

Excerpt from *Innovation Tournaments: Creating and Selecting Exceptional Opportunities*

The professional services organization Deloitte conducts an annual innovation tournament. The objective of this tournament is to identify the innovative ideas occurring everyday at client sites or field operations, to bring them to the core of the organization for incubation and development, and then to deliver them back to the edge so more clients or personnel benefit from them. The tournament, which Deloitte refers to as Innovation Quest, also fosters an ongoing culture of innovation.

Deloitte's innovation tournament includes three phases: ideation, collaboration, and evaluation. In the ideation phase, all 43,000 employees of Deloitte are invited to submit ideas electronically. Innovation leaders and subject-matter experts from relevant disciplines within the organization review and select ideas to move to the next phase. In the collaboration phase, idea owners build a team and solicit feedback on their ideas. Feedback is obtained from a diverse set of backgrounds available in the organization, leading to a significant enhancement of the initial proposals. During the final evaluation phase, all Deloitte personnel are encouraged to provide their views on the most promising concepts – they vote for the best ideas – which is a significant factor in determining the winners.

To date, more than one thousand ideas have been submitted to Deloitte's Innovation Quest, and more than 90 individual winners have been named. Winners received monetary rewards and gained exposure to senior leadership. Among the winning ideas were a new enterprise sustainability service, which allows clients to measure, improve, and sustain their social and environmental performance, and a new talent management suite, consisting of solutions designed to enhance an organization's ability to attract, develop, engage, and retain talent.

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