

Creativity & Innovation in the Workplace

Discussion notes from the January 18th best practices forum

*These discussion notes are a result of the participants brainstorming sessions. Read on to learn about ways to make your organization **stand out!***

Ways to Stimulate Creativity

- Write creativity in your values
- Live it throughout everyone in your org.
- Provide transparency and access to creative/innovative activity; to maximize participation, buy-in, acceptance. Avoid secret “skunks works” that face uphill acceptance curves.
- Enabling culture is table-stakes.
- Hire people, talent, personality; teach skills, knowledge.
- Shifted to improvement management style.
- New titles (job titles)
- Safe, non-threatening environment in which to work
- Remove physical barriers
- Match people to passion, not just training or experience
- Identify core competencies
- Engage in creative activities to increase social interaction
- Empathy – trade roles for a day and problem solving
- Cross-functional/cross-generational diverse problem solving teams
- Brainstorm
- Challenging traditional hierarchy
- Colourful office supplies
- Non-traditional designs
- Encourage play
- More disco balls
- Celebrate more – big and little victories
- Bring kids to work – different viewpoint – have fun!
- Retreats – change environment, refresh
- Driven from top
- Start small – sharing ideas
- Define for the particular company – creativity
- Recognize differences
- Break down walls/barriers – ensure people feel safe – Sr. leaders involved/show the way
- Recognize creativity
- Time required
 - create time for creativity – review, reflection
- Policy to support creativity
- Increase employee involvement in decisions
- Help employees find passion

- Recruit based on time for projects – replace with recruit employees that have passion for the project.
- Opportunity to share across
- Create opportunities for following interest not necessarily credentials within a company
- Possibility for job shadowing – build interest, build understanding of what others do
- Opportunities for learning
- Expand employee network opportunities – inside and out
- Provide Playstations in workspace
- Provide opportunities to get out of the office – daily workout time
- Flexibility in job structure – hours, work set-up
- Creativity should be a deliberate activity
- Articulating and valuing the essence of creativity as part of your “core” work
- Living the values/clarity of values
- Find the ways to integrate the different generations in tasks together
- The leadership sets the tone for creativity/innovation
- What gets valued gets done
- starting with the end in mind
- Remember to focus and build on the areas you have control of
- Permission/trust
- Corporate culture which fosters in & creativ.
- Encourage people to have a ‘life outside’ – more interesting people
- Invite a broad range of people to be involved in problem solving
- Willingness for an organization to take the risk to be creative and innovative
- Hire “diversity”
- What are some the extreme forces that are impacting permission?
- Reinforce the notion through an action – reinforce talk
- Yes, we can have restrictions, but what can we do within those restrictions?
- “fairness” is not “sameness” in terms of HR practices – customized solutions
- Treat people how they wish to be treated – ask first
- Throw out the policy manuals
- A broader life experience for leaders – parents of gen Xers
- Specific training programs which develop an understanding of generational issues/diversity
- Recognition of creativity – whether it can be implemented or not
- Can we change environment which support I & C?
- Consider the work audience/customer in terms of what their needs are
- Break time – daily or as a sabbatical – regenerative time
- Get rid of reduce protocols which restrict creativity and innovation

Themes

- Increase social time/interaction
- Cross-exposure: generations
- Cross-training (jobs/work)
- Physical environment, eg. open, mixing spaces
- Exposure to new materials, info
- Really connecting with clients/customers
- Mix art and business

- Balance low-tech with hi-tech
- Truly empowering people, leadership (eg. projects)
- Positive recognition – informal/personal – formal (tangible)
- Flexible benefits: EnCana model (credits)
- Creative environment
- World café “café conversations” – groups chat about topics in small groups then to other groups
- Transparency
- Get rid of barriers
- Proactively mixing people up
- Cross industry exposure
- Coffee card meetings
- Walkabouts/thinking – not producing time
- Diversity (immigrants)
- Staff driven creative sessions held regularly (led by staff members)
- Every other includes senior management but not led by them
- Flex hours
- “3pm dance breaks” – drop everything and dance
- Game time
- Monthly fun event – orchestrated by staff (take turns)
- Discussions leading to mind map
- Have a place where people can post ideas, discuss ideas, dedicated ideas space, solutions focused
- Foosball table in office
- Programs and committees that will implement ideas so that actions happens – things take place
- Brainstorming around responses to needs. Big picture policy brainstorming.
- Bring together unlike groups of people – diverse ideas, perspectives, people not normally viewed as experts on issue
- Bring everyone’s life experience to solve strategic questions together
- Invite to participate – invite passion and personal responsibility
- Get the hierarchy out of the room
- Create space and time for creativity – make it ongoing, part of day-to-day way
- Find balance between being creative and getting things done
- Reorganizing units and work teams – make it more of the norm – pull together different people for different projects
- Leadership needs to be clear about the value to values – what they stand for
- There is a new workforce – requires a new way of working – leads to bottom line impact
- Need to look for opportunities of where you can be creative – no matter how difficult it may seem
- Social and team building activities – integrate them into work life – build collaboration
- Look for balance across generations
- Address what individuals are looking for – younger generations claim their wants, more independent
- Invite experimentation and learning from mistakes
- Break down boundaries across organization
- Teams taking lead roles on projects
- Flexibility (within reason?) with hours, schedules, etc.
- Time off for charity work
- Veterans doing orientation of other generations

