

# 10 WAYS TO JUMP-START YOUR BUSINESS CREATIVITY

In today's businesses, creativity seems to be in increasing demand. We are required to contribute new ideas beyond the obvious in order to compete, survive and prosper.

Innovation is how a firm or an individual makes money from creativity. Organisations, their Managers and other employees seek to create original ideas and concepts that will end up as innovations, such as new or enhanced products or services, processes that increase efficiency, highly competitive marketing campaigns, or superior management.

Creativity is the process of generating something new that has value. Before we can have innovation, we must have creativity. The key to increasing creativity within your company is to help the people in it act like a creative group. But how is this done?

Suppose you want to be a sculptor, you might begin behaving like a sculpture by practicing every day. You may not become Michael Angelo, but you will probably become more of a sculptor than someone who never tried. Likewise, you and your colleagues can become more creative if you act the part.

Here are 10 ways you and your company can start becoming more creative today:

## 1. Expect Improvement Every Day

Ask all employees to improve one aspect of their work every day, focusing on areas within their control. They could meet at the end of the day, and ask each other what they did differently.

## 2. Ask for 3 Solutions

Whenever an employee comes to you with a problem ask them to think of three solutions BEFORE they share it with you. Allow them to come up with their own ideas. Three will allow more choice and encourage creativity.

## 3. Hold an 'Idea Draw'

Hold a monthly idea draw using a roll of numbered raffle tickets. Each time someone comes up with a creative idea, give them a ticket. At the end of each month, share all the ideas with the staff. Hold a drawing and give a prize to the person whose number come up.

## 4. Look Outside for Fresh Perspectives

Invite people from other departments, or industries to your brainstorming sessions ask them how *they* would solve *your* problem.

## 5. Provide a 'Creative Corner'

People can go to think creatively in a specially provided area. Stock the area with books, videos and learning games on creativity. You might want to decorate the area colourfully and perhaps add pictures of employees as infants to suggest that we're all born spontaneous and creative.

## 6. Lunch with Purpose

Encourage weekly lunchtime brainstorming meeting of three to five employees. Each person could read an article or book chapter each on creativity. They can then share ways of applying creative thinking to the business. Invite local creative business people or speakers on creativity to speak to the group.

## 7. Mix Left and Right Brains

When groups are brainstorming, try dividing the group into left brained (rational and logical thinkers) and right brain (intuitive and artistic) individuals. Ask the rationalists to come up with practical and conventional ideas. Ask the 'intuitives' to come up with far out, unconventional and illogical ideas. Combine the groups and share the ideas.

## 8. Set Idea Quotas

Guarantee creativity by giving each employee a weekly idea quota. Thomas Edison used this method. His personal quota was one minor invention every 10 days and a major invention every six months.

## 9. Change "Yes, but ..." to "Yes, and ..."

When people come up with a new idea people will dismiss it with 'yes but ...', this mindset shuts down the creativity process. Ask them to build on ideas instead of dismissing them by continuing where the last person left off by saying 'yes and ...'.

## 10. Thinking Hats

Ask people to imagine they are someone else for a fresh pair of eyes to the problem. They could imagine that they were a child, what might they say, what questions might a child ask? They could put themselves in the shoes of a mentor, a parent or someone they admire, how may they look at this situation? The idea here is that *'You cannot solve a problem with the thinking that created it.'* (Einstein). Looking at a different viewpoint should provide you with new information.

Creative problem solving is deeply entrenched in what it is to be human. It's in our DNA. Any group can be counted on to be creative, and following a few simple guidelines can enhance its efforts – for example:

- Stimulating and maintaining a creative culture also means people should feel able to take calculated risks when trying out new things, so remember to encourage a positive culture to help this be successful in the long term
- State a problem in a way that stimulates creative thinking
- Don't interfere with a creativity session when it is full swing, and
- Have a plan for evaluating ideas so that a solution can be implemented.
- Do remember to thank people for their ideas however wacky they may appear

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