

The Playbook for Successful Idea Programs in 2025

How to run idea campaigns that drive measurable business impact and engage employees

In review

Shopping with smart mirrors

Trial having an interactive mirror... with AI technology that recogn... customers preferences based on...

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New idea

Eco-friendly even...

Organise workshops and ev... sustainability, such as eco... sessions, talks by environn...

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Implement

Leadership drop-in sessions

Allocate a day each month where employees can get closer to leadership via a virtual 1-1 drop-in where ideas can be shared and...

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Introduction

Empower your people, elevate your business

Launching an employee ideas program can feel daunting: will you get enough ideas? Will it take forever to manage? And will those ideas even make a difference?

Plus, let's be real—keeping your people excited and engaged can sometimes feel like an uphill battle.

But it doesn't have to be that way.

In this playbook, we'll show you how to make it easy, fun, and wildly effective to gather and implement ideas that can drive *real* change.

And the best part? You don't need to drown your people in emails or endless surveys to get there. With our system, you can:



Unlock happier humans

Watch **employee engagement** soar as your people feel seen, heard, and valued.



Save big, stress less

Shave hours (and headaches) off your plate, all while you **boost the bottom line**.



Spark change

Empower your people to lead with their own brilliant ideas—it's **change management** with a dash of innovation

How?

We'll introduce you to our **START framework**. It's like your campaign GPS. It has 5 stages:

Stakeholders

Pick who to involve in your employee ideas campaign

Theme

Lock in a goal that'll spark your employees' creativity

Audience

Decide on your target audience, and how you'll collect data

Results

Define the outcomes and metrics you'll keep an eye on

Timelines

Set those all-important timelines to stay on track

So... ready to get started?

Suggested stakeholders



Who should you involve in your campaign?

The right stakeholders can make or break your employee ideas campaign.

You need to gather the dream team that will steer the ship, champion the cause, and keep the wheels of your campaign turning.

We've pulled together **7 key personas** you'll want on your radar.

And, before you panic—no, you don't need to wrangle 7 different people! But making sure each of these roles is covered in some way is your best bet for a campaign that runs like clockwork—and actually works.

 Campaign sponsor	<p>The spearhead. This is your go-to person for securing the budget and resources needed to get the campaign rolling. They'll also be backing the winning ideas when it's time to bring them to life.</p>
 Campaign manager	<p>The owners. Responsible for the day-to-day running of the campaign, project management and making sure the whole thing's a success from start to finish.</p>
 Idea manager(s)	<p>The drivers. They're the go-to for moving ideas along the pipeline, sending updates, and closing ideas down when needed.</p>
 Expert reviewers	<p>The evaluators. In charge of reviewing the top ideas, offering timely expert insights, and giving valuable feedback to your idea submitters.</p>
 Champions	<p>Your hype squad—responsible for promoting the campaign, spreading the word, and rallying behind submitted ideas and idea-makers to keep the momentum going.</p>
 Implementers	<p>They make sure the best ideas don't just sit on a whiteboard. Whether it's clearing roadblocks or rolling up their sleeves to get things done, they turn great ideas into real-world wins.</p>
 Internal comms	<p>They're in charge of building buzz—before, during, and after the campaign. Their mission? Boost engagement and share those success stories.</p>

Task



[Download our campaign builder template here](#)

So, who's doing what?

Using the table above, whip up an Excel sheet to list out the key stakeholders you'll need to make this ideas campaign a hit.

Jot down their names, roles, and maybe even a note on why they're essential to have on board. This will be your "who's who" guide for success!

Theme

What's your goal?

Before you dive in, let's talk about why you're running this campaign in the first place.

What's the goal? At Sideways 6, we've seen **3 big reasons** behind most employee ideas campaigns:



Business improvement and innovation

Find ways to save time and money, and **generate revenue.**



Employee engagement

Get your people excited, involved, and **reduce churn.**



Transformation

Guide your business through change, with your people on board.

Pick your theme wisely—it'll shape everything from the ideas you gather to the impact you make!

