

## edison365ideas built on Microsoft Office 365 helps Exxaro meet business challenges with transparent ideation.

Exxaro is one of the largest and foremost black-empowered, diversified resources companies, with current business interests in South Africa, Europe and USA. Although just 11 years old, Exxaro's pedigree and skills were built over decades as a company rooted in South Africa and respected by its peers for innovation, ethics and integrity. Exxaro's purpose is powering better lives in Africa and beyond by responsibly investing in mining, energy, water and agriculture. Exxaro's success depends on employee imagination and passion to drive business value, and encourages active collaboration, openness, connectivity, adaptability and creativity.

### Finding solutions

Exxaro faces many challenges across its core mining operations. Some, such as environmental issues and the working conditions of its field employees, are distinctive to its industry. Others, like employee and resource optimisation are common in most large companies.

Management decided that Exxaro's challenges could best be tackled by harnessing collective ideas from the workforce. *"We did not want to outsource the solving of our own business solutions to third parties,"* says Head of Innovation, Diksha Pillay. *"We believe our own people are much better positioned to understand the challenges we face, and have insight to generate holistic solutions that work best in our culture."*

Exxaro employees have shown they have creative ideas to share, but capturing and assessing these ideas proved tricky at first. There was no central collection point to access easily, and often good ideas were lost. In 2017 management decided to formalise the ideation process with an innovation programme called 'functional excellence', supported by ideation technology. The company tested a number of ideation platforms, using technical and business metrics to evaluate performance and fit with the company.



#### Industry

Coal, minerals and renewable energy



#### Location

Pretoria, South Africa



#### Challenge

Engaging employees to come forward with ideas to solve business issues.



#### Products and Services

edison365ideas for 6,000 users



#### Results

Underpins Exxaro's values, increased employee engagement, 14 new challenges, 88 new ideas, 35 under review and 3 successful solutions to challenges taken forward in the first 60 days



#### Partners

CPS  
Dake Solutions

## Perfect fit

At the end of 2017, the company became an active and comprehensive user of Microsoft Azure and Office 365. Exxaro evaluated the market for a platform aligned to its digital cloud needs and after recommendation focused on researching the award-winning Microsoft based solution edison365, which provided a modular end-to-end innovation management platform.

When Exxaro tested edison365**ideas**, it was clear that the company had found the right answer: a cloud hosted, unified idea and portfolio management platform designed to drive innovation and ideation. Built on Microsoft Office 365, edison365**ideas** easily integrated with Exxaro's other Microsoft systems, and most important, it ticked crucial boxes in Pillay's metrics.

*"edison365 is the perfect solution provider for us. With 6,000 users across multiple locations and with varying technical capabilities it was essential that the idea platform we selected was user friendly, looked fun and exciting to use, transparent, easy to configure with inhouse resources and allowed us to easily take ideas into a portfolio management solution like projects online. edison365 was the only solution that managed to do it all."*

Exxaro has planned its ideation programme closely with all its functional divisions: Information Management, Human Resources, Stakeholder Affairs and Sustainability, for example. Each division is assigned an innovation owner, responsible for identifying a groupwide or divisional challenge. The innovation owner then uploads the challenge, encourages participation, and manages and ranks the ideas for review and implementation.

In less than three months, 15 challenges have been set by the divisions, attracting ideas from all areas across the organisation with three successful ideas taken forward for implementation. Challenges loaded range from seeking a name and branding for Exxaro's cultural drive, to a quest for derisking a brownfields mining project plan and schedule during construction phase.

Many ideas relate to business efficiencies and cost savings. Others support core company objectives: reducing energy and water usage and potential innovation projects for trainee engineers, for example. The innovation team boosts the ideation programme by offering recognition awards, and has developed a self-help user guide to make the platform even easier to use.

*"We set high standards for the ideation platform we wanted. It needed to be accessible at any time and easy to use. Technically, it had to be simple for us to configure, and usable at limited data cost to the employee. edison365**ideas** solutions is highly integrated within our current product stack."*

Desmond Govender, Group Manager IM

## Measuring success

edison365**ideas** has already proved popular with employees and management, but Exxaro is rigorous in ensuring a return on ideas (ROI). Generating three successful solutions in less than two months exceeded all expectations.

The challenge for each functional division now is allocating time to evaluate and respond to ideas. The vision is for ideation and problem solving to become business as usual, with all staff collaborating to solve the organisation's business challenges. edison365**ideas** supports that vision with a single standard platform.

## Business benefits



Supports Exxaro's values of empowerment, teamwork, commitment to excellence, and honest accountability (ETCH).



Transparent so that all employees can see their idea is logged to their name.



Crowdsources great solutions from employees to solve operational challenges thereby creating collective intelligence.

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