

Crowdsourcing Campaign Unveils Pipette Stand of the Future

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For the first time, life science researchers were able to assist in the development of a new product: Eppendorf launched an Internet-driven crowdsourcing campaign to allow its customers to collaborate on a new challenge. Eppendorf was looking for the pipette stand of the future and prizes were awarded for the best ideas.

Crowdsourcing is an optimal method for identifying and meeting customer requirements. From 1st May to 30th June 2011, pipette operators had access to a forum at www.eppendorf.de/ideas, in which they were able to discuss their ideas, present their visions for the new product, and voice their opinions regarding contributions from other participants. The project was publicised via a German Facebook page, online banners and flyers, and was aimed at pipette operators in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

Although the pipette stand is just one tool used in daily research work, its role should not be undervalued. It provides order in the lab and guarantees precise work thanks to the correct storage in Stand By mode.

The contributions were evaluated by a jury consisting of independent consultants and Eppendorf's own product specialists. The customer with the most promising idea for the pipette stand of the future was invited to the Eppendorf headquarters in Hamburg. There, he was given the opportunity to take a look behind the scenes at the pipette development and production plants. He was also presented with an Xplorer® electronic pipette bearing his own name.

The company hopes that the winning design concept is suitable for production and will lead to the introduction of a new product. In using the crowdsourcing method, Eppendorf is able to call upon the know-how of its customers and expand the company philosophy of placing the customer's needs at the centre of its focus.

The second and third-placed contributions were rewarded with an Eppendorf Reference® and a Research® plus pipette.

Why crowdsourcing?

The development of new Eppendorf products involves much research to guarantee the quality standards they have become accustomed to. The question is, why go down the route of crowdsourcing?

"For us, it is primarily about getting a new perspective on our products. The 'Pipette Stands of the Future' campaign is the first step for us in this direction," said Janine Jacobi, International Product Manager Liquid Handling.

First place was awarded to Yener's pipette stand that picks up points as a result of its high usage potential for the operator, thanks to simple but appealing proposals. The concept proposes that the pipettes should grip better in the stand and features an integrated lab alarm, loudspeaker for playing music, and pleasant lighting.

Boris von Beichmann recognises an important approach in this concept: "In a world, in which everything is becoming more pragmatic and electronic, there is a growing need for individualisation. At first, some of the elements of our winner appear to be a bit playful. However, if we are honest, music and colour are where our emotions lie."

The design boasts a degree of innovation across multiple levels including material, technology, emotion and functionality.

Yener explained its design benefits: "We proudly present the Eppendorf 'emo'. 'emo' is a charger stand that is not only able to hold conventional single-channel pipettes, but also electronic single-channel pipettes and - with the right adapter - multi-channel pipettes. The pipette is positioned in a space-saving manner on the rotatable pipette stand. This means even the smallest labs have enough space for the 'emo'. The 'emo' features space for up to 6 pipettes. The pipette holders are moistened with an adhesive structure. This nano adhesive structure is based on nature, which has such excellent adhesive qualities so the dropping of pipettes is now a thing of the past. However, these areas are usually difficult to keep clean. For that reason, the 'emo' has a UV hood that can also be used during everyday operation.



Winner Yener Selçuk from Hannover (Germany).

"This ensures contamination-free work. Calculators and lab alarms can be integrated and replaced in the pipette stand, thus providing users with everything they need in the lab. Those are the functional properties of the 'emo', but the design also has a lot to offer. Its luminescent LED lights can be set to the desired colour by remote control. This is what gives the 'emo' its name - if the lab technician is in a bad mood, a quick glance at the 'emo' will tell users just how he/she is feeling. If the 'emo' is red, you are probably better off saving any special tasks for another time. Blue indicates an innovative and motivated phase, and the lab is in seventh heaven if the 'emo' is illuminated in pink. The icing on the cake is the USB port, which allows users to play their favourite music from their iPhone/MP3 player through the integrated loudspeakers. The 'emo' is an all-rounder that lights up any lab."

Second place went to Bianca's design that shows a highly flexible pipette stand that is stationary and accommodates different pipettes. As such, Bianca has taken different work conditions and requirements into consideration.

"Bianca has been awarded second place because her concept is based on such complex and highly professional planning," said Janine Jacobi, Product Manager Pipettes.

Bianca said: "The idea is to design a pipette stand that can hold all Eppendorf pipette equipment and can be configured without screws."

Third place was awarded to Sarah who took a simple, but very pragmatic, approach to her pipette stand design. She proposes giving the pipette stand storage space for other lab equipment, such as pens, scissors and boxes of syringes. This would provide more order and make things easier to find, particularly in a small lab.

Sarah explained: "As pipette stands always have to be positioned somewhere on a desk, thus taking up valuable workspace, my idea was to develop a pipette stand that can simply be hung on the shelves above the laboratory bench. Furthermore, I am constantly looking for either a pair of scissors, marker pen, or ballpoint pen. These things are always somewhere about, but never where you need them. That is why I came up with the idea of a pipette stand, in which you can simply deposit this essential stuff."