

How Entrepreneurial Ideas Can Provide Value for Suncor

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Chris Fitzgerald has always loved to solve problems. Ever since he started with Petro-Canada over 15 years ago, he has worked all over Suncor with one common theme-taking complex problems and finding solutions that work for employees, leaders and the business.

Chris, who is currently a development manager focused on optimization for Business and Operations Services at Suncor, and his team were recently recognized for an innovative way to solve some of the most complex issues at the company. The 'idea blast' is an entrepreneurial concept designed to generate a lot of ideas in a short amount of time, before narrowing them down with the help of a team of judges.

"The idea blast came about due to a perfect storm of needs," says Chris. "It needed to address three things: better engagement with end-users, introducing new ideas and increasing the development pace."

For the inaugural idea blast, Suncor's supply chain team was selected. The supply chain team was up to the task, they embraced new ways of working, provided dedicated team members to join the team, and even pitched the concepts to the executive team together. To Chris, the key to a successful idea blast is an effective partnership with the end-user of the solution.

"It's fundamental," adds Chris. "Suncor is a complex organization. Without partnership new ideas or solutions might not resonate with the team that will use it in their daily work. If the people designing the solution are the ones who ultimately use it, it creates a much more successful solution."

The idea blast started with hundreds of ideas from Suncor supply chain employees as well as external partners and vendors. Connecting with people outside of our company was key to generating new and unique ideas. After brainstorming the initial ideas, the team refined a list of over 100 ideas over the course of three months, culminating in a pitch with the innovation board for feedback and approval.

Currently, Suncor's innovation team is proceeding with two digital concepts from the idea blast with the potential to improve worker experience in the field and support the Northern Lights Project, a digitalization project that intends to enhance operations across all of Suncor's sites. The two ideas were created by employees and there is potential for the ideas to be applied across Suncor.

Idea blast was a finalist for a Suncor Excellence Award in the People's Choice category. Suncor Excellence Awards have been handed out for the past 20 years at the company. The awards are used to recognize and celebrate employees and contractors who are leading the way in strengthening our company's culture and living Suncor's purpose and values.

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