Catalyst

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I4P	Imagination for People	France
OU	The Open University	United Kingdom
UZH	University of Zurich	Switzerland
EN	Euclid Network	United Kingdom
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Page **2** of **13**

Revision Control

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D3.7.2 – Gamification creativity tool ■ May 2014 ■ Imagination for People
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Page **3** of **13**

Executive summary

The present document is a deliverable of the CATALYST project, funded by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content & Technology (DG CONNECT), under its 7th EU Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7).

This deliverable is an outcome of Task 3.7, Creative Ideation, whose main goal is to build tools to catalyse creative thinking at scale, and feed it back to the deliberation as structured data.
This specific tool exploits card gamification, "funny money," and social interactions to help participants generate more ideas.

We believe gamification in online debates is key in helping participants move past difficult topics on which they may get stuck. These issues are particularly important given the virtual aspect of the tool.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

The Gamification creativity tool is a generic web widget that facilitates individual or collective creativity. The process is important for ensuring the debate keeps moving forward, and to ensure participants are able to unlock their creativity on a particularly difficult issue. The tool uses cards, social interaction and gamification to stimulate the collective intelligence process and feed in the new ideas and options to the discussion.

It is meant for any group that needs to generate more avenues or idea paths around a given topic. As such, we want it to be usable from any software system that can represent ideas within CATALYST's ecosystem of tools.

A large number of creativity and ideation techniques exist to spur creativity in a room full of people. Far fewer exist in the context of online interactions, which have fundamental differences with in-room interactions:

- Online group interactions are usually asynchronous, that is the participants read the submissions of other participants with a significant delay (minutes to days).
- Most in-room creativity techniques use a facilitator to guide the exchanges towards the goals of the session. That person can cut in at any time to help the participants. This is rarely feasible online because of the preceding point.
- In most online interaction, the nonverbal communication is seriously degraded (videoconference) or totally absent (all other communication channels). Depending on context and study methodology, the percentage of the total messages nonverbal communication represents varies, but is generally greater than 50%. Verbal communication is especially crucial for transmitting emotions and feelings.

A last difference is not inherent to the offline nature of the exchange, but tied to one of its main perceived advantage:

- For the most part, participants in online interaction do not schedule a common time period in their day to visit the discussion, as most online interactions allow people to participate each according to their own schedule. As such, even when the technology allows it, there is an expectation that groups are asked to schedule a common period in the day to have online interactions.

This widget is designed to be use in two distinct creativity scenarios:

- When a participant individually looks for inspiration around a specific idea he selected himself. We call it the "inspire-me" scenario.
- When a group or its community manager decides that a specific concept requires more options or refinement, and that the group should be focused on that task. We call this the "creativity session" scenario.

2. How does it work?

A long-time staple of in-room facilitation, card decks come in many different forms. We believe that some are more adapted to online interactions that others. In particular, those that are domain specific and more precise in their prompts are expected to work better online than card decks presenting general inspirational images and things of that nature.

2.1   Picking a card to find inspiration: first step of inspiration

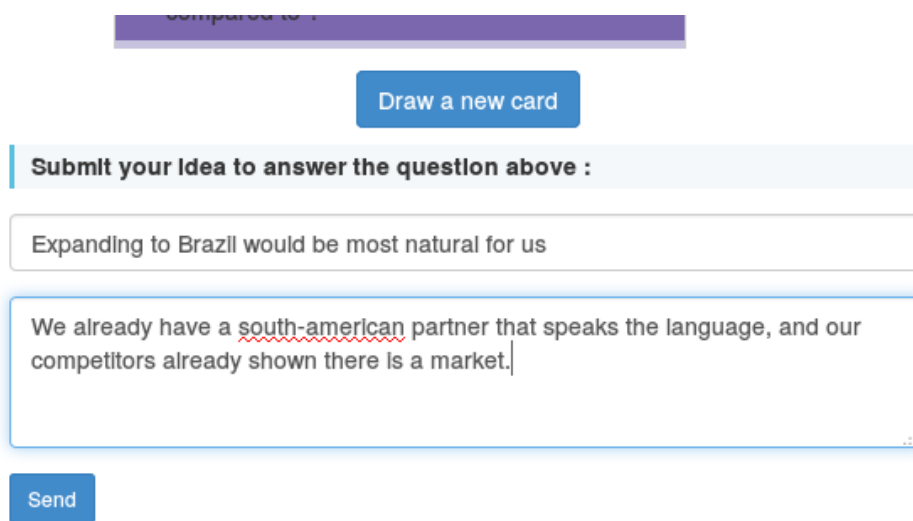**Figure 1: Slot machine style interaction**

The slot machine style interaction is not just there to create a game mechanic element. We feel it is crucial for users not to see cards in the same order. While the immediate goal is for the participant to find inspiration, the end goal is for the group to find inspiration. We want ideas that originate from a variety of cards. If we make it natural for users to scan cards to find one that is "obvious" or "easy" for them to deal with, we are concerned that each card will not be given a fair chance, and that the same cards will be selected by most users.

