

Telematics Trendline

Following the Growth of Automotive Telematics

By Derek Kaufman, C3 Network, Inc.

Telematics Trendline is a series of monthly articles by Derek Kaufman, C3 Network, Inc., designed to inform AAIA members about the trends in telematics applications for both the retail automotive and commercial trucking industries. For the full September article, or for more of the series, click [here](#).

This month:

- **Napkin Labs**



As your Trendline editor writes this month's edition, tops are falling off buildings in Washington, DC, hurricanes are headed for Manhattan and Texas is approaching 75 straight days of triple digit temperatures. It is time for some summertime thoughts on creativity to take our minds off the realities of the day.

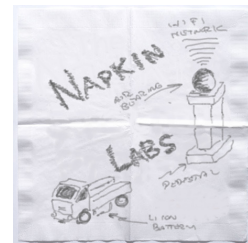
As we work with folks in the telematics field, we are always interested in how ideas are generated and how prototypes become marketable products. This month we bring you an interesting service that could be instrumental in getting your creative juices flowing.

Napkin Labs

How do you engage your current customers in the development of future products? How do you attract new players to the creation of your company's future? What if you could source a thousand ideas on some feature of a product or service and then choose the best ones to implement – and do all of that easily and efficiently?

Welcome to Napkin Labs at www.napkinlabs.com

Our guess is that Riley Gibson and Warren Ng, the co-founders of this innovative crowd-sourcing service, got their new company's name from the simple concept of sketching a first idea on a napkin. Riley and Warren have expanded that thought to encouraging thousands of people to sketch on napkins of their own. The magic is in getting all of them to send the napkins to you.



Walk through the Napkin Labs tour at <http://www.napkinlabs.com/tour>. You will see a simple way to establish a challenge and brand it with your company's look and feel. But keep reading the site and you will quickly understand that what Riley and Warren are actually doing is guiding and turbocharging your creative process.

Napkins Labs knows that tapping online communities replaces our old notion of "focus groups". Its genius is in engaging players in those communities to submit actionable content that is centered on a common theme that you introduce. Facebook and Twitter are great ways to engage your customers, but they can be random and unfocused – a shotgun of scattered thoughts. Napkin Labs is a rifle targeted on a better-defined bull's eye.

The Napkin Labs site lists ten ideas on how to use its services including:

1. Brainstorming new opportunities with customers, employees, suppliers or other parties
2. Marketing your innovations
3. Generating feedback on ad campaigns
4. Increasing customer loyalty
5. Updating current products with a “I wish you had this” challenge
6. Curating content as inspiration for new ideas
7. Collecting photos of customers using your products
8. Collecting “voice of customer” testimonials
9. Specifically targeting follower types for focus group questions
10. Collaboration with your most influential customers

Napkin Labs is set up as a subscription service. Users can start with a basic site at \$99 per month and move up to fully customized sites and private challenge communities for \$499 per month. It also provides a game layer that rewards participants with points or cash for the submittal of ideas.

The next level of Napkin Labs will be a series of apps that go deeper into the creative process. They will guide users in thinking about the challenge at hand. The goal will be to make your innovation partners better at articulating their insights. That could be very cool.

We have been interested in crowd sourcing for innovation since we first recognized the emergence of social media. As usual, we started looking into Napkins Labs only to find that one of our favorite magazines – Fast Company – beat us to the punch. In a recent article they list both Open IDEO and Innocentive as sites that are working on the same concept as Napkin Labs.

The folks at IDEO have helped all of us to think differently about creativity and the power of brainstorming. Their Open IDEO site (www.openideo.com) has been in its beta shakedown cruise for about a year. It tends toward bigger, more global challenges like world hunger and health but the overall concept is very similar to Napkin Labs.

You might also want to check out the Challenge Driven Innovation methodology of the well-established Innocentive site at www.innocentive.com. This site has been attracting engineers and scientists all over the world with real product challenges that pay out tens of thousands of dollars or more. It establishes a community of “Seekers and Solvers” and has an established process for the transfer of IP.

Telematics Trendline is a monthly news article written as a service to AAIA members. The reference to any specific commercial products, processes, or services by trade name, trademark, manufacturer or otherwise, does not necessarily constitute or imply its endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by AAIA. The views and opinions of the author do not necessarily state or reflect those of the AAIA staff.