We'll walk you through how you can get started with each theme, and the sorts of questions you can ask to **get maximum engagement** and **high quality ideas.**

Business improvement and innovation

Business improvement campaigns are all about snagging ideas that can streamline processes, cut costs, boost revenue, or even launch brand-new products or services.

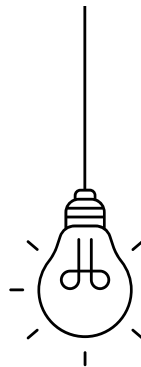
Take a look below for inspiration on how to get the ball rolling.

What's your big idea for cutting waste across the business?

What would you do to boost our water production efficiency?

What's your next big idea for a killer kidswear or beauty line?

What smart hacks do you have to save costs across the company?



Insights based on Sideways 6 campaign data

- Most business improvement campaigns ask "What" questions.
- "What" questions tend to spark the most ideas and get people talking.

\$96M

Saved and generated through efficiency ideas at **Balfour Beatty** with Sideways 6

Theme

Employee engagement

Employees just don't stick around like they used to, and replacing them? That's a pricey game.

But here's the thing: when employees feel heard, they're happier—and they're more likely to stay put.

By asking for their ideas and actually listening, you're showing them that their opinions count. And, honestly, that's what really counts for them.

Employee engagement campaigns usually aim to:

- Boost the employee experience
- Streamline efficiency
- Level up your customer experience

Check out the infographic below for some ideas on how to make this happen and get your team more engaged than ever.

Give your idea a short title*

Virtual coworking subscription as employee benefit

Please provide a brief description of your idea*

Provide employees with membership to an online virtual coworking platform—to support remote working. (100 words max)

Could you estimate how long it would take for your idea to be implemented?

Less than a week 1 - 6 months

1 week - 1 month 6 months +

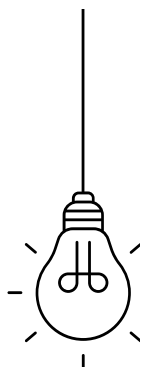
Submit

Complete 75%

Capture ideas from a wider audience with an embedded form for employees outside of MS Teams

How could we improve your day-to-day working life?

How can we help you achieve a better work-life balance?



What ideas do you have for better training and development?

What smart ideas do you have to make your daily work more efficient?

Insights based on Sideways 6 campaign data
 Most employee engagement campaigns use “How” questions and are the second most popular way to ask a question across all campaigns.

75% Increase in employee engagement at **Marks & Spencer** when they moved their ideas program into Teams

Theme

Transformation

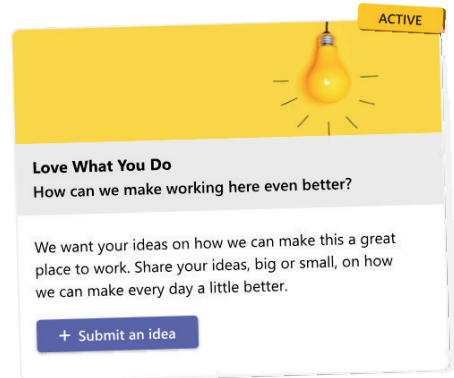
Change doesn't have to be a top-down drag. When you bring employees into the mix and let their ideas help shape the transformation, it's amazing what can happen.

Not only does it make the change feel more like a team effort, but it also gives everyone a sense of ownership—which makes them more likely to embrace the shift.

Transformation campaigns usually aim to:

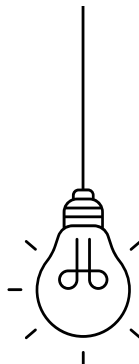
- Build a culture of innovation
- Sharpen up processes
- Drive impactful changes across the business

Take a look below to see the kinds of transformation campaigns you can run to shake things up and lead the charge for change!



Have an idea to drive change and help us crush our sustainability goals?

How could we use technology better to fuel innovation at [company name]?



Do you have ideas on how we could evolve our R&D to get products to market faster?

How could we adopt AI more broadly in our company to drive innovation or efficiency?


