

# The I-Bank

Enterprise-Wide, Idea Management Software



- Ingenuity
- Innovation
- Inspiration
- Imagination
- Immersion
- Individuality
- Inventiveness
- Inter-dependence
- Improvement
- Illumination

*“How forward thinking organizations use their intranet to inspire, originate, develop, evaluate, track, launch, and reward powerful new ideas.”*

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## A. THE NEED:

It doesn't take a genius to know that innovation is a key driver of your company's success. No matter how *extraordinary* your current products and services might be, it's only a matter of time before they become quite ordinary. Times will change. Technology will change. Markets will change. And all at a rate faster than ever before. Indeed, chances are good that you will wake up one morning only to learn that some younger, faster, smarter, more entrepreneurial start-up (or a more forward-thinking competitor) is now offering the same (or better) product or service at a lower cost. *Or has completely changed the game.*

Clearly, there is no magic pill for ensuring sustainable innovation. There is no formula or blueprint for turning ideas into action. In the end, it is not *processes* that drive innovation, but *people* – inspired, committed, and intrinsically motivated people. And yet, these people – *your company's avant-garde cadre of aspiring innovators* – need more support than they are currently getting. Like solar energy, much of their bandwidth and brilliance is being lost – falling between a wide array of organizational cracks.

Enter **I-Bank**, an exciting new, enterprise-wide software system and related support services that markedly reduces “innovation loss.” This patent-pending software goes beyond mere idea management and the archiving of preconceived ideas. It *also* increases the quantity and quality of new ideas generated on the “fuzzy front end” of the innovation process. And it does so in a way that enables every single member of your workforce – from mailroom to boardroom – to become active contributors to your company's ongoing innovation efforts.

The purpose of **I-Bank** is threefold: 1) To fill your pipeline with powerful, new business growth ideas; 2) To radically decrease the time it takes for ideas to “move through the system” and; 3) To help your organization establish a sustainable culture of innovation.

## B. WHY THE I-BANK WORKS:

### 1. It sparks a company-wide response to specific business challenges:

Innovation is driven by two variables: 1) An organization's need for breakthrough results in a specific domain *and*; 2) An individual's need to create something extraordinary. In service to the first of these two factors, **I-Bank** has been designed to help organizations launch specific, time-sensitive idea-generating campaigns.

### 2. It sparks new ideas in previously undefined "innovation spaces":

Idea generation campaigns can be very useful, but they are not the only way to jump-start innovation. Indeed, looking back at the history of innovation, some of the biggest breakthroughs were *not* conceived in response to a defined need, but originated as the result of an individual challenging the status quo and following their fascination for new possibilities. This is precisely why **I-Bank** is more than just event-driven. It is also an open-space "ingenuity environment," enabling forward-thinking mavericks, visionaries, and closet geniuses a chance to contribute the best of their thinking.

### 3. It's launched with the support of Senior Leadership:

All **I-Bank** campaigns are sponsored by members of your company's leadership team. From the outset, potential contributors know exactly *who* has launched an idea campaign and *why*. It is this specificity that lends credibility and thrust to the **I-Bank**. It also facilitates real-time, off-line dialogue between Idea Originators, their collaborators, and key organizational thought leaders.

### 4. It humanizes your company's effort to innovate:

It's one thing to create technology that helps your company leverage its collective brainpower. It's quite another to do it in a way that your workforce will *want* to participate. Just because something is uploaded onto your intranet does not ensure that people will respond. High tech needs to be balanced with high touch – or, at the very least, *high tech that touches people*. This is one of the strengths of **I-Bank**. It's humane. Users connect with it. Navigation is easy. The graphics are compelling. The tools are engaging. The language cuts through corporate-speak. Bottom line, people connect with the product in a genuine way.

### 5. It engages everyone in your organization:

In today's demanding marketplace, it is no longer sufficient for R&D to be the only contributor to your company's innovation efforts. It is *everyone's*

responsibility. We call this imperative “co-responsibility” and have designed the **I-Bank** (along with all collateral materials) to reinforce this message every step of the way.

