VIA University
College

CASE STUDY

Digitalizing the approach to innovation to support sustainability and set students up for success

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Online collaborative communities to stimulate innovation are part of the learning process. We believe that students need to have these competencies so that they can take them into practice when they graduate.

Helle Eskesen Gode, PhD
VIA Business
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Medallia

SUMMARY

VIA University College is one of six in Denmark, with eight modern campuses in the region of Central Denmark. Their teaching model builds on Danish traditions of educating students in cooperation with professional practice.

VIA's leadership wanted to create a culture that promotes engagement, creativity, and new thinking across the organization and through external partners – an ongoing project called VIA Crowd Lab.

Choosing Medallia Ideas as their platform, VIA Crowd Lab is increasing engagement, creativity, and new thinking around the campuses; enhancing internal and external relationships; and sourcing innovative solutions to complex challenges.

VIA's innovative approach to crowdsourcing is providing its nearly 20,000 students with invaluable experience as they work together to develop actionable ideas for practice partners.

Strengthening digital learning environments to help students work collaboratively and find solutions to professional challenges

VIA University College is one of Denmark's six university colleges, with eight modern campuses covering the Central Denmark Region. VIA was established in 2008, the result of several mergers in Danish higher education. Programs, courses, and research at VIA build on strong Danish traditions for educating students in cooperation with professional practice, in areas such as healthcare, teaching, social education, technology, business, and design. As a result, students are engaged with and generate the knowledge to help solve real challenges for public and private organizations – in Denmark and internationally.

VIA wanted to develop and strengthen its digital learning environments to support a problem-based learning (PBL) strategy. With PBL, students work collaboratively to find solutions to practice-related problems and challenges via online communities, while encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship. VIA's leadership wanted to create a culture that promotes engagement, creativity, and new thinking across the organization and through external partners.

The result of this strategic vision is an ongoing project called VIA Crowd Lab. This platform of online communities and digital processes is based on the core assumption that innovative solutions to complex challenges are best found by involving ideas from a large and diverse group of people – the crowd. Online collaborative communities digitalize the innovation process via crowdsourcing; stimulate innovation with the participation of students, employees, researchers, and external practitioners; and facilitate the transition from thought to action.

VIA Crowd Lab's core purposes are to:

- Provide methodological tools for innovation and knowledge sharing among education, research, and practice participants.

- Open doors into VIA University College for external professionals and provide access to students, teachers, and researchers for external professionals.

- Encourage a flexible and open approach to innovation that generates sustainable solutions to complex challenges.

- Spread and democratize innovation and facilitate the implementation of ideas in practice, together with professional practitioners.

Making changes to do a difference through an open and innovative approach to crowdsourcing

VIA Crowd Lab's vision for the university is to become a leader in crowdsourcing in the education sector, increase student engagement, and amplify the ability to solve complex problems.

VIA wanted a digital crowdsourcing platform and partner that could help turn their vision into reality. The selected platform should actively enable students to create value for others, contribute to VIA University College's ongoing efforts in entrepreneurship, and help participants make a difference by making changes. After evaluating available options, the VIA Crowd Lab team selected Medallia and the Medallia Ideas platform.

Medallia Ideas allows participants to set and launch ideas and challenges with ease and flexibly refine them through systematic stages. It targets user participation, collaboration, and voting to develop and distill the best ideas and solutions. User scores, rewards, badges, and leaderboards encourage positive competition and sustained participation. Practical business decisions are supported with real-time insights and in-depth analysis.

VIA Crowd Lab is now enabling idea and knowledge sharing from a large and diverse group of people through a flexible and open approach to innovation. The University is increasing engagement, creativity, and new thinking around its campuses; enhancing internal and external relationships; and sourcing innovative solutions to complex challenges. They also are providing useful and actionable insights back to Medallia on how to improve the platform.

Delivering actionable ideas to diverse challenges and providing students with practical and invaluable experience

Since deploying Medallia Ideas, VIA has run about 30 challenges, with plans to grow that significantly as the platform is made available for other courses and departments to create their own student/practice challenges.

One of the first challenges asked students to come up with ideas about improvements to the university itself, as input to VIA's strategy. Participants posted and discussed ideas about how to make VIA the first choice for students and attract more people to study at the University. There was a lively discussion, and the Vice Chancellor provided some great feedback

"We realized that we had to conceptualize how we work with crowdsourcing – so we developed what we now call VIA Crowd Lab around the Medallia platform."

Morten Randrup Mathiasen,
Project Manager, Collaborative
Online Communities,
VIA University College

To learn more about idea crowdsourcing at Via University, contact us here.

to the students, helped group the ideas into three different sections, and identified which ones would be incorporated into the overall strategy.

Another challenge explored waste reduction possibilities for pre-packaged grocery store salads. The REMA 1000 grocery chain in Denmark wanted to reduce the amount of plastic packaging they used and posed the challenge to VIA's marketing students. While marketing students may not be specialists in plastic packaging, they are knowledgeable about retail and consumer behavior, and could provide a different viewpoint than engineering students, for example. REMA 1000 was deeply inspired by the students' ideas to further develop their plastic packaging reduction initiative.

Finally, nursing students at VIA participated with the memory clinic at a local hospital on how to engage people with dementia and their families. This challenge is on its third iteration and has become part of a third semester course on healthcare innovation. Going forward, the hospital will continue its collaboration with VIA and its students.

VIA Crowd Lab is inspiring classes to invite real-life practice into the learning environment and professionals to request students into valuable conversations about their practice. By digitalizing innovation through crowdsourcing, the lab has stimulated novelties through collaborative online communities. The participation of students, employees, researchers, and practitioners continues to grow, and has strengthened VIA University College's work – giving students real-life problems to address and providing them with invaluable experience for the labor market.

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