Insights based on Sideways 6 campaign data

Most transformation campaigns revolve around "Have..." questions—they're perfect for sparking employee ideas on specific projects or challenges.

50% Of employees at Vueling engaged in transformation by accessing the Sideways 6 app

Task

1. What's your campaign theme?
2. Why do you want to focus on this?
3. Go back to your stakeholder task - who needs to be involved?

 [Download our campaign builder template](#)

Audience

Who's in? Defining your campaign audience

Before you hit go on your employee ideas campaign, you need to think about who you want to engage. Are you rallying the whole company, or focusing on a specific group?

Casting a wide net can spark more ideas, but targeting a specific team might give you deeper insights. Both approaches have their perks, so make sure your choice matches your campaign goals.

Let's break it down!

All employees

Running an all-employee campaign means opening the floor to everyone—every department, every perspective. Here's why that's awesome:

😊 Benefits:

1. **Diverse perspectives:** You'll get a flood of ideas from across the business, tapping into insights you might not expect.
2. **Inclusivity:** It's a win for company culture—everyone feels heard and part of the process.
3. **Better problem-solving:** More brains = better solutions. A wider range of ideas means you're more likely to crack those tricky problems.
4. **Boosted engagement:** When employees feel valued and heard, they're more likely to be invested in their work.

Segmented employees

Running a campaign with a specific group of employees lets you zero in on a select crowd with shared interests or expertise. It's like crowdsourcing with a laser focus.

😊 Benefits:

1. **Expertise:** You'll get top-notch, relevant ideas from employees who know their stuff in the area you're tackling.
2. **Efficiency:** Smaller groups mean less noise and more focus, so you can move faster and with clearer direction.
3. **Less resource strain:** Fewer ideas to sift through means less time and manpower spent managing the process.
4. **Tailored campaign:** You can customise the campaign to the needs of the project, bringing in just the right people with the skills to match.

Task



[Download our campaign builder template](#)

Make a record of who your campaign will target: All employees or specific employees?

Think about the volume and quality of results you want to get, and if you are running a time-bound campaign or an always-on campaign (more on that later).




Results

How to know you're nailing it

Running a killer ideas campaign is great, but how do you know if it's actually working? That's where setting the right metrics comes in.

Whether you're focusing on **business improvement**, **employee engagement**, or **transformation**, tracking the right data is key to monitoring success—and figuring out where you can tweak things for next time.

Check out the table below for ideas on what metrics to track, based on your campaign theme and goals. Remember, it's all about keeping things measurable, so you know when to celebrate (or make adjustments).

 Business improvement	 Employee engagement	 Transformation
£/\$ of costs saved	% or bps increase in employee engagement score (eNPS)	% or bps increase in organisational health index
£/\$ of revenue generated	% of audience engaged	No. of unique ideas shared
No. of hours saved	% increase in employee retention	% of employees who believe in the strategy
Velocity of ideas to market	% reduction in employee churn	% of people feeling close to the business
No. of innovation projects	% increase in number of employees 'feeling heard'	% of audience engaged

Task

Note down the metrics you want to track. How can these tie in with the overall goals of your business?

Tip: when starting out you may want to begin with a simple KPI, such as % of audience engaged or % of ideas implemented.

Timeline

When's the right time to wrap up?

Should your campaign be an ongoing, always-open hub for ideas, or a focused, time-bound sprint? Both have their perks. Ongoing campaigns keep the ideas flowing, while time-bound ones create urgency and focus.

Let's break it down!

Always on

An Always-On campaign runs nonstop, ready to scoop up ideas whenever inspiration strikes. It's the ultimate long-term strategy for capturing those genius thoughts anytime, anywhere. Here's why it works:

😊 Benefits:

1. **Continuous engagement:** Keeps the ideas coming all year round, so employees stay engaged and in the loop.
2. **Flexibility:** Employees can submit their ideas whenever works for them—no pressure, just creativity.
3. **Long-term innovation:** It builds a culture of constant innovation, where fresh ideas are always welcome.
4. **Consistent feedback:** Regular feedback on ideas keeps employees feeling involved and valued.