- Outcomes/result based – creativity and innovation in the process
- How/should we change/adapt/bend to a different generation
- Planning days and allowing time for creativity
- Contests/fun – who can be most innovative
- Obtain input from outside sources into problem solving/creative thinking
- Re-frame problem
- Add cayenne to black & white
- Encourage the random and irrelevant
- See failure as an opportunity
- Consider a variety of methods to encourage staff creativity sharing process ie. individual, group processes
- Create a contest to foster idea generation
- Remove threats of failure – trust
- Rules of brainstorming clear to everyone
- Foster non-traditional environment
- Playtime for Sr. people – allow people to lead by example
- Get people out of their comfort zone – different location, events
- Feedback loop to educate people of the results
- Demonstrate creative successes
- Let people take on new roles – team leads rotate
- Share expertise
- Round tables
- Move people around
- “CEO” for the day
- Create “space” in the day to be creative
- Trust that your employees will continue to generate results
- Tenure results in flexibility
- Develop change agents
- Tapping back into our childlike creativity
- Allow people to “recharge” and rejuvenate
- Improve self-effectiveness around time management
- Working around personal body rhythms
- More laughter and fun
- Identify & strategically place your creative people
- Continually change “creative” exercises to appeal to different people
- Promote employees to establish work/life boundaries
- Reward the behaviors you want to see
- Set employees up to successfully manage the w/l balance
- Two way performance management – ongoing communication, employees evaluate leaders
- Explain benefit of being creative
- Stop the assumption that creative = more work w/ less
- Define creativity and make it results oriented
- Reward mechanisms – variety
- Solicit feedback, report back on how feedback made a difference
- Idea generators have the opportunity to work their ideas
- Capitalize on the unique strengths of others

- Knowing the end but allow people to figure out how they achieve the end
- Start small – bite sized pieces, then celebrate small successes to build momentum
- Foster independent control, autonomy & self-confidence
- Social events (potluck, talent show)
- Friendly competition (chili contests, races)
- Time out for fun and laughter
- Employee driven teambuilding (10/15 minutes at every meeting)
- Bring diverse teams together around problem solving
- Communication tools (blogs, newsletters)
- Create diverse forums that appeal to people's skills/talents (ie personal space)
- Secret Suggestion Box
- Create a culture/language for propensity to take risk (safe environment)
- Allow employees to talk about what's important to them, not what employer assumes is important
- "sacred cow" – only employee can email president and he's/she's the only one who knows and will answer the email
- Open/approachable leaders/managers
- Support cross-training, employee curiosity and other positions
- Breaks (foosball, crud, gift of time, team cheering)
- Ability to close door and have time to be creative uninterrupted
- Company be results driven, not task driven, get rid of "Big Brother" – within framework of job requirements
- Create "get away from work" spaces, lunchroom, fitness room, etc.
- Problem solving "develop a way out there option"
- Brain warm up exercises at beginning of meetings
- Encourage employees who come to you with a problem to have possible solutions first
- Put yourself in some else's shoes
- Encourage failure
- Focus groups
- Experiment
- Focus on talents, unique abilities, strengths
- Change the room
- Treat people as "T"
- Tell everyone the objective
- Creative an environment of trust
- Pay attention – acknowledge
- Respect co-worker's creative styles
- Reward creativity
- Foster communication
- Strategies
- Word association
- Mind mapping
- Brain storming
- Quiet reflection
- Challenging the norm
- Take breaks
- No criticism allowed

- Lead by example
- Play
- Relationships
- Activities – regeneration, diversion
- Full brain thinking
- Encourage multiple bottom lines
- Diverse workgroups – continually changing
- Have employee lead discussions for any topic the like. Involve everyone together regarding of group they work in.
- Encourage participation outside the company into the community
- Appropriate workplace environment
- Brainstorming sessions – buy lunch for the employees
- Anonymous survey of rewards that people (employees) would enjoy. (To be rewarded publicly or privately)
- Reward people for ideas
- Tap into other people's creativity
- Have a website (place) where people can express ideas “free flowing”, as they come to mind.
- “Metaphor for creativity” – space rocket – breakdown of gravitational forces
- Enable
- Respect
- Awaken imagination
- “Model” to inspire
- Celebrate and rewrite the story
- Finding creative metaphors
- Individualize
- Love/support
- Give dignity to creativity
- Comfort, acceptance in team
- Recognize the difference between: aspiration/ambition/self-actualization
- Barriers to break through
 - Competition
 - Socialization
 - Conscious Policy
 - Time/deadlines
 - Fear
- FUN
- Friendly atmosphere (Flexible, safety, Open, Possibility, Environment)
- Understanding of employee mix (Diversity, Generations, Ethnicity, Portability, Education, coaching legacy)
- New ideas (Wheels, test, test, vision, OK to fail)
- OPENESS – foundation of these that follow
- Flexibility and respect!!
- Everyone involve
 - Cultures – Senior support
 - Opportunity to experience/be involved with other groups
 - Architecture, office design, amenities
 - Innovation – creativity

