

## When You Don't Have a Picasso or da Vinci on Staff Developing Creativity in Employees

Creativity is one of the least understood areas of human ability. Our ideas about our creative selves are too frequently discouraged in our early years by others whose ability to judge this matter should be questionable at best. So if your art teacher told you that creativity isn't in your paint brush let alone in your genes, he or she has seriously underestimated you.

On the one hand, there is a strong argument for believing that creativity is an ingrained ability. Child prodigies like Mozart and Shirley Temple may lend credence to the argument that talent and creativity are something you're just born with – that there is some genetic component at work. However, regardless of the existence of a creative gene pool, it would be wrong for us to assume that we can't learn to be creative. Many successful artists tell the tale of countless discouragements prior to their success, when only their commitment, desire, hard work and belief in self allowed them to attain success.



Neurologists speak of brain elasticity; the ability of the brain to reinforce and strengthen neurological pathways through continued usage. If we think of the brain as a muscle that grows stronger when exercised repeatedly, then wouldn't it be logical to assume that our creativity will also strengthen with frequent flexing?



If it's not already obvious, the main lesson about nurturing creativity is this: one of the biggest obstacles that hold back creative potential is belief systems. Some false beliefs that can inhibit creativity include the following:

- ❖ **Creativity is limited to art and music.** If you've found a way to complete a certain task at work more efficiently or uncovered a faster shortcut to your favorite store, that's creativity in action. Most scientists have creative minds. Creative problem-solving is something that any of us can achieve if we open our minds to possibilities out of our comfort zones.
- ❖ **Creativity can't be trained.** There are many ways you can stimulate new ideas – and the methods can be really fun too. Problem Reversal, for example, asks you to look at a problem from a contradictory perspective. Case in point: "Team morale is low. What are the methods I can use to make it even worse?" Possible solutions: Refrain from offering rewards after a job well done; belittle employees in front of everyone; take away their autonomy. All you need to do next is reverse the solutions, and the double negative will expose viable options that you may not have thought about.
- ❖ **Brainstorming and problem-solving should only consist of viable, logical ideas.** Suspend judgment when brainstorming solutions to problems. Welcome whatever idea comes to mind, no matter how whacky. That off-the-wall idea may be shaped into the ultimate solution.
- ❖ **If a solution has worked in the past, there's no need to revise it.** This may be true to some degree. If something isn't broken, there's no need to fix it. However, if you keep encountering the same problem over and over, then it's not the problem that's the problem! It's your solution. Part of keeping a business competitive involves coming up with innovations, new ideas, and new solutions. If Bill Gates or Steve Jobs believed in rehashing the same solution over and over, we'd still be typing on typewriters.



To nurture creativity in employees, it's important to uncover if there are any psychological obstacles that can be snuffing their creative fire. Psychtests' **Creativity** and **Problem-Solving Aptitude Test** can help HR managers unravel a person's creative hang-ups, while their Analytical Reasoning Test can help employees stretch, flex, and strengthen that creative "muscle" between their ears. 🌀

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