Time-bound

Time-bound campaigns run for a set period and are perfect for gathering ideas around a specific business challenge. Here's a look at the perks:

😊 Benefits:

1. **Urgency:** A ticking clock gets people moving! Time-bound campaigns create that urgency, motivating quick participation.
2. **Concentrated effort:** All hands on deck! Everyone focuses on solving one key issue or tackling a specific initiative.
3. **Less resource strain:** Fewer ideas to manage means less time and effort needed to sift through submissions.
4. **Tailored approach:** You can fine-tune the campaign to suit the project, picking themes that will have the biggest impact on your business.

Task

Jot down some ideas for your campaign timeline.

For example, you might kick things off with one "always-on" campaign, plus a time-bound one that pops up each quarter.



[Download our campaign builder template](#)

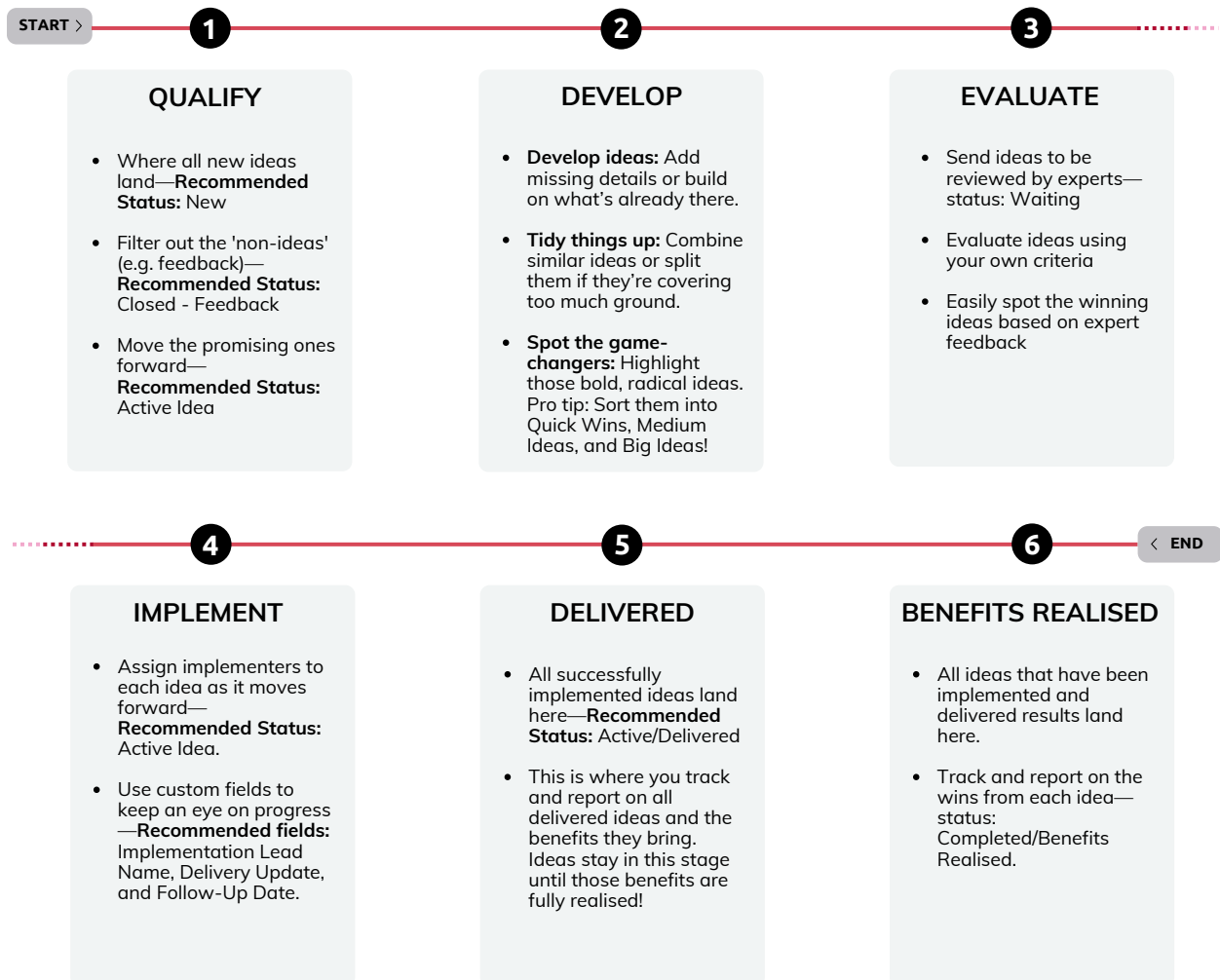
Structure

From idea to impact—How to structure your campaign

Kicking off an employee ideas campaign is exciting stuff! But to turn great ideas into real results, a bit of structure goes a long way. Think of it like a roadmap: without one, those brilliant ideas can get lost or stall out.

By setting up a clear path—from submission to delivery—you'll keep things moving and make it easier to spot the game-changing ideas that can really make a difference.

Don't worry—we've got a simple model lined up for you, laying out the ideal status at each stage. It's the perfect way to help everyone stay in the loop on where each idea is in the funnel.



Structure

What’s the Big Question? Broad vs. Specific

When it comes to asking for ideas, the type of question you ask matters. Do you want to keep things broad and open-ended to spark a wide range of ideas? Or go more specific, targeting a particular problem or area?

There’s benefits to each approach, and the choice depends on your campaign goals. Check out the infographic below to help you decide which question style fits your needs best!

	Broad	Medium	Specific
The why	Leadership want to spread the word and get more eyes on a company strategy	You want fresh ideas to nail down a specific goal within an overall strategy	You’re after ideas that hit a more specific objective / criteria
Example	“How can we become carbon neutral by 2030?”	“How can we reduce environmental waste?”	“How can we cut the amount we travel for business?”
