes horribly wrong and they’re looking for help. While they’re doing this, be alert for how your product helps – or hinders – their day.

**Goal:**
Understand how and when your customer uses your product.
Start Your Day In Action
Buy a Feature

**Activity:**
Create a list of features with an estimated cost. The cost can be development effort or actual cost you intend to charge for the feature. Customers buy features that they want.

Features are priced high enough that no single customer can buy the features. This helps motivate customers to negotiate between themselves as to which features are most important. Observation of this negotiation provides great insight into what customers are willing to pay for.

**Goal:**
Prioritize features.
Show and Tell

Activity:
Ask your customers to bring examples of artifacts created or modified by your product or service. Ask them to tell you why these artifacts are important, and when and how they’re used.

Pay careful attention to anything that surprises you – artifacts you expected them to create or modify that they have ignored, artifacts that aren’t used, or artifacts used in unexpected ways.

Goal:
Identify the most important artifacts created by your product.
Me and My Shadow

**Activity:**
Shadow your customer while they use your product or service. Literally. Sit next to them and watch what they do. Periodically ask them “Why are you doing that?” and “What are you thinking?” Take along a camera or camcorder and record key activities. Ask for copies of important artifacts created or used by your customer while they are doing the work.

**Goal:**
Identify your customer’s hidden needs.
Give Them A Hot Tub

**Activity:**
Write several features on note cards, one feature per card. Include several completely outrageous features. If you’re making a portable MP3 player, try adding features like “heats coffee”, “cracks concrete” or “conditions dog hair”. If you’re making a system that manages payroll, try adding features like “plans family reunions” or “refinishes wooden floors”. If you’re building an office building, add a hot tub in the lobby. Observe what happens with a customer uncovers one of these outrageous features.

**Goal:**
Use outrageous features to discover hidden breakthroughs.
20/20 Vision

**Goal:**
Prioritize features.

**Activity:**
When you’re getting fitted for glasses, your optometrist will often ask you to compare between two potential lenses by alternately showing each of them. Start by writing one feature each on large index cards. Shuffle the pile and put them face down. Take the first one form the top and put it on the wall. Take the next one and ask your customers if it is more or less important than the one on the wall. Place it above or below, depending on its relative importance. Repeat this with all of your feature cards.
The Apprentice

Activity:
Ask your engineers and product developers to perform the “work” of the system that they are building. If they’re building a new data entry system, have them do the work of the current data entry operators. If they’re building workflow management software for furniture delivery people, have them deliver furniture. If they’re building a system to analyze vehicle performance data, ask them to change the oil in the car. They gain knowledge of the customer experience and some degree of empathy for the real problem that your customer is trying to solve.

Goal:
Create empathy for the customer experience.
Remember the Future

Activity:
Hand each of your customers a few pieces of paper. Ask them to imagine that it is sometime in the future and that they’ve been using your product almost continuously between now and that future date (month, year, whatever). Then ask them to write down exactly what your product will have done to make them happy or successful or rich or safe or secure or art – choose what works best for your product. Key point – ask “What will the system have done?” not “What should the system do?”

Goal:
Understand your customer’s definition of success.
Our Client Experience

- Qualcomm: Facilitated IG’s w/ Customers
- Qualcomm: Sales Force Training
- Trend Micro: Product Manager Training
- Aladdin Knowledge Systems: Product Road mapping, Security Council meetings
- Emerson Electric: Technical Advisory Council
- Rally Software: Technical Advisory Council, Product Road mapping
- Ryma: Customer Advisor Board Meeting
- SDForum: Strategic Planning
- Wyse: Customer Advisory Board Meeting
Case Study: Wyse Technologies

**Innovation Game(s):** Spider Web  **Team:** 1 Facilitator, 5 Observers

**Problem/Opportunity:** Wyse was seeking new and creative ways to interact and gather feedback from their customers during their semi-annual customer advisory board meetings.

**Engagement:** Enthiosys was contracted to help design and facilitate an interactive session using appropriate Innovation Game techniques that would deliver the type of product information being sought by senior management. Working closely with the Wyse team Enthiosys was able to help select the appropriate Innovation Game that would produce the desired result and provided recommendations regarding event planning, preparation and materials needed to facilitate the session. On the day of the event, an Enthiosys consultant facilitated the session after which the consultant provided suggestions to the team for how best to capture and process the feedback and results that were produced.

**Results:** The client received a wealth of rich, useful feedback that enabled them to quickly make key strategic and product level decisions and also provided them with additional information that could be leveraged for future product planning, development and marketing purposes.
**Case Study: Qualcomm (QWBS)**

**Innovation Game(s):** Spider Web, Product Box, Start Your Day

**Team:** 1 Facilitator / Multiple Qualcomm observers

**Problem/Opportunity:** Lacked voice of the customer research programs

**Engagement(s):** Enthiosys has worked with Qualcomm to design and facilitate several Innovation Game sessions at industry conferences and internal customer meetings. During these sessions we’ve used a number of games to gain insights regarding issues such as marketing, requirements management and corporate strategy. Initially Enthiosys worked closely with their event and product teams to help select the appropriate Games, provide event planning recommendations, support event preparation and conduct post event summary and analyses. Qualcomm has since been able to take over much of the planning and post processing activities while still using Enthiosys for Game selection, customization and facilitation.

**Results:** The use of Innovation Games has led to numerous enhancements to existing products, the discovery and adoption of new marketing messages and most recently the creation of a new software platform that is considered a key component of their long term product strategy.
Case Study: Aladdin Knowledge Systems

**Innovation Game(s):** Speed Boat, Buy a Feature

**Team:** 1 Facilitator / Multiple Aladdin observers

**Problem/Opportunity:** Required customer input to product roadmaps

**Engagement(s):** Starting in December of 2005 Enthiosys has worked with Aladdin to design and facilitate several Innovation Game sessions as part of their quarterly Security Council meetings. Enthiosys has worked closely with Aladdin's event and product teams to help select the appropriate Games, provide event planning recommendations, facilitate the games and conduct post event summary and analyses. To date we’ve conducted two Innovation Game sessions with a continued commitment to use Innovation Games through the rest of 2006.

**Results:** Based on the feedback Aladdin received from the first Innovation Game session in December, they’ve taken action on two new initiatives;
1. The creation of a developer portal
2. A series of educational programs to address customer’s complaints about a lack of information on how to use their product.
Putting Innovation Games To Use

What are your questions?
What will you do with the answers?

Select and prepare for the game.
- select & invite participants
- organize internal team
- handle the logistics

Play the game.

Process / analyze the data.

Present results and take action.
Next Steps?

Contact The Innovation Games® Company to learn how Innovation Games can help you achieve your goals for better understanding your customers.

http://innovationgames.com
info@innovationgames.com