### **6. It provides powerful tools and techniques to spark creativity:**

The **I-Bank** is far more than just an electronic suggestion box system or a repository for previously conceived ideas. More accurately, it is a virtual environment that accelerates both the origination of powerful new ideas *and* the process of turning those new ideas into action. One way **I-Bank** delivers on this promise is by providing users with a selection of easy-to-use creative thinking tools – time tested catalysts that get people out of the box and into action.

### **7. It enhances collaboration and teamwork:**

No matter how creative an aspiring innovator may be, it is unlikely their ideas will ever translate into results without a healthy dose of collaboration and teamwork. Towards this end, **I-Bank** provides a variety of collaboration-enhancing tools: a) Topic-specific discussion groups; 2) Joint idea development space; 3) Whiteboards; 4) Instant feedback from the IdeaReview team; 5) Skype; and 6) Instant messaging.

### **8. It fills your pipeline with powerful, new business-growth ideas**

Ultimately, the purpose of **I-Bank** is to increase the quantity and quality of ideas fed into the fuzzy front-end of your company’s innovation pipeline. We know, of course, that only a percentage of submitted ideas are going to translate into cost-savings, process, product or service breakthroughs, but that’s OK. *Some of them will* – and all it takes it ONE to make a profound difference. But perhaps even more importantly, **I-Bank** sends a clear message to all employees that their ideas matter. Maybe the first one they submit will go nowhere. But the second might. And the third. And the 100th.

### **9. It enables aspiring innovators to get timely and accurate feedback**

There’s a very simple reason why an organization’s most brilliant thinkers fold up shop and stop pitching their ideas: The process of getting timely feedback is inelegant. “Howling in the corporate wind,” is how one client explained it.

**I-Bank** addresses this phenomenon by embedding a very simple “idea response” mechanism into the software. Aspiring innovators not only get a quick feedback from your company’s designated IdeaReview team, they are also able to check the status of their idea any time in the process – noting *who* reviewed their idea, *when*, and *what* concerns still need to be addressed in order for their idea to move forward.

**10. It accelerates the time it takes for new ideas to manifest:**

No one can deny that speed to market is one of the competencies that differentiates leading-edge organizations from fast followers. Curiously, however, few organizations have been able to translate this commitment into an efficient process for moving new ideas “through the system.” **I-Bank** does just that – providing just enough structure and accountability to make sure that the fuzzy front end of the innovation process doesn’t stay fuzzy too long.

**11. It provides incentives and rewards for participating:**

In the best of all worlds, the motivation for people to contribute powerful new business-growth ideas is *intrinsic*. Meaning? People conjure up new possibilities and solutions not because they *have* to – but because they *want* to. **I-Bank** assumes that some of your workforce is intrinsically motivated. Still, we know that not everyone is – and that well-timed (and fair) rewards - have their place. Which is why the **I-Bank** includes a “Frequent Innovator” feature – a way for contributors to get acknowledged for participating. This feature is front and center in the program. A column on the home page – continuously being updated – provides an instant profile of your company’s top 15 contributors to **I-Bank**.

**12. It allows you to track and evaluate competitor’s products & services:**

Yes, **I-Bank** enables you to capture, develop, evaluate, sort and provide timely feedback on new, internally generated ideas. But is *also* allows you to track and evaluate the new products and services of your competitors – providing everyone in your company an up-to-date profile of what’s happening in your competitive space.

**13. It is highly configurable**

We realize that each of our clients are unique, with their own unique cultures, assumptions, needs and points of view. That’s why we’ve designed **I-Bank** to be easily configurable. Much of the software’s content, requires absolutely no third party intervention and can be customized by you, as needed.

**14. I-Bank is totally secure**

One of the reasons why aspiring innovators do not pitch their new ideas is because they’re afraid their ideas will be stolen. Organizations, too, are concerned about this phenomenon and often go to great lengths to guard their intellectual property. Towards this end, **I-Bank** has been designed to be an extremely secure environment. Access to your organization’s **I-Bank** Depository is *not* granted to everyone – only those who have been granted clearance and have

accepted the appropriate, legally binding, non-disclosure agreements (all of which will be available online).

