

# An Innovation Challenge Can Help Employees Feel More Connected

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**PD Instore**(<https://pdinstore.com>) , which designs and builds product displays that help companies create a great customer experience, found an innovative way to help its employees feel more connected with one another. The Minneapolis-based family business launched an internal innovation challenge called PD Expo, which challenged employee teams to work together to design and build something that would help people in their local community. Along with bragging rights, the winning team would also receive a cash gift to donate to a chosen community organization.

The challenge threw together employees who had never had the chance to work with one another before, and the happy result was that they felt more connected with one another and with the community. Since some of their inventions required materials not readily available at the PD Instore plant, many of the teams reached out to suppliers and others outside the business for help -- and received an enthusiastic response. Their inventions included a specialized desk for neurodiverse children; a STEM cart to improve science education in the classroom; a four-sided portable playroom and other innovations. Along with the cash prizes, the inventions were also donated to the community.

FamilyBusiness.org Senior Editor Kimberly Eddleston recently sat down with two members of the fourth generation of PD Instore's family ownership: Director of R&D Ian Strommen and Chief Culture Officer Emmie Strommen. They explained how the innovation challenge worked, what they'll do differently next time, and the lasting benefits it has brought their work force. The bottom video is PD Instore's story of the Expo.

*Top Photo Courtesy of PD Instore*

[Link to video](#)

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