

# Innovation, reinvented

August 16 2010

---

A carmaker reports that design time on a new model dropped from six months to just one, thanks to new tools for innovation and collaboration developed by European researchers. The way companies get and develop good ideas has undergone its own profound reinvention.

It usually takes up to six months to design a new car model; researchers at Fiat and Alfa Romeo can accomplish that feat in just one. It is a graphic illustration of the dramatic impact that new tools, developed by EU-funded European research, can have.

The Laboranova project developed 18 tools or tool concepts and highly refined eight core tools. These eight were then tested in various combinations among some of Europe's biggest corporations. Fiat and Alfa Romeo both independently tested InnoTube, developed primarily by INSEAD's Centre for Advanced Learning Technologies (CALT) of France. InnoTube is a bit like YouTube with massively enhanced collaboration and a host of additional functionality.

"InnoTube is a [collaboration tool](#) that implements the most important elements of Web 2.0, notably tagging, rating and recommendations, and it takes advantage of three drivers in Web 2.0 design," explains Marco Luccini, research associate at business school INSEAD, France, and one of the tool's designers.

The first of those drivers is rich media video communication (users can also attach any kind of document or comment). Second, InnoTube provides a new way of accessing information by focusing on people and

their knowledge. A third driver is instant gratification. Users are more motivated to use the tools, and to use them well, to establish their authority and share what they know.

## **Participation**

"It is like Wikipedia, people get a real kick out of participating, and now it has millions of articles, and all because Web 2.0 lets people do what they would like to do anyway. But with Web 2.0 they are connecting with people immediately," Luccini stresses.

InnoTube also boasts a host of enhancements to all these relatively common Web 2.0 elements. For example, users can look at a type of 'mind-map' showing the links between different users who like the same content, and Luccini emphasises that there is an inherent value to such 'connected knowledge'; it helps highlight information that will probably be useful even if you have no idea the information is there.

"If you like somebody's choices for one item, chances are that you will like it for another. If you are interested in a subject that one user covers very well, you will probably find lots of information you were not aware of in the files she or he recommends," he says.

There is almost no end to the enhancements INSEAD's CALT has added to their package. People can communicate asynchronously, by starting forums around particular content or topics, or synchronously by using instant messaging, chat and video chat, public or private.

## **Special agents**

The InnoTube platform also uses 'agent technology' to enhance its functionality. A concierge agent can alert you to what is new, a similarity

agent can help compare and contrast different users. All this information can quickly get overwhelming, so INSEAD also developed a recommendation agent to advise you about what information you need to follow or what people to get in touch with.

There is a game element, too, where players use words to describe a video. This serves two purposes. First, it connects players together; if the words match, they each get a point. Second, it annotates the video with useful keywords, keywords that reflect the interest of a particular user.

For example, a motor advertisement might inspire an engineer on the aerodynamics of the car, while the same video inspires a marketer for its message. In this way the relevance of videos is made plain.

Finally, a connection agent watches exchanges, key words and relationships as they develop, seeking to discern connections between people, between ideas. This is the vital element and the reason InnoTube was developed. To help users make connections.

## **Useful strategy**

The strategy worked. By using InnoTube, two teams working separately at Alfa Romeo and Fiat were able to dramatically reduce the amount of time it took to develop a new car design, from six months down to one month in one case. INSEAD's CALT has a long-standing relationship with Fiat and the company agreed to test InnoTube in two of its carmakers, Fiat itself and Alfa Romeo. In each case, there were up to 100 people using the tool.

“The people were from different departments, different companies, and even different countries and continents,” explains Luccini. “InnoTube offered them a unified way to exchange ideas, get to know each other, cooperate and move the project forward, in this case, designing a car.”

Early on, InnoTube revealed profound cultural differences between different departments. "It was really funny to see how the different teams would use InnoTube. With engineers, they would often just use their camera phone, and then provide some black and white schematics as an attachment. It was very, very functional, all about getting the job done well as simply as possible," explains Luccini.

"By contrast, the contributions from the sales and marketing teams were like Hollywood productions, with logos and graphics and all sorts of animations. Their presentations, too, were very beautiful compared to the black and white functionality of the engineers. It was a really sharp illustration of how differently people from different departments communicate."

## **Great accolade**

Fiat took on the tools to do INSEAD's CALT just to test them for the project, but perhaps the greatest compliment for InnoTube is that, even though the assessment phase is over, Fiat and Alfa Romeo, and other companies who tested the tool, are still using it.

"We cannot reveal all the companies using these tools, but those that helped us assess InnoTube really like it, so much so that they continue to make use of it even though the assessment is over."

InnoTube represents just one of the applications developed by Laboranova, and many of the other tools report similarly positive feedback from the companies using them.

INSEAD's CALT will further develop the InnoTube tool and start offering commercial versions in the near future.

**More information:** [cordis.europa.eu/ictresults](http://cordis.europa.eu/ictresults)

Provided by ICT Results

Citation: Innovation, reinvented (2010, August 16) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-08-reinvented.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.