**15. Site content can be refreshed at whatever interval you choose:**

The online content you receive upon licensing **I-Bank** is varied and engaging enough to intrigue even the most skeptical of users for quite a while. Still, there will likely come a time when return visitors will feel the need for the “new and different” – more tools, more techniques, more tips, and more inspiration to keep them at the top of their game. Towards this end, **I-Bank** offers its licensees a rich library of refresher content to keep the site engaging for years to come.

**C. WHO ARE THE CREATORS OF I-BANK?**

**Mitchell Ditkoff:** President and Co-Founder of Idea Champions, a management consulting and training company specializing in creative thinking, innovation, leadership and team development. Clients include: GE, Pfizer, Merck, NBC, AT&T, Goodyear, Michelin, MTV Networks, Chicago Board of Trade, MetLife, TIAA Cref, Lucent Technologies, West LB, Mitre, and General Mills.

**Michael Schacker:** CEO of e-Change, maker of leading-edge enterprise software tools for Organization Development and training initiatives. Clients include: GM (Media Division), Pfizer, Raytheon Company, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, Prmrose, Xerox, Columbia House, Warner Music, Holland & Knight Law, etc.

## D. THE CONTENTS:

### 1. Home Page

Begins with a *call to creative action* in the form of a welcome message from your CEO (or any designated Senior Leader.) Here is where every member of your workforce is invited to think out of the box, become co-responsible for innovation, and begin contributing ideas – both large and small – to your company’s **I-Bank**. The homepage also features a “Creative Toolbox” to facilitate easy navigation to the site’s most essential gateway pages. And finally – as a way to promote **I-Bank**’s reward and recognition program – the homepage displays an updated roster of the top 15 people in your company who have earned the most Frequent Innovator points.

### 2. Twenty Qualities of an Innovator

One of the biggest challenges for any user of a corporate intranet is the WIIFM (“What’s In It For Me?”) syndrome. Bottom line, even the most technologically savvy of employees will not use enterprise-wide software unless they sense an immediate payback. This is precisely why we feature our internationally acclaimed “20 Qualities of an Innovator” instrument. This engaging, self-assessment tool enables users to get quick insights into their IQ (Innovation Quotient). It sparks immediate insights into what, specifically, users can do to become more effective innovators on-the-job.

### 3. Mindshifts

Most people who log onto their organization’s intranet are usually in a “point-and-click-logical-linear-information-finding” mode – not exactly the kind of mindset conducive to the origination of breakthrough ideas. We realize that *some* users of **I-Bank** will *always* be in this mode – content to submit their already preconceived ideas. However, there are *others* in your organization who will appreciate the opportunity to shift thinking their styles and experiment with new ways of approaching a problem. For them, **I-Bank** offers a selection of “Mindshifts” – quick hitting, creative thinking techniques that spark the new and different. These techniques are easy to use and can be easily applied to business challenges *outside* of the **I-Bank** environment.

#### 4. Ingenuity e-Tools

**I-Bank** is more than just an electronic suggestion box. It is a dynamic, integrated, learning environment that sparks new ideas, collaboration, and the kind of commitment that leads to bottom line innovation. Towards that end, **I-Bank** includes three interactive e-tools. These tools are highly engaging and get the creative juices flowing in seven minutes or less:

- a. **The Idea Lottery:** A perfect tool for grid makers, spreadsheet fanatics and left-brainers. Works on the principle that innovation is often the result of new connections between made between seemingly unrelated elements.
- b. **Jump Start:** Sometimes aspiring innovators – especially those who have been working on a challenge for a while – are only seconds away from a breakthrough. Often, all it takes is a slight provocation to experience a quantum leap of thought or action. That’s what *Jump Start* is all about.
- c. **Free The Genie:** Forget about “getting out of the box” for a moment. *It’s time to get out of the lamp!* Free the Genie is fun-to-use suite of four brainstorming tools for absolutely anyone in your organization looking for an extra edge, nudge or creative leap of thought.

