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White Paper | 2007

# **Innovation Every Day**

Collaboration Unleashes Project  
Team Creativity



# Innovation Every Day

## Collaboration Unleashes Project Team Creativity



**An organization cannot flourish without innovation.**

By organization we mean any functional structure designed to generate benefits for its members or stakeholders: a nation state, a business, a community committee or non-governmental organization are just a few instances. What becomes of a nation without industries and technologies to propel its well-being?<sup>1</sup> Or a business without products and services that align with customer demands? *It's how organizations become proficient at innovating every day that counts.*

As more work gets shifted to project and program teams, the ability for teams to generate ideas, organize them, set priorities and make decisions with accountability has made its way to the center of organizational strategy.

Strategy without a plan of execution amounts to little. It takes Group Intelligence (GI) technology and tools to put innovation into project team competency, *every day!* GI technology provides a safe, empowering environment that enables associates to manage their innovative contributions in every

project phase without typical time or cost constraints. Because the work of innovation has been perceived as expensive and time consuming, many organizations (such as corporate businesses) fall prey to five barriers to success<sup>2</sup>:

- **Small minority:** make innovation the job for the select few
- **Inadequate funding:** limited by conventional notions of face-to-face work, innovation processes are perceived as exceeding current budgets
- **Time scarcity:** innovation is expected to happen outside work hours despite its inherent value to the organization
- **Risk avoidance:** traditional tools and team dynamics tend to increase the perceived risk level of innovation activities
- **Incorrect measures:** if revenue, profits and market-share are the sole metrics, innovation may be stifled or killed

Group Intelligence technology and tools help organizations overcome *if not avoid* all five pitfalls, **plus** GI makes innovation an **every day** discipline of project teams and program portfolios.

## What's New in Group Intelligence Technology

There's more to GI technology and tools these days than you might think. Originally called GDSS, group decision support systems<sup>3</sup>, "[GI] combines a many-to-many communications paradigm with a one-to-many facilitator role. [GI] is structured around meetings – not presentations – where people participate and contribute to the process," states the Gartner Group (2006).<sup>3</sup> GI technology incorporates a tool suite that empowers project team members to achieve rich, interactive collaboration in face-to-face meetings or distance-remote sessions, or even asynchronous work sessions. Common tools include:

- Brainstorming
- Topic development
- Concept organization
- Idea or concept organization
- Voting
- Multi-criteria decision-making
- Action planning
- Joint authoring

Now the Web 2.0 world has extended many of the capabilities reserved for face-to-face meetings to all team sessions including remote meetings, so that the innovation enabled by GI is now an every day possibility.

Utilizing an on-demand (vendor hosted) GI offering, a project team is now able to instantly leverage an

innovation team-space to use pre-built templates for:

- Creating a charter
- Gaining consensus on scope and objectives
- Gathering requirements, issues or opportunities
- Jointly (or in sub-teams) developing opportunities into complete scenarios or use cases
- Rapidly reaching a sense of item prioritization with Rank Order or Multi-Criteria votes
- Capturing broad inputs via on-demand Surveys, internally or externally
- Distributing important documents, charts or presentations for all team members to use in their work
- Assigning tasks with priority level to individuals for performance management
- And publishing or archiving process proceedings or minutes

The Web 2.0 aspect means GI is highly intuitive, easy to access, and available on-demand when the team needs it. All one must do is access GI applications by means of an internet browser. Invitations are sent using Outlook or a preferred email system.

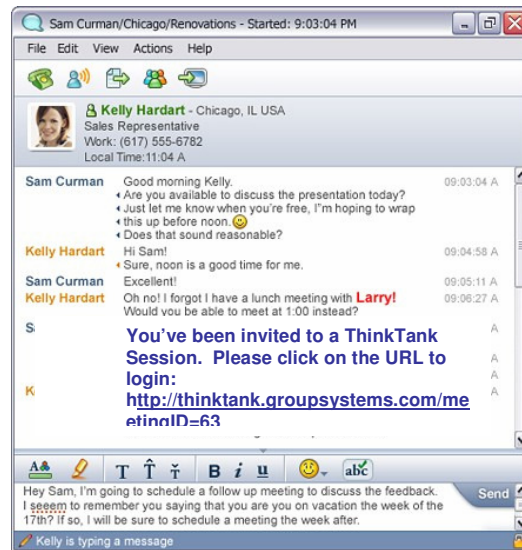


Figure 1- Sametime 7.5 ThinkTank Invitation

Invited team members are granted keyword access to the team's process activities. A team leader guides the team from activity to activity to ensure (i) everyone is heard, (ii) all ideas or suggestions are captured with the aide of anonymous contributions and (iii) time is well spent on a structured, project-aligned session.

