

Crowdsourcing for Innovation

Marketing professor Matt O'Hern explores the future of new product development

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ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF MARKETING MATT O'HERN STUDIES CROWDSOURCING IN NEW PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Matthew O'Hern's career path has been set since he was in sixth grade.

"Almost all my friends wanted to be NFL players, and I thought, 'well, I think it would be pretty cool to be a professor,'" he said.

Years later, as an assistant professor of marketing at the University of New Hampshire, O'Hern remains on the cutting edge in a highly ranked department, focusing his research on concepts

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in new product development that will form the future. In particular, he focuses on the benefits of crowdsourcing.

“I am exploring the benefits that occur when customers create their own new product improvements and offer support directly to their peers,” he said.

O’Hern was inspired to pursue this line of research by the open source software movement. He also had a forward-thinking doctoral advisor who predicted he would be busy in this line of research for years to come. O’Hern aims to help firms better identify the most talented customer creators within their user communities, and better understand the benefits of directly involving customers in new product development or service support.

He has an interesting finding on this front: “One of our studies found that in certain cases, customers who experience a service failure are significantly more satisfied when they receive help from a fellow customer than from a firm,” he said. “In that same study, we demonstrated that there are steps that companies can take to make their front-line service employees seem more ‘customer-like’ and thus reap the same benefits.”

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