

UNLOCKING CREATIVITY AT WORKPLACE

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ABSTRACT--

Today's business have to become more creative and innovative to deal with growing competition and globalization. The physical workplace can be of value for facilitating creativity. Creativity is the nature of creating something new, either a new idea, concept or method. Innovation is using creativity to enhance performance of a process, person, team or organization. Businesses, for-profit and nonprofit, are facing changes like never before. Numerous driving forces to this change include a rapidly expanding marketplace (globalization), increasing competition, diversity among consumers, and availability to new forms of technology. Creativity and innovation are often key to the success of a business, particularly when strategizing during strategic planning, and when designing new products and services.

Keywords—creativity, innovation, competition, globalization.

INTRODUCTION---

In a globally competitive economy, enterprises must pay continuous attention to increasing responsiveness to changes in market demands and maintenance of competitive advantage over rivals. To achieve this it is highly desirable to introduce best available technology and management tool with a synergy best suited in the competitive environment. Companies can no longer achieve sustainable competitive advantage by merely deploying new technology into physical assets and by excellent management of financial assets and liabilities. The only source of competitive advantage is an organization's ability to make best use of creative potential of its people. Creativity is our ability to solve problems, adapt to change, and create something new and unique. It is also our ability to develop new ideas, to be imaginative and to innovate. While we all have creative potential, many people have disconnected from their creative mind and feel stagnant or stuck. But not to worry any individual can reconnect with their creative side and get those creative juices flowing again. Creativity requires that you let go off your need to 'know' the answers, always be right and control the situation.

Why creativity is needed--

The following set of circumstances create the need for creativity in the organization—

- Turbulent operating environment.
- Vulnerability due to competition

- Sophisticated and demanding customers.
- High targets are set up for employees.
- Crisis that threatens survival of firm.
- Favorable circumstances which tend to trigger off creativity initiatives in image building and humane practices.

Levels of creativity— Basically there are two levels of creativity

- Creativity at Individual level—Creativity at individual level is often inhibited or reduced by our own experiences in educational systems and organizations which tend inappropriately to devalue creative expression. The individual talent of the person working within the role is used.

Task identity—This is the degree to which the job represents a whole piece of work, or doing a job from beginning to end.

Task significance—The importance of the task in terms of its impact upon other people within the organization or in the world at large has an influence on creativity.

Autonomy—This is the degree to which the jobs provide freedom, independence and discretion for the people performing them in determining how to do their work and when to do it.

Task feedback—When people receive information about how well they are in performing their job and on the effectiveness of their performance, they are more likely to be creative in their work, since they become aware of their performance gaps.

- Creativity at Team level— For a team to be creative it must have clear objectives to give focus and direction to creative energies. These objectives should be clear, shared, negotiated and attainable. Team participation incorporates four fundamental concepts—influence over decision making, information sharing, interaction and safety. When team leaders are directive and dominant there is less innovation and less shared understanding. Support for innovation is the most significant predictor of innovation and creativity of teams.

But how much creative an individual may be an organization can never get maximum benefit on sustainable basis out of them unless it is supported by organizational framework. Support from organization may also be needed which will help to carry out creativity revolution in regular and systematic manner so as to harness group ideas.


Pre-requisites for a creative environment—

A good idea is like a fragile thing. Like a match it is easily blown out by the cold winds of rigidity and convention. Even with a good idea, finance and other resources, creating a successful value adding organization is hard. Motivating and coordinating people and their activities is further hard work. Getting individual efforts aligned to focus on the organizational objectives isn't always easy and unless these can be done, organizations draw very little benefit out of it


Work place creativity=ability*motivation*work place environment

Our environment profoundly affects our attitude, traits, ability and behavior. The environment may itself block or facilitate creative ideas themselves. A punitive environment can result in blockage and a risk taking and experimenting environment may stimulate creativity.

Following type of environment will help in removing blockage for innovations and creativity at our work place—

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- Active involvement of individuals.
 - New learning based on the already known.
 - Experience sharing.
 - Open environment with opportunities.
 - Encouraging curiosity and experimentation.
 - Emphasis on self discovery and divergent thinking.
 - Opportunity to interact with creative people.
 - Recognition and rewards for creativity.
 - Decentralization of the hierarchy.

Types of creativity—

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- *Kaizen*--Adaptive creativity –when people tend to accept the paradigm in which problem is embedded and are likely to continue current way of doing things but bring about a better way of doing it
 - *Kairo*-Innovative creativity—people step out of the box, they innovate by redefining the problem, producing new ideas and provide solutions aimed at doing things differently.

To be successful organizations need to be adaptive in their orientations but when a company wants to grow and maintain itself in predictable ways it needs to innovate. Innovation is a hot topic these days. Confronted by all the mystery and disorder that precedes innovation, the challenge is to help people make

meaning of the journey. In this sense, innovation is the end product of a disruptive cycle of Adaptive Change. To innovate is to intentionally let go of the “way things are” and welcome “the way they could be.”

Why to unlock creativity—

When organizations want to become better and faster by actualizing core value especially initiative and speed. This can be achieved only by releasing the creative energy and fire out of people. Without creativity organization cannot make the fullest use of information and experience it already has. Creativity is the least investment path of getting added value from existing assets. So why not unlock creativity proactively.