Of course, the Agenda is one key ingredient of the secret sauce:

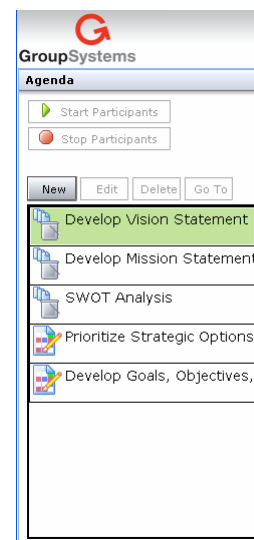


Image 2- ThinkTank Agenda

The agenda justifies the meeting or session. Everyone knows why they are working together, and where the start and end points are.

GI now offers **presence control** (the leader knows who is “in” session and on which activity), **persistence** (sessions may last one hour or one year, depending on the process requirements), and **innovation anonymity** (the identity of contributors is hidden unless ‘tagging’ is selected) to turbo-charge team performance.

How user-friendly is GI? It’s as easy as eBay, Google or Yahoo. Contributions rely on an instant messaging notion of work. GI’s proprietary database structure and analytical processing engines facilitate instant capture of contributions from two to hundreds of participants. The ability to view others’ contributions naturally triggers new ideas and possibilities. The limits on innovation melt away.

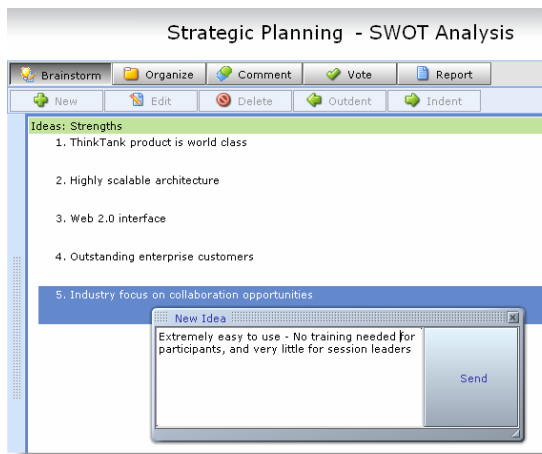


Figure 3- ThinkTank Brainstorming

What is project team work without prioritization and decision-making? GI features simple to very powerful voting tools so that the group’s collective intelligence rises to the top,

first by means of anonymous voting across numerous criteria and then by means of discussion and debate on the visual outcomes:

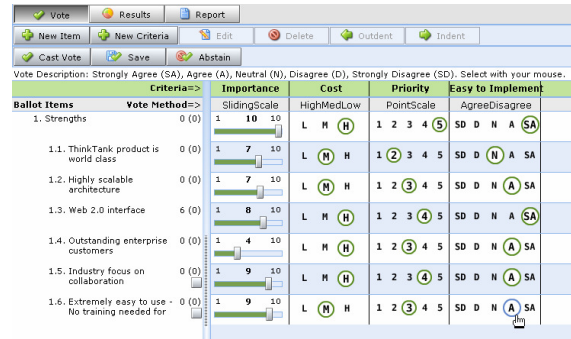


Figure 4- ThinkTank Multi-Criteria Voting

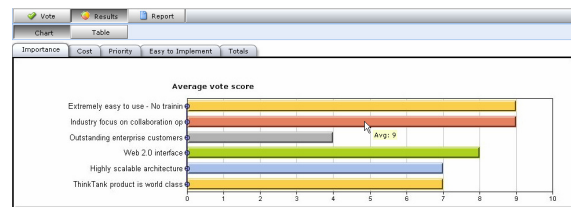


Figure 5- ThinkTank Instant Voting Results

Two other powerful capabilities are Action Planning (a mini-version of Microsoft Project Manager) for task or priority ownership and management, and publication of process proceedings in the form of an elegant Microsoft Word or HTML documents. Data can also export to other applications.