#### 5. The Idea Greenhouse

It’s one thing to provide your workforce with an integrated system for submitting original ideas. It’s quite another to ensure that the ideas they submit are robust. That’s what the Idea Greenhouse is for. Simply put, it’s an expert set of configurable questions to help aspiring innovators do their due diligence and build a solid business case before depositing their brainstorm in the **I-Bank**. In effect, the Idea Greenhouse is a virtual coach – asking the kind of questions that starry-eyed ideators often forget to consider. The result? Ideas deposited in the **I-Bank** are significantly more developed than usual – saving your IdeaReview team countless hours of wasted evaluation time.

NOTE #1: Idea Originators control their own “idea development space.” It is *their* decision – and their decision alone – which collaborators, if any, will have password protected access and the rights to edit – not just view and comment.

NOTE #2: No ideas are deposited in the I-Bank until Idea Originators have clicked the Deposit button. At that moment, an error trap asks “Are You Sure?”

and displays a 5-question checklist to ensure that all deposited ideas meet the basic criteria for submission.

## 6. The I-Bank Depository

Once a new idea has been developed in the Idea Greenhouse, the Idea Originator clicks on the DEPOSIT button to formally submit the idea to the I-Bank. After reviewing the Idea Originator's responses to Idea Greenhouse questions, each member of the IdeaReview Team – applying previously established criteria – ranks the idea on a scale of 1 – 5. IdeaReview Team members are only able to view **I-Bank** data from their own business unit or department– unless they have been given MetaViewing privileges by the program administrator. NOTE: Members of the IdeaReview team can access the top/down database of all ranked ideas – enabling them to get an instant read on what ideas are candidates for further development, sponsorship and/or funding.

Bottom line, the **I-Bank** Depository becomes your organizations' "Ft. Knox of Collective Brainpower" – the virtual place where the best of your company's thinking is stored. The Depository – like all features of **I-Bank** – is open 24/7 from any location around the world – an especially valuable feature when you consider the fact the 97% of all corporate citizens claim to get their best ideas *away* from the workplace.

*NOTE: Only IdeaReview Team members (and their designated agents) are able to review IdeaBank reports and/or enter external-source new product ideas.*

## 7. My Idea Status Page and Point Reward System

Idea Depositors can check the status of their ideas, 24/7, by logging onto their "My Idea Status Page." When an IdeaReview Team member evaluates a newly submitted idea, the software automatically adds their name to the list of reviewers, allowing Idea Depositors to keep track of who, specifically, has reviewed their idea – and when.

If and when a formal review of a newly submitted idea is scheduled, the date of that review is displayed. Should that specific idea get to the next step of the idea development process, that "win" is acknowledged with congratulatory graphics on the appropriate **I-Bank** page. At every step in the process, the Idea Depositor knows exactly where their idea is in the process and what hurdles still need to be overcome.

The *My Idea Status Page* also displays how many “Frequent Innovator Points” the Idea Depositor has accumulated to date. It is the IdeaReview team’s responsibility to decide on what kind of rewards to bestow... at what interval...and for what specific amount of points. Regardless of the formula selected to reward users of **I-Bank**, the software tracks all the numbers.

### **Frequent Innovator Points:**

IdeaBank rewards users in two ways: 1) for *participating* in the program (i.e. number of ideas submitted, number of live presentations made, number of ideas receiving funding, number of ideas making it to the pilot stage, number of ideas that enter into Product Development) and; 2) for translating ideas into *measurable results* (i.e. cost savings, time savings, increased revenues.)

NOTE: The Frequent Innovator Points Program is completely customizable, i.e.

100 points:	Idea submission
2,000 points:	Idea that leads to a live presentation to IdeaReview team
4,000 points:	Idea that leads to a pilot program
6,000 points:	Idea that goes into production
8,000 points:	Idea that leads to yearly savings of X
8,000 points:	Idea that reduces defect by Y
8,000 points:	Idea that streamlines a process by Z
12,000 points	Idea that generates X annual revenue

## **8. Ingenuity Library**

All aspiring innovators get stuck sometimes. Deflated. Lose heart. Forget their original inspiration. The effort to turn new ideas into action requires an almost heroic effort – especially in a corporation where decision-making is not always in one’s control. The **I-Bank’s** Ingenuity library is designed to help your company’s aspiring innovators stay encouraged, engaged, and on top of their innovation game.