Ways to unlock creativity—


- Change your environment---When you feel stuck or have hit a creative block, try changing your scenery. Take few essential supplies with you and go to a coffee shop and work for a while, or simply get up take a walk. Try not to think too hard, just relax and enjoy the change of the environment.
- Take risks---In order to get your creative juices flowing be willing to take risk and let go of your need for certainties. Be open to new ideas, it is important though some ideas may be silly. One never knows when one idea may spark another idea that turns out to be the perfect solution to the problem.
- Use your imagination—Give yourself permission for day dreaming and let your imagination go wild. After the imaginatory exercise be aware of any thoughts, feeling and sensations that you have because they may just be the creative answer you need
- Centering/relaxing---It is the practice of quieting the mind and relaxing the body to create a sense of peace present moment focus(mindfulness).It is the process of clearing away the mental clutter so that one can access their creativity.
- Play/laugh—Let your inner child come out as children are naturally creative. So to recharge your creative mind, get out, play have fun and be child like
- Use affirmations---choose thoughts that affirm your creative abilities—like creativity flows in me, I can do it, I honour my creative abilities.
- Do something routine—many people find that creative ideas happen when they are engaged in routine activities like showering, exercising, driving or cleaning
- Accurate problem definition---gather information and organize work in proper manner. Try root cause analysis technique to identify the accurate problem rather than approximate problem identification.

- Develop Future Scenarios—it is a difficult task as future comes with lot of unseen risk and uncertainties which cannot be predicted in writing. So visual thinking can help to develop accurate future scenarios.
- Brainstorming sessions—means generating wild ideas which can lead to meaningful results from the vague ideas developed by sorting out the best ones.
- Game storming—developing ideas in to visuals like pictures, charts ,graphs for a better understanding and clarity of complex problems using different shapes and sizes in a similar manner as we have different shapes while playing a chessboard for better logical analysis and understanding connection among different situations.

So we can say “Creativity is a natural resource that we all have”. This unlimited natural resource is underestimated and underutilized. A common myth says that creativity is the process of generating unique ideas. But this is not true. Creativity is actually the process of generating new and useful ideas as well as finding values for the existing ones.

Barriers of creativity—

In a work place full of bright, intelligent and educated people the potential for great ideas is very high. Unfortunately they seldom materialize when needed as a result of the following barriers—

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- Following rules blindly.
 - Becoming over specialized.
 - Fearing mistakes and failures.
 - Believing that “I’m not creative”.
 - Self aborting ideas in the mind.
 - Lack of skills to present ideas in attractive ways.
 - Workplace environment is ‘idea toxic’.

Suggestions for making more creative teams in organization—

Without a healthy and continuing supply of ideas, organizations would cease to exist. So now days organizations are turning into in-house human resources, as a rich source of ideas in the knowledge economy. Ideas in organizations are like diamonds lying in the dust – lying unappreciated until a manager has the insight to spot them, pick them and value them. People are inherently creative but the paradox is that people in many organizations keep their creative side out of the workplace. Efforts should be made to

- Assign projects complementing organizational goals.
- Make available the necessary resources.
- Give recognition for work.
- Undertake case studies.
- Identify persons who can act as catalyst and free them to think beyond narrower perspective and find innovative response to challenges.
- Stop evaluation of ideas before they are implemented.
- Promote healthy competition.
- Undertake cost benefit analysis.
- Implement the ideas with concrete action plan.

There are some core principles for workplace innovations. Sustainable ‘win-win’ approaches to work organization are most likely to be achieved when—

- Employees are regarded as active partners, treated as responsible people who will react constructively and who want to contribute to the full extent of their individual capability.
- The workplace has developed a culture which values participation and involvement, with a work environment in which everyone contributes for the benefit of the organization as a whole.
- Participation and involvement at the workplace level are linked to the development of new competencies. Sometimes this means finding ways of utilizing existing skills more effectively, but very often new investment in training will be required. Learning should become integral part of job performance.
- When organizational innovation is initiated at workplace, employees can see immediately that it is directly related to the achievement of transparent performance measurement.
- New forms of work organization are explicitly informed by a win-win perspective. This means that the worker must be able to recognize and influence the potential for improvements in the job quality and working life.
- Employees have some control over their work environment, including the ability to strike a balance between routine tasks and more demanding roles.

The environmental conditions prevailing at workplace have great effect on either promoting or killing creativity of individuals. So organization should be very particular on this aspect and continuous analysis and realigning must go on in order to harness best from the workforce.

Conclusion—

The manner in which the infrastructural resources are used determine the level and growth of the company. Transformation in organization is only possible if the people energy is harnessed in a way to satisfy the ultimate consumer requirements. You need persons who can efficiently manage the teams and also drive the company's goals. Alignment with strategy is what creates value for an intangible asset.

Curiosity, hardwork,perseverance,determination,adaptability,honety,responsible attitude, receptive to new ideas and open mindedness are some of the time tested strong points that help build up ones creative personality Focus your resources where they will give you the greatest return taking help from your empowered employees to fight the competition using knowledge and creativity as your driving force. Always remember “*You can't use up creativity. The more you use it, the more you have.*”

Organizations can sustain their competitive advantage by operating in multiple models simultaneously—managing for short term efficiency by emphasizing stability and control and for long term innovations by taking risk and learning by doing. Organizations that operate in this way may be thought of as ambidextrous-hosting multiple, internally inconsistent architectures, competencies and cultures, with built in capabilities for efficiency, consistency and reliability on one hand and experimentation, improvisation and luck on the other. So in our journey of excellence we must always continue to focus on positive and decline the negative keeping in mind the words of Henry Ford—‘Whether you believe you can, or whether you believe you can't, you are absolutely right’. The journey towards creativity never ends here it continues unabated and becomes as meaningful as the person who travels within it.

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