“Game”- Changing Innovation Made Easy: Parking Wars

THE OPPORTUNITY
D&D Automation, a controls integrator based in Stratford, Ontario, was on an evolutionary path. Established in 1992, the growing company was looking to transition from being a services-only to a product and fee-for-service-based business. The challenge was how to motivate and equip D&D employees to contribute to the company’s transformation.

THE SOLUTION
Having learned about Juice Inc.’s Innovation in a Box program, D&D invited Juice to provide internal training on the i5 process: a strategic five-stage process and set of tools that fuels innovative thinking.

Following training, D&D created its own “Seal Team” to oversee innovation within the organization. The Seal Team created a shortlist of opportunities for innovation, using a ranking process to identify something that could create impact within a 90-day period.

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Like many companies, the parking lot provided upper management with reserved parking spots closest to the building. “Everyone else had to fight for the rest of the spots—some of them a pretty far walk from the main door,” says Michael McCourt, president of D&D Automation.

Using the i5 process and tools, the Seal Team developed and presented a new solution to D&D’s parking woes. Rather than invest tens of thousands of dollars to repave and expand the parking lot, they proposed Parking Wars: turning D&D’s parking lot into a life-sized game board.

As part of Parking Wars, D&D opened up all managers’ spots to employees and created:

- four “Early Bird” parking spots close to the door, which any employee could park in (with in-and-out privileges for an entire day);
- the “Furthest Five” spot (the furthest five spots from the building);
- a one-hour parking spot right by the door; and
- a “Primo Parking” spot.

Essentially, Parking Wars rewarded employees with points if they parked in one of the “furthest five” (five spots furthest away from the office). When accumulated, employees could use their points for a week of Primo (exclusive) Parking, or bank them for gift cards.
Parking Wars quickly became a friendly social competition among co-workers. Almost immediately, employees began clamoring for the furthest five spots in hopes of accumulating points.

“Sometimes the first person here in the morning parks in the worst spot in the lot,” remarks Michael. “How does that happen, where the first person here takes the very worst spot?”

Today, it’s not unusual to see several parking vacancies closer to the building—perfect for employees who go in and out of the office throughout the day.

“Even if you don’t want to participate in Parking Wars, you benefit because there are spots closest to the building available to you,” says Michael. “In other words, there is no way you can’t benefit from this innovation.”

D&D has seen other indirect benefits since implementing Parking Wars.

When meeting new clients, the company shares its story of how Parking Wars came to fruition. “We tell clients that if we can do something this creative with just our parking lot, imagine what we can do for them,” says Michael.

Moreover, implementing Parking Wars has shown employees that innovation does not have to be complex.

“The best ideas are simple, but they’re not always easy to find,” says Michael. “The rigour and process of Innovation in a Box and the i5 process take the complexity out of being innovative. In fact, I don’t think what we did could have been possible without Juice. The i5 is going to be a toolkit we plan to use for a long time—for innovations big and small.”

Parking Wars is now a permanent fixture at D&D: its presence a constant reminder to employees that innovation opportunities exist, even in the simplest of things.

THE RESULTS

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