Open co-creation enables a firm to develop new solutions by working closely with online communities that include customers and other interested parties. Co-creation requires a socialization strategy that ensures community members identify with the firm’s image and engage in dialogs that are aligned with company and customer needs. There are two types of tactics for a customer socialization strategy—institutionalized, where control of the interaction remains primarily with the firm (push mode), and individualized, where by and large the customer is in charge (pull mode).

### Socialization Tactics to Enable Co-Creation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Institutionalized Tactics</th>
<th>Individualized Tactics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>Formal, structured, collective, uniform</td>
<td>Informal, unstructured, individually differentiated, varied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction direction</td>
<td>Direct with the firm</td>
<td>Individual or peer form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timescale</td>
<td>Known timetable, fixed in sequence</td>
<td>Open timetable, no prespecified sequence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundary-spanning</td>
<td>Socialization agent</td>
<td>(Not applicable)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The full article describes how Finnair successfully co-created service ideas by using a variety of social media technologies (SMTs) and socialization tactics to help ensure that community members identified with the company’s image and engaged in dialogs that were aligned with both company and customer needs. The SMT-enabled co-creation resulted in almost 300 new service ideas.

The first SMT socialization initiatives used institutionalized push tactics. Two blogs were started in 2009—“Finnair Runway,” which included contributions from a wide range of Finnair employees, and “Departure 2093,” which was launched as part of Finnair’s 85th anniversary celebration. This blog created five visions of flying 85 years in the future. However, these blogs did not result in any co-creation. Although they made content visible and persistent, it could not be edited, and online visitors rarely made any comments. Moreover, visitors could not personally connect with Finnair employees and did not collectively identify with their peers on some common cause that would have promoted interaction.

Next, in 2010, Finnair launched its Facebook page and a Twitter account. Thus, the company began to shift to SMTs that relinquished some control to the customer and introduced more individualized socialization tactics. SMTs were no longer used just to convey structured and uniform messages, but also to generate informal, unstructured and peer-based communication. Although Facebook and Twitter enabled greater exposure of...
the Finnair brand, they did not produce discussions on air travel quality—i.e., they did not engender co-creation.

In 2011, Finnair ran a two-month SMT-based campaign called Quality Hunters, a formal, planned and institutionalized socialization tactic. Four “socialization agents,” known as Quality Hunters (QHs), were hired to stimulate discussion and dialog about travel and the co-creation of ideas. For two months, they traveled to key Finnair destinations “in search of quality.” They shared their thoughts and adventures with the public through personal blogs (which were not subject to scrutiny by Finnair) and generated conversations with customers relating to quality. Although more than half a million visitors viewed the blogs, most were passive and didn’t contribute to the community. Since very little dialog was generated, the strategic aims of the campaign were not achieved: there was no intensive discussion on quality that led to co-creation.

A second Quality Hunters campaign was run in 2012. Over a five-week period, seven new QHs made 171 flights to 36 different airports. Again, Finnair didn’t influence the content of the QHs’ blogs, but this time the firm assigned each QH a specific topic. The pre-assigned topics were expected to result in more focused blogging and to allow for better idea generation. Compared to the first QH initiative, the second campaign generated many more comments. The QHs used both individualized and institutionalized tactics. First, as socialization agents, they created rather uniform experiences through their blogs (i.e., the institutionalized tactic), but the individualized interaction with QHs fostered interpersonal relationships with community members.

In Spring 2013, Finnair built on the active online community that formed around the two earlier QH initiatives and launched QH 2013. The aim was to identify the key moments that can either make or break a journey and seek out practical ways of improving the travel experience. Community members were invited to share their views and experiences and to identify points of improvement under several themes. The discussions were primarily conducted on the QH Twitter channel, blog and Facebook page. At the time of writing, it was too early to assess the results of QH 2013, though it did result in substantial amounts of co-creation.

**Five Lessons**

Based on Finnair’s experience, we have identified five lessons for other businesses using SMTs for open co-creation.

1. *Stay focused on long-term goals during shorter-term initiatives* Open co-creation requires a vision that transcends any particular initiative and captures what the firm hopes to accomplish in the long run.

2. *Experiment with multiple SMTs.* A single SMT by itself will not stimulate customer participation and co-creation. Tools like Facebook, Twitter and blogs all have a role to play.

3. *Build community and relational identification with the SMT followers.* Building identification takes repeated experiments that strive to connect customers and potential customers with the company, both collectively with a common cause and relationally at the interpersonal level.

4. *Use both institutionalized and individualized socialization tactics.* At Finnair, institutionalized tactics with the early blogs didn’t result in the much-hoped for interactions with customers; the separate uses of individualized and institutionalized tactics with Facebook didn’t stimulate online discussion. However, the different uses of these two types of socialization tactics for customer service during crises and for product development surveys did result in benefits in service delivery.

5. *Reinforce and leverage external co-creation initiatives with internal changes.* Finnair’s external co-creation initiatives were accompanied by internal company changes, particularly in terms of a more outward-looking company culture. The change in culture allowed an idea from the online community to be refined further internally.

Finnair’s experience shows how the combined use of institutionalized and individualized socialization tactics allows a firm to lay the groundwork for a multidirectional dialog and for productive, open service co-creation. However, SMTs are neither a driver nor a facilitator but instead are an amplifier. SMTs amplify both an organization’s weaknesses and its strengths in customer and community interaction, as well as in innovation. Hence, deploying SMTs for service co-creation requires organizations to engage in parallel activities to fundamentally strengthen their weaknesses and leverage their strengths.