Benefits	Sky-high engagement, tons of ideas, and a broad mix of perspectives	Solid engagement, and a high rate of ideas that actually get implemented	Top-notch ideas, maximum implementation rate, efficient campaign
Disadvantages	Idea quality is lower	Engagement is usually lower long-term	Lower volume of ideas

Task



[Download our campaign builder template](#)

Know your stakeholders, campaign audience and timeline?

Now’s the time to jot some ideas down for your campaign question. Why not rope in some of your stakeholders to vote on their favourite?

Structure

Ask a little more—Get a lot in return

When employees submit an idea, it pays to ask a few extra questions up front. Why? Because the more you know about their thinking, the better you can evaluate their suggestions.

These questions help you get the full picture and boost the chances of landing some seriously high-quality ideas. Ready to dig deeper? Let's explore what to ask!

 Question type	 Question examples	 Answer types
Idea name	What is the name of the idea?	Free text
Submitter's department/team/region	What department/team/region do you work in?	Multiple choice
Idea department/team/region	What department/team/region would your idea benefit?	Multiple choice
Problem	In 100 words or less, what problem is your idea trying to solve?	Free text
Solution	In 100 words or less, please explain how your idea could be implemented	Free text
Benefit type	What type of benefit might your idea bring?	Multiple choice
Submitter responsibility	Are you prepared to develop and/or deliver the idea?	Yes/No
Innovation type	Is this a brand new product, process or service (radical idea) or an improvement to an existing product (incremental improvement)?	Multiple choice
Strategic pillar	Which strategic pillar does your idea relate to?	Multiple choice

Boost engagement, cut costs, and manage change the easy way...

Imagine having a system that:

- Seamlessly collects ideas from every corner of your company
- Automatically sorts and categorises submissions (no more spreadsheet nightmares!)
- Helps you easily spot those game-changing ideas
- And enables you to track progress like a boss

Sound too good to be true?

Discover the easy way to gather your employee ideas and transform them into game-changing innovations.

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