

## *Case Study*



# **BERNINA**

*New products through cross-departmental ideation*



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**BERNINA**<sup>+</sup>  
made to create

## New products through cross-departmental ideation



### **The company:**

- Independent, family-owned company, developing and manufacturing domestic sewing and embroidery systems of very high quality

### **The challenge:**

- No consistent way to manage ideas submitted through different channels
- Lack of visibility of ideas contributed by business partners
- No view of ideas currently in process or already implemented within the organization
- Lack of key details and information in submitted ideas

### **The outcome:**

- New Idea Management system engages employees from 10 different departments and enhances collaboration for sharing and enhancing ideas
- 200 new ideas submitted from cross-departmental innovation team
- 2 new product releases & 2 next-gen innovations to be released shortly
- Profits from BERNINA's "Design-Skins" product are donated to the Susan G. Komen Foundation for Breast Cancer Research

### **Business Challenge:**

BERNINA is a family-owned manufacturer of fine sewing machines, with a history dating back more than a century. To survive in the current market, customers need to be constantly surprised with new and innovative products – they want something special. BERNINA has always encouraged ideas from every corner of the company.

However, employees were concerned whether the ideas they submitted into the organization would be considered and processed effectively. This did not always happen. BERNINA did not have a structured process in place to manage ideas submitted through various channels from both inside and outside of the company. Some employees complained that they proposed the same idea three times and nothing had happened; it was clear that something needed to change.

### **Scenario:**

Innovation as a theme plays a large role for BERNINA; the company has a strong reputation in the industry, and therefore the competition carefully watches what they do.

The company receives many ideas and proposals for product innovation from various internal and external contributors. As an example, BERNINA dealers might submit ideas via email or alternatively send handwritten letters by post. In the past, each area of the business processed these ideas differently and stored them separately. There was no opportunity to discuss and develop each concept with a wider audience of experts from throughout the company. Key details were often missing, and the ownership and management of the idea from review to implementation was unclear.

BERNINA decided it needed a centralized system, focused specifically on ideas, to ensure no ideas were lost and that all ideas were managed properly.

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***“Our customers naturally expect something special; HYPE gives us the capability to improve our levels of innovation, allowing different experts from around the world to work together on their ideas”***

*Michael König*

*Innovation Manager at BERNINA International AG*

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### ***The solution:***

The first step for BERNINA was to review and evaluate their innovation management process currently operating within the product development division. BERNINA wanted to optimize the whole ideation process, centralize the idea repository, and offer one unique and consistent view of all concepts. Finally, the company wanted to ensure their employees had confidence that submitted ideas would be effectively and efficiently reviewed and considered – with full transparency of the evaluation and selection process.

### ***The relationship between HYPE and Client:***

BERNINA evaluated their existing innovation processes; the company decided that a key missing component was an innovation platform to process ideas and to make them visible to different departments. Therefore, in 2007, BERNINA reviewed the leading software platforms. They compared the various functionalities and came up with a “wish list” of features and their criteria for a “new way of working”. BERNINA chose HYPE because of the solution’s close match to BERNINA’s needs and HYPE’s experience with clients from many different industries. A trial with HYPE was rapidly implemented in the fall of 2008 with a select group of five employees. This small team started working with the software and was gradually increased to ten, fifteen, and then continuously to more employees. By evaluating the behavior of this core innovation team, BERNINA wanted to understand how a wider group of employees would react to collaborating in this “new way”.

### ***Detail of the program:***

The innovation program pools expertise from approximately 50 key employees networked across ten different departments. Each department and set of team skills is different; BERNINA encourages collaboration across these different innovation groups to create unique, best-in-class products.

One example of how this diverse set of expertise functioned in a real-life scenario: an employee within the testing division visited a furniture store one weekend and was inspired by a fabric display with a “70’s style”. This sparked his idea to develop sewing machines with different “skins” – allowing users to personalize their sewing machine with a customized design or picture. The BERNINA employee was encouraged to submit the idea into the HYPE innovation platform. Over the next few weeks, this idea was enhanced a remarkable 46 times by employees across 7 different departments! Each individual added his or her own view and further developed the idea.



*Michael König,  
Innovation Manager*

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This new, innovative product is now available in their [online stores](#):



### ***Benefits:***

From the initially small team of specialists, BERNINA's HYPE-powered innovation platform has recorded 200 ideas, leading to two new products available in the market. Two more products generated through their new innovation pipeline are now on the verge of release.

BERNINA is very satisfied with their return on the initial investment. The result: all new ideas are managed through HYPE. The biggest visible benefit of this new approach is the rush of new products available in the market. However – and best of all – it's not just BERNINA that's benefiting from their new innovation approach: all profits from the innovative "DesignSkins" product are donated to the Susan G. Komen Foundation for Breast Cancer Research ([www5.komen.org](http://www5.komen.org)).



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