Task Name	Category	Start Date	End Date	% Completed	Resource
1. Task1	Sales	2/13/2007	2/20/2007	100%	Brian Keyser
2. Task2	Purchasing	6/12/2007	6/26/2007	15%	Brian Keyser
3. Task3	Sales	12/13/2007	2/20/2008	30%	Jeannette Hartshorne
4. Task4	Development	11/13/2007	11/20/2007	40%	Brian Keyser
5. Task5	Sales	5/13/2007	7/20/2007	80%	Matt Audette
6. Task6	Human Resources	3/31/2007	9/20/2007	90%	Doug Poirier
7. Task7	Development	10/13/2007	10/20/2007	25%	Joe Ackert
8. Task8	Sales	2/13/2007	2/20/2007	100%	Brian Keyser
9. Task9	Sales	5/13/2007	7/20/2007	80%	Matt Audette
	Development	11/13/2007	11/20/2007	40%	Brian Keyser
	Human Resources	3/31/2007	9/20/2007	90%	Doug Poirier

Figure 6- ThinkTank Action Planner



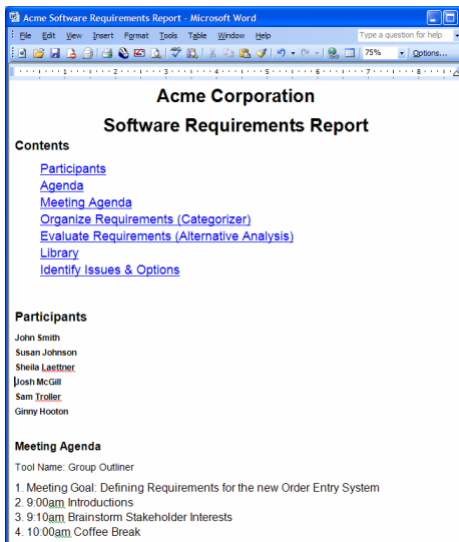


Figure 7- ThinkTank Instant Reporting

Documentation captures that agenda, participants, all contributions including attached artifacts, votes, decisions and co-authored work.

*GI technology is what every organization needs to unleash project team creativity because:*

- **It's the info hub:** for email, instant messaging, documents, process flows and decision paths
- **It's there when you are:** in person sessions are no longer the only way to work, rather, distance and asynchronous work becomes a snap
- **It compliment audio:** no need to change the way you work today, just add GI to your team calls or make it available off-call
- **It's the idea-weaver:** once the organization uses GI on a daily basis it becomes the repository for ideas, suggestions, contributions and breakthrough

## Scaling the Barriers with Group Intelligence (GI) Technology



**Innovation** – everybody wants more of it but the barriers seem to always get in the way. Those days are over. GI technology neutralizes the barriers at organizations which are serious about innovation today or tomorrow.

### #1 Small Minority

Innovation should come from all angles, every day, and not just from an anointed small team with the tools or extra time for creative endeavors. A sure way to kill innovation is to make it the job of a small minority, like the development team or the marketing team. Extensive research supports the thesis that breakthrough innovation occurs in cross-functional, cross-departmental, cross-silo settings. The solution is GI technology. With GI the organization can sponsor an ongoing, dynamic forum for all employees and value chain partners to weigh in on strategies, policies and programs.

The best tools would be Brainstorm and Survey with the process leader making the decision on whether some form of Vote is useful.

For example, an undisclosed global pharmaceuticals leader has made innovation a daily ubiquitous priority. By offering an innovation toolkit (with GI) to all marketers and product managers globally, they are seeking competitive advantage through innovation. With an on-demand service offering, the entire organization can participate via desktop, laptop or remote public browser capability.

There is just no logical reason to limit the possibilities!

## **#2 Inadequate Funding**

Innovation can be expensive if it is pursued the old fashioned way: everyone must fly to the same conference room to be guided by a facilitator in a multi-day work session. Alternatives now exist with GI. GI makes innovation an every day, all the time capability by means of *persistence* (sessions remain active for as long as you like), *inclusion* (everyone can participate easily), *structure* (the project leader determines the most useful session process to get from A → B → C) and *archived documents* (you always can jump into the session and make a contribution).

Presence controls and participant rights permissions are yet two more powerful capabilities added by GI to any project team.

One leading advertising firm has coined Dynamic Collaboration (using GI) as its cornerstone offering. This enables clients to achieve breakthrough branding, marketing and messaging programs from anywhere, and in less time. With GI, the cost of putting collective intelligence to work represents a small fraction of the potential benefits.

