



# Michelin hits the collaborative road

*With more than 10,000 users and over 400 communities, Bibspace is Michelin's internal collaborative platform. Operating alongside participational innovation tools, it assists the group in its digital transformation project.*

Innovation lies at the heart of the Michelin group's strategic focus. That reflects in a range of tools: business incubators, the *Innov'Up* innovation challenges and the *InnovaGo* scheme encouraging employees to come forward with their own ideas. The company's task to find a way of linking them together, resulted in the Bibspace social network. In a group well accustomed to implicitness and confidentiality, the blueKiwi collaborative platform was chosen to foster participational innovation, inspire a new way of working in collaborative fashion, and boost empowerment and autonomy.

The Personnel Department administers the Bibspace project internally, with the assistance of the Communication Department and the IT Department. The 8-month pilot phase was launched in April 2012 with 1,500 volunteer employees in 35 communities. The experience was extremely successful, and the decision was made to deploy the tool throughout the entire group: the Bibspace platform was rolled out in May 2013.

## Encouraging innovation

Michelin believes all its employees are a source of innovation: special communities are created to encourage everyone to submit their ideas to others using a simple analog process.

The platform produced more than 18,000 ideas in only one year. They are posted, and can then be discussed and enhanced by the community.



In order to stimulate innovation upstream and create a link to *Innov'Up*, communities are detailed to take on challenges: employees at all divisions carrying out all functions respond to problems and express their creativity to solve them.

Innovation also means looking around at one's own environment, being able to keep ahead of events and reacting. It was on this basis that the strategy department created a business intelligence community, where all members can make their own contributions. This upgrades the knowledge of employees, who are transformed into full-time research cells. The group has been evaluating the user experience of the mobile applications developed internally. A beta-tester community is used for this co-construction scheme, so Michelin does not have to outsource consultants to do the same job.

Finally, a number of co-creation practices for the Bibspace platform itself have been rolled out. The scheme features regular workshops, where volunteer Bibspace users and blueKiwi development teams conduct exchanges on their needs or new releases.

Using blueKiwi has a considerable impact on sales teams. Firstly, it makes customers part of the process and produces better dialogue with them. This combined approach has halved the costs and timelines of previous processes.

The sales team communities also create links between reps who are often working remotely, and facilitate transfer of information, cooperative assistance and provision of tools.



## Foster collaboration

Strengthening links among employees calls for a set of collaborative tools: a common agenda, an ideation component, a Q&A module, a documentation library, task manager, Wiki etc.

The communities working on best practices enable staff to develop a reflex for sharing beyond their own team. Exchanges take place in spaces such as:

- manager communities, discussing good managerial practices and division targets
- legal communities, which features, for example, experiences and legislation concerning countries in which Michelin operates

There are also extra-professional communities to spread a collaborative culture and develop the reflexes for using the platform in connection with sports events, cultural topics, cars etc.

Bibspace is not only for Michelin managers. Maintenance teams at different plants use it to discuss machinery adjustments and can even use it to solve

production problems, occasionally with some major gains.

Transversal collaboration via Bibspace gives Michelin, a matrix-management company, the chance to embrace change and to break silos.

## Boost empowerment and autonomy

Bibspace constitutes a vector of empowerment, smoothing down hierarchical connections.

The changes introduced give managers responsible for a community a posture of empowerment and influence, without the knowledge of the traditional command & control setup.

Some communities specifically focus on change management. Top managers have discussions and share their readings or reflections in a bid to facilitate changes of posture or mindset. Not only does this smooth down hierarchies, but it also shortens geographical distance, arranging Q&A sessions between management and employees at remote locations. The scheme also helps capitalise on exchanges in a lasting space.

Michelin has decided to provide assistance for its transformation, and focusses on long-term development and puts considerable time in user coaching.

In this regard, more than 750 Community Managers have received training since 2013. Tools were created with blueKiwi to assist them in their task: a scoping sheet, a guide to identify key users and initial contents, launch and reporting kits for communities, training etc.

According to Lecko<sup>1</sup>, Bibspace is one of the three leading active collaborative ESN platforms in a panel of twenty companies. Bibspace has produced new uses, and adapted to many needs for cooperation and collaboration.



During the monthly Social Coffee, Community Managers share their reflections and discussions of use cases with the blueKiwi Customer Success team. Meetups, training sessions and conferences are also organised.

With blueKiwi, Michelin meets expectations with regard to innovation: it has encouraged suggestions, discussion and enhancement of ideas, communities with clients or partners have been developed, time-to-market has been reduced by faster information sharing, and the pace of project coordination modes has been stepped up.

<sup>1</sup> ESN volume 7, April 2015, Simon Legroux & Michel Ezran - referentiel.lecko.fr

