

IThink: Innovative Collaboration Project Increases Telecom Italia's Competitive Edge Starting from Within

“Telecom Italia selected Cisco as a benchmark and to help implement IThink because of their experience with Web 2.0 solutions such as Ciscopedia, blogging, I-Zone, I-Prize, and social networking. Having the opportunity to count on the availability of IBSG resources to develop specific solutions based on a selection of best practices was equally compelling.”

— Salvatore Mizzi, head of Digital Innovation, Telecom Italia

In Brief

Telecom Italia, the incumbent service provider in Italy with 80,000 employees, is facing stiff competition to provide products and services based on innovative technologies. Knowing that change begins internally, Telecom Italia is undertaking a major, strategic transformation program aimed at creating a modern, flexible, multidimensional communications business, starting with its employees. To execute this ambitious plan, the company is pursuing a combination of tried and tested approaches that have served it well over the years, while at the same time tapping new competitive assets to improve competency and reliability and underpin the company's leadership across its increasingly convergent operations. To start, Telecom Italia is taking advantage of the collaboration opportunities offered by Web 2.0—such as wikis and blogs—to develop a web portal called IThink that will help employees contribute to the company's strategy in real time. In addition, the company plans to extend IThink to clients and partners, encouraging them to contribute according to their needs and market requirements. This innovative approach will help Telecom Italia deepen its ties with customers and stakeholders, as well as develop integrated solutions for every facet of its business.

Customer

Telecom Italia

Industry

Service Provider

Challenges

The following challenges are a result of Telecom Italia's goal to enact a more customer-driven strategy, one that involves customer feedback and participation:

- Adopt an open innovation approach to encourage talent-scouting opportunities.
- Identify new ideas and potential products/services.
- Create a global innovation network using new Web 2.0 technologies and social networking tools.



Cisco Internet Business Solutions Group (IBSG)

Solutions

- IBSG and Telecom Italia worked together to define new processes in the area of collaboration where IBSG built specific solutions based on a selection of best practices, to help the service provider become a recognized, leading innovator. For example, IBSG shared key performance indicators, network and user impact, and results on designing a process similar to I-Prize. IBSG also shared with Telecom Italia Cisco's Web 2.0 vision, implementation, and customers' experiences.
- The IThink web portal is a key result of IBSG's and Telecom Italia's collaboration efforts. IThink enables internal users to propose and share new, innovative ideas for products and services by taking advantage of social networking and Web 2.0 tools to create an open environment for discussion, experimentation, and creativity.
 - This collaborative and innovative work tool is also available to external partners such as universities and foundations, providing all users with a general view of R&D activities, shared documents, and materials pertaining to ongoing projects.
 - All contributions are entered into the Ideas section of IThink; users then vote on the ideas. After a set, minimum threshold is passed, ideas are sent to a committee of internal and external experts/consultants, who analyze both the technical aspects and business potentials using appropriate decision-support tools for defining which ideas to adopt.
 - Their positive evaluations are posted in the Evaluation section, along with explanations for why the idea was approved and information about what led to the development of the project (there is a similar process for addressing a negative evaluation).
 - In this way, the tool's transparency and procedures are guaranteed, thus gaining user trust in and credibility of the process. Once the prototype process is completed, the product/service is tested by a select panel of users.

Next Steps

- Cisco Internet Business Solutions Group continues to be heavily involved with Telecom Italia during the pilot phase to trial Web 2.0 innovation processes and quantify the pilot's impact. The program's goals include:
 - Increasing productivity and enhancing internal atmosphere.
 - Providing accuracy in selecting experts, making knowledge that was previously hidden available for reuse.
 - Expanding training content through a peer-production process that must conform to peer-review rules and the community's judgment.
- Provide governance in the areas of project execution and operation enablement.
- Telecom Italia intends to adopt an open innovation approach to encourage talent-scouting opportunities, identify new ideas and potential products/services, and create a global innovation network using Web 2.0 technologies and social networking tools. While this innovative approach to collaboration reduces time spent researching new ideas and increases the pool of potential innovations, it requires notable effort when analyzing proposals during the evaluation phase.

Projected Results / Benefits (Qualitative)

- Enable users to present, manage, and view ideas and projects within a network.
- Enhance the Telecom Italia brand and employee skills/talents.

- Stimulate innovation by facilitating collaboration and knowledge sharing.
- Create a global innovation network through social networking tools.
- Integrate external talent into the organization, potentially for recruiting purposes.

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