

Getting Ideas Implemented

Establishing your Evaluation Team

There are a number of options:

- * **A team of full time Evaluators** is my preferred option (this may be impractical though for smaller organizations, or where numbers of ideas received are expected to be low.)
 - Evaluators have only one task to focus on - evaluating ideas.
 - They can give quick responses to suggestions.
 - They are able to build close communication links with the Suggestion Administration Team.
- * **Appoint a team of part-time Evaluators.**
 - Again, clear communication links need to be established with the admin team.
 - Suggestions must be evaluated and responses sent quickly.
 - Roles and responsibilities agreed and formalized as part of their job.
 - Sufficient time must be allowed to properly carry out the role.
- * **Call on specific expertise** within the business **as it is required**, a simple process that does not intimidate new evaluators, as ideas are delegated to the responsible areas.
- * Enable easy access to instructions/advice if new to the role.

Choosing your Evaluators

- * Evaluators should include **Senior Members of the Management Team**, able to make decisions on the viability of suggestions and give commitment for implementation.
- * Ideally they **should be**:
 - Good communicators.
 - Fair.
 - Open-minded.
 - Have a good sense of urgency.
 - Experts in their particular field.
 - Strong supporters of the suggestion scheme.
 - Committed to its success.
- * Develop a process for regularly gaining **feedback from Evaluators**
- * Give regular **recognition to your Evaluators**.
(Acknowledge the vital role they will have played in successfully Implemented ideas)

The Evaluation Process

Here is a typical process for a Centralised Suggestion Scheme:

1. An **employee has an idea**. They may be required/want to discuss it with or have it signed-off by their line manager
But be aware that a Suggestion Scheme on its own will not address poor Management Styles. Staff may prefer to send suggestions directly to the admin team.
2. **Employees send** their suggestions.;
 - Either in paper form.
 - Or electronically.
 - Or even verbally - to the Scheme Administration Team.
3. **The submission** should capture as concisely as possible such things as:
 - The suggestors name/ location/ phone number.
 - The current situation.
 - Suggestion.
 - Benefits.

((Try not to ask for too much detail and keep it simple. If necessary you can always go to the suggestor for more details.
Remember it's the idea you want rather than how it is presented.)
4. Suggestions are **logged/ filed in** either a manual or automated system and given a unique number.
5. Members of staff are often given some form of **instant recognition** - pen/ mug etc - perhaps with special recognition for individuals who have made multiple *original* suggestions.
6. Suggestions are **checked for duplication**. *Some organizations are alerted if, over a period, they continue to get duplicates.*
7. The suggestion is **sent to the appropriate Evaluator** and a letter of acknowledgement sent to the suggestor.

8. Ideally, **Scheme Administrators contact the Evaluator** by phone/e-mail and discuss the suggestion. This has the following advantages:

- * In many cases there **can be an immediate response** and the suggestion can be progressed or declined quickly.
- * Where **more consideration** needs to be given.
 - the suggestion itself is sent to the evaluator.
 - a holding letter sent to the person making the suggestion.
- * Generally, however, suggestions are **sent to the Evaluator** by the Scheme Administrator **without prior discussion**, having first been logged in the system by the admin team, although:
 1. All ideas will be subject to **delay while in transit** (especially if the suggestion is sent to the wrong evaluator)
 2. There is the danger of suggestions being filed in the **Evaluator's In Tray** (with the obvious delays and need for follow-up requests)
- * Evaluators will give the go ahead for the suggestion to be **implemented or decline it**.
- * When sending a **negative response** to the person making the suggestion.
 - it is important that a clear and full reason is given
 - try to avoid the word decline (or worse still rejected)
 - use phrases such as the idea "is not viable at this time" or "unable to be adopted."

Note: The most successful Suggestion Schemes exist in an environment where there is complete transparency.

9. The **Evaluator** considers the suggestion and **responds in detail** to the admin team who will update their records and forward the response to the suggestor.

- the admin team may occasionally challenge the Evaluator if they consider the decision to be flawed (perhaps the Evaluator has misunderstood.)
- similarly they will act on behalf of the suggestor if he/she is unhappy with the decision.

10. Decision to **adopt and implement** the suggestion
- suggestor will be advised that the suggestion could be further developed.
 - the Evaluator will generally be the person who will project manage the implementation, but this is not mandatory of course.
 - it is a good idea to involve the suggestor in the implementation of their idea. This avoids the danger of suggestions falling into a "Black Hole."
- * Many ideas will have non-financial or **non-tangible benefits**
(Be sure to give appropriate recognition if there is to be no cash award.)
- * A full costing exercise is carried out to **determine the net savings** on which an award and/or recognition can be made.
1. An **interim award** may be paid if a suggestion is to be implemented over a long period.
 2. A **top-up payment** can be made on completion.
 3. A **post implementation costing exercise** may also be carried out if it is felt that the savings have, over time, exceeded the initial sum. An appropriate additional award/recognition can be made.
 4. Alternatively you may take the **'snapshot' approach**.
 - calculate at the time the award is determined against expected savings (If subsequently the savings increase or decrease then no adjustment either way is made to the award.)
- * Be sure to attract as much **publicity** as possible when an **award or recognition** is given.
- * Be sure to **publicise small successes**.

Note: You may want to consider a regular review of old declined ideas to see if changes in technology etc. mean that they have become valid. Remember to reflect this in your Scheme Rules, in terms of ideas that naturally have been implemented since being declined.

Be careful **not to overload** particular evaluators

- consider drip-feeding ideas a few at a time if required, to give the evaluator some breathing space
- keep the suggestor informed of progress
- * It is important to **appreciate some of the problems** that an evaluator may have:
 - part-time evaluators will have other priorities
 - they will get many suggestions that are clearly not viable or presented badly (try to make sure you filter these out before sending) or many "small step improvement" suggestions.
 - they may not be recognised properly and often enough, in view of the critical role they play in the scheme.
 - all too often time is not taken to give them training in their role and a clear understanding of how the suggestion scheme fits into the business.
 - they will do most of the work but someone else will get the award.

* **Review** the whole **process regularly**:

- At least every 6 months with input from all staff at all levels
- consider focus groups/ dedicated surveys/ part of staff surveys/ intranet
- use output from the review to measure standards and set objectives
- * Include a description of the Scheme and submission process in **Induction Packs** for new employees.