CrowdSourcing into real product - phase II

I'm stirred today to write a comment on this MyCustomer.com post, "Ross Dawson: Six tools to kickstart your crowdsourcing strategy" that surfaced on Twitter the last few days.

See this tweetdoc for activity.

In general, it's a great post, and I am continually intrigued and inspired by the very notion of crowdsourcing for innovation, which has many elements -- Ross provides a nice overview of the following concepts in particular:

- *Distributed innovation platforms*
- *Idea platforms*
- *Innovation prizes*
- *Content markets*
- *Prediction markets*
- *Competition platforms*

My questions though arise in the definition of crowdsourcing - *and where does it start and stop, in terms of the process?*

For me, on face, the word denotes pure collaboration, with a purpose based on the crowdsourced event or goals -- yet not merely at the front end of the process.

Products like Spigit or Brightidea, among others, provide great provocation, good vetting and a tangible platform pull for crowdsourcing innovation ideas.

What is not discussed is phase II

Great ideas, great contests for up-front vetting, great community rally getting people to help push the ideas forward, competition, prediction, etc. - all excellent, and all this data is now in a *system*.

But beyond, where does the data go?

- To me, the data needs a seamless phase II. It needs to go into a tacit development project system, ideally automatically, to push the ideas into life.

- To me, the vetted ideas now become product roadmap feature lists and design discussions, systematically, thus requiring direct integrations into in-house task and project management systems driving agile software development teams that may be geographically dispersed.

- To me, ideas that don't end up in a development or planning "system" for execution, quickly and painlessly preferably, *can easily fall into the "just ideas" category - as fleeting as the next guys'.*

> ⚠ The notion of floating meeting ideas come to mind. I used to call them "airball meetings".
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> How many times have you been at a meeting with brilliant minds, and brilliant ideas -- all floating around, *in the air* -- and no one writes them down, or puts them into a system. Then the next week comes, and um, let's rehash and refloat those ideas again, and again... (and I've also been guilty -- don't get me wrong!)

What is simply AWESOME about innovation platforms is not merely the community collaboration elicited. I think it's about *the enormous collected data* over anything else -- in a system -- so much data that needs a life beyond.

Collected data, utilized, is extremely powerful.

Phase II - making the data useful in the software development lifecycle

With phase II, new product and innovation ideas that began, can now begin to come to life with the right hosted, shared, and collaborative environment. Phase II is the software development process (SDLC) -- with direct data integrations of innovation platforms' data into systems.

It would look like this:

- Valuable data from the innovation platforms flow directly -- systematically -- into a task or issue workflow management system, like Atlassian JIRA, to further kick off the agile SDLC.

  - Corresponding idea details, categories, priorities, voting, use cases, or other data are also mapped, and continually pushed directly into JIRA.

- Feasibility of the ideas are further vetted through online discussion threads.

- Confluence wiki is used to enable collaboration, requirements vetting, and community development among the team.

  In fact, the dev team may even have been elicited by the initial crowdsourcing community. Conceptually, the dev team needs fluid communications channels, rich tools platforms, and they need it remotely accessible, cloud hosted -- not constrained by timezones, office hours, or card key access.

- GreenHopper agile planning tool is used to plan and progress the project forward, with weekly scrum and/or kanban agile SDLC management.

- Shared codebase (e.g., SVN), FishEye, Crucible, Crowd, continuous integration and good team agile processes are of course also core -- accessible from any corner of the Internet. Afterall, engagement flows will speed up globalization.
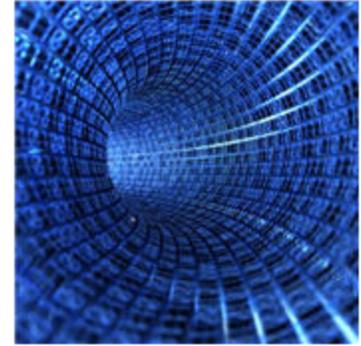
Am I stretching the term too much?

There is this one point in Wikipedia's definition:

> *Individuals who participate in crowdsourcing projects are often anonymous,*

Am I stretching the definition too much?

I'm not sure.

While the origination of the term may have come from open anonymous approaches, keep in mind that the innovation platforms called out above are not merely anonymous. These are being sold into large closed organizations... So thinking that anonymous part is just a nit.

Maybe initially an open and anonymous crowd may work, but to translate into really making something - hmm....

Well that's my thoughts -- and in my crowdsource group of one here, 🙂 **vote was thumbs up, unanimous!** 👍