Considering the absence of an interactive facilitator, and the outcome desired (to generate more options around a specific idea that are understandable to discussion members who may not have participated in the creativity session), much more direct instructions are given to participants than most in person creativity sessions. In-person sessions tend to be more open, initially.

Specifically, as you can see above the community manager will provide, and the widget will display:

- The specific issue or topic in the concept map of the discussion the creativity session is about
- A specific question, written by the community manager, that the participant is expected to answer, in the form of a new option on, or refinement of the preceding issue or topic.

2.2 Writing our idea

Figure 2: Sharing an idea within the widget

The title is the new option or idea, with the description the context. This is especially crucial for individual "inspire me" sessions, where the creativity widget interaction ends here, and the idea is submitted to the general group for further discussion outside the context of the creativity widget.
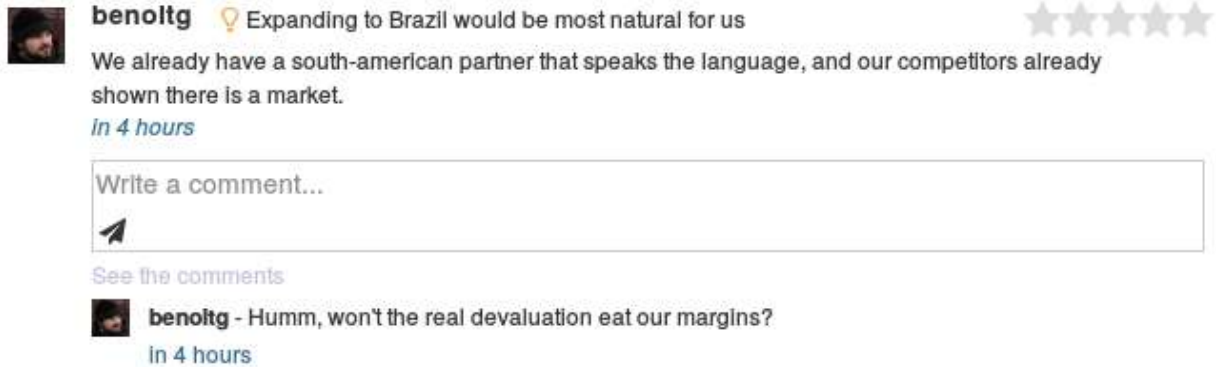
benoltg 💡 Expanding to Brazil would be most natural for us ⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐

We already have a south-american partner that speaks the language, and our competitors already shown there is a market.
in 4 hours

> Write a comment...
> ✈

See the comments

benoltg - Humm, won't the real devaluation eat our margins?
in 4 hours

Figure 3: Posted idea within the widget

2.3   Re-creating a social interaction: Second step of inspiration

In the case of the creativity session, where we expect the entire group to focus significant attention on the exercise (basically a brainstorming session), we want the actual exchange to spark ideas. Basically we try to reproduce the type of interaction we would have on a Facebook wall.
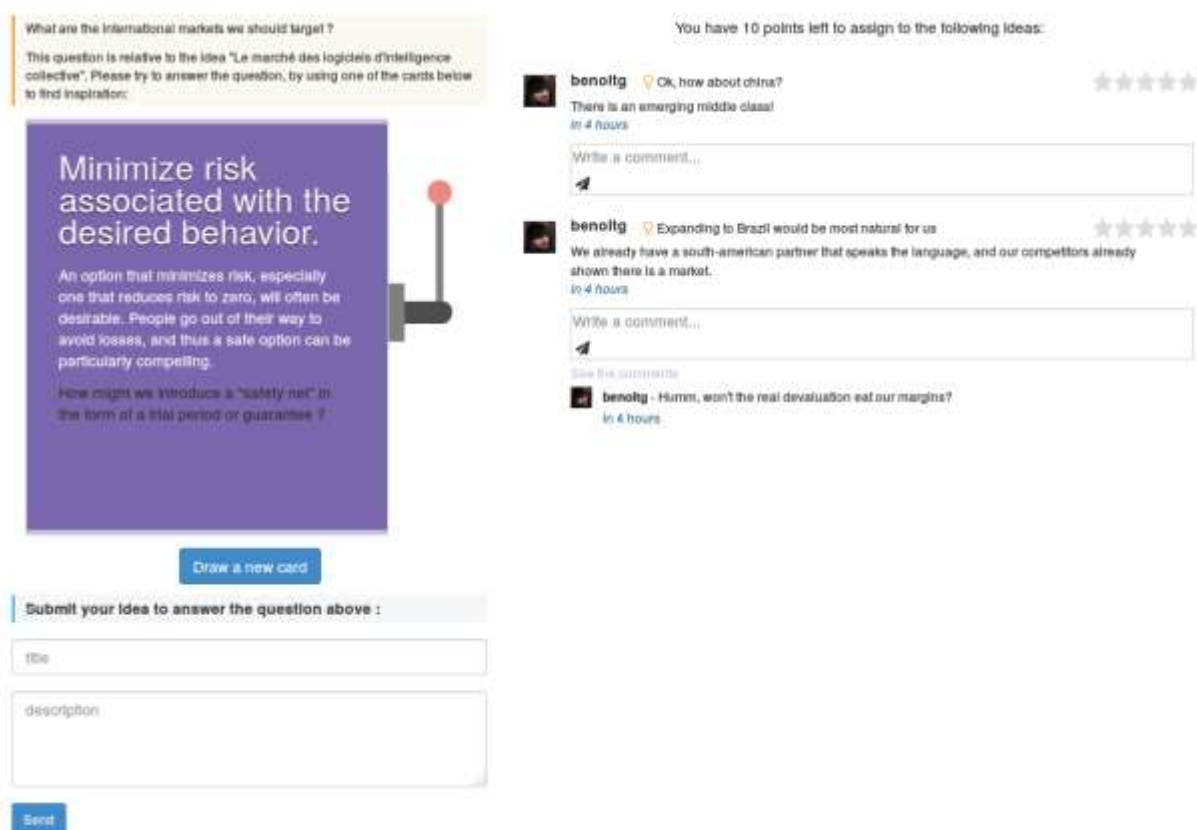