- Embracing, open to diversity, without judgment of ideas people, generations, cultural
- Exploring possibilities
- Consciously bring in NEW experiences/people – open house, retreat, wellness, education
- Team building – escape the routine – retreats, rewards
- Collaborating through understanding (stepping into someone else's world)
- Need to consider a variety of methods to encourage staff creativity sharing process both individual and group
- Creative ideas methods
 - Suggestion box
 - E-mail
 - Blog
 - One on one
 - Focus groups
 - Failure is an opportunity
 - Post it notes
 - Many famous entrepreneurs have faced bankruptcy
 - Edison patented them
- Name tag – different name/behaviour/"today I am"
- Dress up – orientation, recognition, celebrations
- Have fun
- Compliance
- Cultural fit
- Toy box
- Meetings
- Gatherings
- Smart foods
- No sugar – highs – crash
- Good food at events and social activities, options, variety
- Accountability – management support
- Intranet discussion forums
- Recognition board
- Showcase/communication
- Music
- Prizes
- Give away
- Fun with games and toys, drumming circles, intranet
- Acoustic instrument celebrations
- Lubricated social activities
- Participation – non threatening, comfortable, options (venue to share ideas), voluntary, under chair
- Work/life balance – time
- Creative whiteboard – exchange of ideas/suggestions (non-threatening)
- Scents – basil (hypoallergenic)
- Buddy system – vent, xtrain, mentor, informal or formal, sounding board, friend, social partner, share ideas
- Share your passions – what's yours??
- Peer recognition
- Failure is opportunity

- Stop “yah, buts...”
- Sabbaticals and time off
- Ask people what they think!
- Pod casts, blogs
- Contests
- Reduce stress
- Bring in new people
- Music at work
- Focus more on outputs than inputs
- Leverage technology
- Family pictures on the office walls
- Timely and frequent recognition
- Breaks and treats
- Flexibility
- Give people time and resources to develop their ideas
- Group activities
- Play games and use toys
- Laugh
- Supportive environment
- Show off end products and results
- Empower employees
- Brainstorm
- Increase diversity = increase creativity
- Employee led mentoring
- Flexible hours of work
- Foster volunteer work
- Open forums
- Meetings outside of meeting rooms
- Act on small ideas
- Focus on future employees rather than current employees
- Idea board / idea card – explore what’s possible
- Support / promote exercise – extra-curricular activities, \$ towards gym memberships, yoga in the workplace
- Music – ipods
- Ideas – share with employees, ask employees for their input (don’t assume you know what employees want)
- Facilitated sessions/discussions
- Volunteer as a group – work together and make a difference
- Support Charities
- Adopt-a-family at Christmas
- Compete with another company in a fun event – eg slo-pitch tournament
- Support holidays/cultural events and celebrations – showcase diverse cultures
- Individuals in the company
- Influence area of personal activities ie exercise and fitness
- Building a corporate culture from the individual employees
- Schedule think time
- Encourage the random, the irreverent, the irrelevant (tell the emperor he has no clothes)

- Let them “spice up” the ordinary
- Reframe the problem, look from a different perspective
- Job swap
- Inspirational speeches
- “safe” environment – employee committee, internal “idea” context
- Get funny (use humour)
- Open door policy
- Trust – star gaze, navel thinking, non-activity is OK
- Hire folks passion for....
- Build more passion
- Train for skills
- Commitment to follow through and alignment with shared vision
- Brain storm
- Theme day – PJs
- Games
- Office Digs – mobile
- Muzak
- Encourage aimless “out of control” chatting
- Tiki party today
- Blue sky vision sessions
- Create a space for creativity both emotional and physical
- Failure is an option
- Allow your mind to wander (generate new ideas) daydream!
- Encourage fun! Laugh! Play a little!
- Simplify
- Understand people as individuals
- Give ownership to team members
- Create a “creative business model”
- Flexible time
- Empower your people
- Forum for people to discuss/meet
- Open invitation to participate in meetings
- Celebrate successes
- Your location
- Ask for input/ideas
- Rewards and recognition
- Educate the leaders/staff
- Random round tables
- Fun events
- Maintain your individuality
- Inspire your team
- BE BOLD!