### **a. Power Point shows**

*1. Six Drivers of Innovation:* An exploration of the six key drivers of organizational innovation: Challenge, Freedom, Resources, Teamwork, Supervisory Encouragement, and Organizational Support. Based on the research of Harvard University’s Teresa Amabile.

*2. The Seven Stages of Creativity* An overview of a popular model of the stages a person goes through when creating anything new: orientation, preparation, analysis, ideation, incubation, illumination, and evaluation

3. *Best Innovation Practices*: Inspired examples from selected companies and innovators re: the kinds of behaviors and practices conducive to breakthrough thinking and innovation.

4. *I-Squared: Creating the Time to Innovate*: Almost all aspiring innovators complain about the same thing: the perceived absence of time to develop new ideas on the job. We understand. Something's gotta give. And here's a 30-minute process to help your workforce figure out what that "something" looks like.

5. *Thinking Out of the Box*: An inspirational overview of what it takes to go beyond the status quo and truly be ingenious. Everyone talks about "getting out of the box," but few people can identify what the box really is. Here's your chance.

## **B. Articles**

1. The 10 Personas of a Brainstorm Facilitator
2. Ingenuity Triggers: Where and When You Get Your Best Ideas
3. Two Heads Are Better Than One: On Being a Brainstorm Partner
4. Qualities of an Innovation Coach
5. 24 Ways to Foster a Climate of Innovation
6. Fifty Ways to Be More Creative on the Job
7. The Big Pitch: Effective Idea Selling

## **E. Technical Specifications**

After **I-Bank** has been customized and configured for your organization, the software will be installed on your intranet server—or you can choose to have it hosted on our server. E-Change developers will also be available to assist your IT group for any Cold Fusion coding needed. NOTE: The assignment of coded user levels will prevent employees from entering restricted areas.

- IdeaBank is compatible with two different browsers: Explorer (4.0 or higher) and Netscape (6.0 or higher)
- An intranet server running Cold Fusion software driver is required. (It is available from Macromedia for \$1,299)
- A SQL or Access database is required.
- Discussion Group software is required. (Cost: \$1,200 – \$4,000)
- IdeaBank is easy to install off a CD or download.

**Optional e-Change hosting of pilot I-Bank site:**

\$40/month. No driver costs are required, All data can be transferred to your intranet at any point. A simple link from your intranet goes to a secure e-Change area for your IdeaBank. NOTE: E-Change is currently hosting secure visionary planning sites for GM the Works, West LB Bank, Columbia House, Xerox and many other major corporations.

**F. Customer Support**

**I-Bank** provides customer service and support in two ways: 1) Web-based, via e-changesolutions.com ; 2) Phone-based, via our toll free number: 877-835-3157 (Mon. – Sat. 9:00 AM -7:00 PM EST) . Additional support contracts may be purchased separately at a cost of \$75/hour for programming and \$40/hour for HTML customization.

**G. Two Ways to to Get Started****a. Schedule a demo**

Call 1-800-755–IDEA and we’ll schedule a 30-45 minute online/phone demo for you ASAP. Once you’ve been through the tour, you can return to the demo site any time within the following 10 days to show others in your organization.

**b. Purchase a license**

All licenses are one-time fees, with user numbers specified. Additional users will require additional license fees. The Idea Champions – E-Change Joint Venture will always notify your company of its eligibility for any free or commercial updates to IdeaBank.

**H. Development**

Michael Schacker of e-Change, in conjunction with e-Change programmers, graphic designers and Idea Champions’ Mitch Ditkoff, will create the final **I-Bank** design for your organization. In addition, Michael Schacker will work closely with your IT team to install the customized **I-Bank** software. The software will take 2 – 4 weeks to customize, depending on the specifications. E-Change's software libraries and Cold Fusion SQL language make the database development very rapid. E-Change will supply your organization with a full final Design Specification as well as a “Test Matrix” to systematize the customization and installation process.

*Respectfully submitted*

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*[www.ideachampions.com](http://www.ideachampions.com)*