## **#3 Time Scarcity**

We are all busy and short on time. So why devote it to an innovation project that may not work or may not achieve desired participation? GI will greatly assist with participation and goes a long way towards eliminating the time scarcity problem. Project team members can either (i) join highly productive “virtual” team work sessions supported by an Agenda, Brainstorming tools, Categorizing tools and Votes or (ii) weigh into process activities and steps as their schedules permit. Most project team members agree that productive use of their time is a personal priority.

A worldwide recognized technology consulting firm elected to support its monthly global staff meetings with GI to help all attendees give and get more from each session. GI facilitates productive use of time while integrating innovation into everyday work processes and disciplines.

## **#4 Risk Avoidance**

Innovation by its very nature entails a measure of risk, if risk is strictly defined as failing to achieve a goal on a first attempt. Progress requires

calculated risk taking. The possible benefits are stacked up against the potential costs in order to make the right decisions. GI technology alters the risk equation in three critical ways. First, the cost of innovation is greatly reduced when many associates can collaborate at their place, pace, and in their usual daily processes. Second, the likelihood of achieving breakthrough outputs is much higher with desired participation across time zones and geography.

A well known organization collaborates between India, California, Chicago and France on a daily basis to find and develop important technology projects. It is reasonable to conclude that they have boosted the benefits while also slashing the cost side of the equation. Third, the anonymous contribution settings of GI have a tendency to neutralize those who will always see the glass as half empty, in favor of participants who see the glass as half full or even see a glass full to the brim.

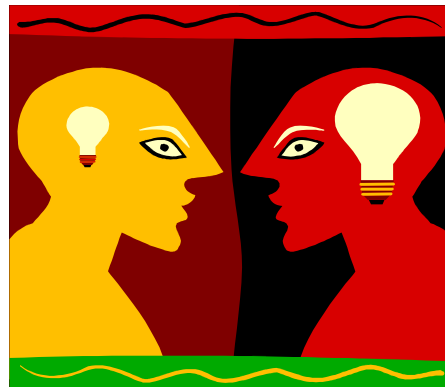
### **#5 Incorrect Measures.**

You get what you measure. We've heard this before. *Rarely are we reminded that you do not get what you do not measure or do not compensate!* Revenue, profits and market-share are vital yet limited metrics for organizational development. These metrics support short-term robustness however, how do we ensure mid-to-long term success? Developing new measures.

Intangibles such as reputation, knowledge, attractiveness to talent,

or leadership are often quite difficult to measure. However, it can be done if the view of measures is expanded and decision makers are asked to join the process of creating new measures. One need look no further than 3M and Google to find two highly innovative organizations that have invented work rules and incentives to fuel remarkable innovation.

### **Unleashing Creativity**



GI technology all but erases the typical barriers to innovation. So how do you get started on the GI journey?

As an on-demand, secure service offering GI means you can avoid the office of the CIO to install or integrate yet another tool or application. Just like Google or eBay, GI by vendors like GroupSystems are available today

- By simply using your internet browser (any browser...even Firefox or Safari)
- For as long or as little as you want



- For as many team members as you have or may have
- For any market or geographic location
- And with next to no training or learning curve (about 2 hours for the leader; no education required for participants)

The GI application is hosted by us. Secure. Redundant (layers of back-up servers). All results are stored or can be down-loaded to your own disk space. Deployed immediately.

Odds are that GI technology will make a remarkable impact on your organization **every day** if you plan to engage in any of these processes or activities...especially if your organization is distributed, national or global:

- Staff Meetings
- Project Updates
- Strategic Planning
- Focus Groups
- Requirements Gathering
- Vendor Evaluation
- Risk Management
- Team Evaluation
- Six Sigma
- Committee Meetings
- Distance Learning

*Can you afford not to unleash your organization's project team creativity?*

## **6 Questions Every Organization Should Ask To Get Started**

1. What roadblocks to innovation do we face, and how could GI collaboration help us?
2. What is my current hidden "total cost" due to thwarted innovation, such that I can calculate what to spend?
3. Presently do my IT resources and decision-making progress stand in the way of project success?
4. How much control/privacy of data do I really need?
5. Is my organization becoming more distributed or more empowered, and if so, how will we succeed with current tools and capabilities?
6. What business problems am I trying to solve, and can GI process templates and tools offer rapid success?

### **Footnotes**

1. Forrester Research, March 2007
2. Five Barriers to Innovation, IBM Global Business Services, November 2006; Gary Hamel survey of senior executives, 2004
3. Gartner Group, 2006