Figure 4: Posted idea within the widget – interaction between users

Here, the interface weaknesses we associate with social networks in a large-scale collective intelligence context (namely that they are tuned for quick and short, relatively shallow interactions among relatively small groups) become strengths in what is essentially a brainstorming process.

We anticipate that the styles of comments will vary widely. Jokes and "Hey this make me think of..." "How about" types of comments, typical of the divergent phase of creativity, will co-exist with initial comments on the feasibility, and relative merits of ideas. The important thing is to keep the group interacting, so participants can get inspiration from other participant's comments.

2.4 Selecting usable ideas

At this point we are now firmly in the convergence phase. No creativity technique keeps all ideas; a handful need to be selected for collective refinement as a group, and a large number may need to be abandoned.
It can be delicate to decide what threshold ideas must meet in order to be discussed further.

We propose a two-stage process:

The first stage is that which allows participants to rank ideas. We are using a "funny money" concept to gamify the interaction. Every participant gets a set number of gold pieces that they can "spend" however they want on ideas.

Figure 5: Stage one – ranking ideas

Note that this is the exact same process as giving a set number of post-its to participants in a room and having them place on ideas they think have potential.

While we allow participants to vote from the beginning (in case they do not come back before the creativity session is over), we strongly recommend not showing the results before the very end, as it would introduce a number of well knows voting biases.

The second step involves selecting ideas to send back to the discussion.

Figure 6: Selecting what to send back to the discussion

The reason to have this second step is to avoid hardcoding a number of value judgements:
- How many ideas can the group realistically process further;
- If the average quality of the ideas near the top is high, it may be worth it for the group to process more;
- The operating rules of the groups may call for a moderator to obey the ranking of the group, or the moderator may be the discussion sponsor and allowed to disqualify ideas for various reasons (budget, legal, outside the purview of the group, etc.)
- Even if the ranking are completely obeyed, one must deal with selecting which comments should be sent to the general discussion. In the context of the wider discussion, some (those debating the merits of the idea for example) are still pertinent, while others (jokes, comments about the card that inspired the idea) are noise.

2.5 Returning to the general discussion: Third step of inspiration

Here we get out of the creativity widget and back into whatever CI tool holds the discussion.

We asked the participants to format their contribution in the form of a sub-idea of the issue of the creativity session (or inspire-me), and explain how it answers the question, so that their contribution will contain the necessary context for other participants to understand it once it comes back to the contribution.

In the case of the creativity session, some comments are interesting to keep for their perspective as well as to bootstrap further discussion.

3. Conclusion and future directions

We tried to approach this problem from a gamification perspective.

Our goal is for users to generate new ideas, and help select those that will help the general discussion move forward. So as seen from the 4 aspects of the gamification user journey:

1. **Goals:** We tried to align the user's action through clear prompts about the end goals.
2. **Action/Resources**: We mostly limit the resources for the session (time) and for voting (the number of votes that can be cast)
3. **Feedback:** We allow other users to give direct feedback on the ideas presented.
4. **Motivation:** We try to be transparent about the usefulness of the actions to the group.

Future developments that are anticipated:

1. We want an online card editor to allow community managers to define their own card that is tailored to their context.
2. There is strong potential for sharing decks of cards that are designed or adapted to such online interaction.
3. We focused on the creativity tool itself, but a lot of the user motivation is likely to come from outside the widget itself. Specifically, in the case of Assembl, we intend to communicate prominently how much time is left to a creativity session, and how many people participated already to try to increase participation.
4. We would like to better expose users of the platform to the cards that inspired a user already, giving a second chance for idea generation, and hopefully leading to "Oh I also have a new idea" type of interaction.

Development on Assembl is completely open, and activity can be followed here on a real-time basis:
- Code browser: https://github.com/ImaginationForPeople/assembl
- Commit history: https://github.com/ImaginationForPeople/assembl/commits/develop

More specifically the code of the functionalities described in this document can be found here:
https://github.com/ImaginationForPeople/assembl/tree/develop/assembl/widget/creativity

List of Figures