

Objectives and execution:

Idea Factory is a new internal process for stimulating, collecting and evaluating new product ideas and cost improvements.

First, we encapsulated our mission in the form of a logo that simply and dynamically expresses the immediacy, curiosity and the “what if” potential of our quest. We created a web tool with easy-to-use forms to allow anyone to submit an idea for consideration. Participants need only submit thoughts around a few simple questions and then a review committee screens the ideas to determine which ones require more investigation. What sets this apart from other “employee suggestion box” concepts is that more effort is spent on stimulating ideas. Each month, we issue a new, fun and engaging challenge to the entire Consumer Marketing Division that allows everyone to participate in some way. For example, “submit an old idea that you were told will never work”, or “cash confessions – tell us how you would treat yourself if you suddenly had extra cash in your pocket”. People post their responses in our IF Café where we gather to celebrate and discuss the ideas (and have a coffee!).

Results:

The end result is that it stimulates new product ideas – both for the participants from the department and for product development team, who takes the submissions and looks for trends and/or products concept to build on. Since the launch in March of 2013, we’ve had almost 1000 challenge responses, 157 ideas submitted to Idea Factory and 6 ideas that are in a launch phase. Assuming all of the ideas execute as planned, we will generate almost \$2 million in incremental revenue for the Toronto Star.