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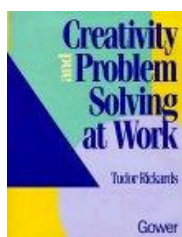
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Papers: Creativity In The Workplace

Colin Ong writes "This article introduces the concept of fostering creativity in the workplace as a prelude to building a world-class Knowledge Creation and Management system."



Peter Drucker was quoted in Forbes Magazine's Management New Paradigms "Managing people will become increasingly crucial in developed countries like US. For the only competitive advantage developed countries can still hope to have is the productivity of their knowledge workers."

The productivity of the knowledge worker is still abysmally low. It has probably not improved in the past 100 or even 200 years – for the simple reason that nobody has worked at improving the productivity."

This is true. However, before there can be an increase in the productivity of knowledge workers, the process of creativity has to be encouraged.

How creativity can be flourished?

According to Brian Clegg, author of Creativity and Innovation for Managers, there are 4 situations when business creativity is exuded,

1)When determining strategy – whether working in regular strategy meetings or in larger-scale off-site strategy sessions, creativity can be a powerful tool to ensure that the future direction is genuinely forward looking and original.

2)When starting a project – at the outset of a project many variables are still unsure, and there will inevitably be problems.

3)When devising a new product or service

4)When a specific problem occurs – whether it is industrial action or supply shortages, there are many problems that arise along the way. An innovative solution, quickly reached, is in great demand.

Below are some practical guide-posts to foster creativity in your workplace:

[Details of problem-solving process]

Every team has to go through a problem-solving process. This is apparent in cultivating a creative workplace. Management has to ensure that every team member is adequately skilled in the various techniques and software programs of problem-solving. This will also ensure that continual organizational learning can permeate even if there is staff turnover.

[Set out the constraints]

It is not advisable to encourage creativity through out your organization without stipulating constraints. The constraints can be in the form of finance, time-span and effects to operational flow. You do not want to create a "renaissance" workplace and then put a dampener on team-building by insisting that these ideas are not workable.

[Which department was affected?]

Quite often, every well-meaning creative idea will translate into extra work for other departments. It is idealistic to expect your employees to accept changes from other "creative" department. Thus it is more prudent to encourage the creative team to spare a thought for other departments. It will also be good practise for them to inform the affected departments of changes after getting the go-ahead from the top management.

[Is there a shelf life for this idea?]

Many creative teams do not factor in a dynamic environment where change is the only certainty. By enquiring about the potential shelf life of a creative idea, team members will also contemplate about the respect and protection of the organisation's intellectual property.

[Which other organization may benefit from this?]

Some creative ideas may not be appropriate to implement but can be used as potential solutions for other organizations in the industry. With this in mind, we always encourage every organization to have a knowledge bank which can house these ideas and also serve as a pension for long-serving enterprising employees.

[Team Presentation]

The importance of presenting ideas cannot be overstated; it encourages the team to be proud of its efforts and gives the rest of the organization an opportunity to ask for clarification.

About the Author - Colin Ong TS is the Managing Director of MR=MC Consulting Pte Ltd (www.mrmc.com.sg). He is a prolific writer on HR, Corporate Learning and New Technology issues. His writings have appeared in a number of global portals and he has also been interviewed on Malaysian Television (TV3) about Knowledge Mgt. He has recently launched a free learning portal at <http://courses.yahoo.com/course/mrmc> which was featured in the recent Singapore Learning Festival.

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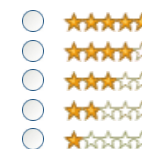
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