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Fostering Creativity and Innovation for Excellence

Abstract

As war for innovation defines today's business world, organization's victory lies with those who create, recognize and organize creativity management successfully. Creativity management systems are in increasing spree with the passage of time and as such are required by organizations in order to sustain leadership position in the face of emerging global competitions of tomorrow. The present paper highlights creativity and innovation as the essential tool in today's emerging LPG scenario. And no doubt creativity management is driving the organization's strategy so far as the sustainable competitive advantage is concerned in 21st century. The scope of the present study extends to creativity management through which novel ideas are ultimately transformed into things tangible and useful.

Managers can be effectively involved in the creative management process at least in three ways: as an architect / social engineer, as a network builder/ politician and as a juggler/ artist. These multiple roles and responsibilities along with associated managerial competencies are the essential ingredients of better creative management. Better management of creativity may evolve a truly innovative company where creativity doesn't just survive, but actually thrives to offer sustainable competitive advantage in 21st century.

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Introduction

In the current turbulent business environment, business corporations are facing intense competitions in terms of marketing their latest product or trying to bring more customers into their fold. To compete only in terms of achieving global scale, international resource access, and worldwide market position- is not sufficient. The new winners are the companies that are sensitive to market and technological trends, creatively respond to the opportunities and threats they perceive, and are able to harness the creative energies of the people who work with and for them to explore new ideas and approaches to deal with new and constantly changing business problems. Thus, intensive competition today has made corporate creativity not only more important

than before but also an absolute necessity. Successful companies describe creative and imaginative behaviours which solved immediate problems and give them renewed energy for continued adaptation (Torrance, 1959). Therefore, the old clique be creative or fall behind and innovate or key process by many successful organizations. Achieving it is hard, but not impossible. Certain strategies have to be deliberately and constantly pursued by the managers to manage corporate creativity. Managing creativity refers to providing stimulating factors that bolster creativity and eradicating factors that kill creativity. One of the best strategies to foster creativity is to nurture the creative mind of the people who work for and within the organization, as the best ideas always come from within. People are the largest source of corporate creativity. They gather a wealth of data. Information and knowledge about their work everyday. To tap their knowledge, companies must make creativity a part of their culture, and think of its nourishment as everybody's job.

What is Creativity ?

Creativity is often associated with the art and expression of highly original ideas. It can also mean recycling existing knowledge and ideas and finding new applications. The catch, however, lies in identifying an idea that has never been applied before. A young school student, when asked as to why we build brick houses rather than wooden houses succinctly replied that it was done to save the forests- A novel response indeed. The routine response could have been that a brick house is stronger and more resistant to fire.

There are many ideas which may be original but so eccentric that they may not have any socially redeemed value. Thus, the value of creativity is determined by its utility and usefulness. So creativity can be defined as "a socially recognized achievement in which there are novel products to which one can point as evidence such as intentions, theories-building, published writings, painting and sculptures, films, laws, institutions, medical and surgical treatments and so on" (Barron & Harrington, 1981).

Corporate creativity means original and useful ideas. But mere originality and utility is not enough. To be creative, an idea must also be appropriate and practical. Thus, corporate creativity is novelty that is useful, appropriate and can be put into action. It must somehow influence the way the business gets done-by improving a product, or by opening up a new way to approach a problem.

Stages Underlying the Creativity Process

There is no absolute unanimity among the researchers on how creativity takes place. Nonetheless, creativity involves 'making remote associations' between unconnected events, ideas, information stored in memory, or physical objects. The process of creativity can be thought of as unfolding in a series of five stages (Glassman, 1989; Kabanoff and Rossiter, 1994).

1. **Preparation :** People engage in the active learning and day-to-day sensing which is required to deal successfully with the complex environment. When Gutenberg invented the printing press, he combined at least three well-known technologies : movable type (used in minting coins), the press (used in wine making), and wood blocks (used to print playing cards, Calendars, and so on.) However, prior to this great leap of imagination. Gutenberg had to learn the tricks of handling soft metals from his father, who had been an official in a mint, This knowledge enabled him to make movable type that was durable and uniform. Thus, inspiration always favours the prepared mind. (Cited in Starl, 1996)
2. **Concentration :** When people focus on the problems at hand, they first define and frame the actual problem so that alternatives can be considered for dealing with them. Japanese companies in order to stimulate creativity among employees incorporate this stage as part of a quality improvement process. That is the reason why the average number of suggestions per employee for

improving quality and productivity is significantly higher in Japanese companies in comparison to typical US companies (Basadur, 1992).

3. **Incubation** : This calls for looking at the problems in diverse ways in order to allow for the consideration of unusual alternatives. It operates under two basic principles of nature: first, diverge stretch your thinking and generate many options, and second, converge select the best of those options to refine and put into action. Diverging and converging is in fact, the heartbeat of the creative process (Firestein, 1996).
4. **Illumination** : A sudden flash of insight or intuition can suddenly solve a vexing

puzzle. The story of how Friedrich Kekule, a German Chemist, discovered the structure of benzene provides a classic example. Kekule had a good feel for building an atomic structure perhaps because of his early interest in architecture. One day in 1865, while dozing in a bus, he saw atoms whirling in a dance. Suddenly, the “tail end” of one chain attached itself to the “head end” and formed a spinning ring. He awoke and realized that the carbon atoms formed a ring. That was an important discovery, because it allowed for much greater progress in the new synthetic dye industry (cited in Star 1, 1996)

Realm of Creativity & Innovation

Imagination and creative thinking are scarce resources. Often you will have to cultivate them in your employees before you can harvest effective solutions to work problems.

Problem solving without creative thinking is a garden without seeds. Creative thinking will plant a mental garden, which can then be cultivated, weeded, nourished and harvested. And fortunately, creative thinking can be taught and applied to problem solving in an organization-wide context.

The most commonly mentioned obstacle to creativity is constraint. Constraint includes the absence of freedom in deciding what to do or how to do it, and lack of control over one's own ideas.

5. **Verification** : This is the process where logical analysis is used to confirm that good problem-solving decisions have been taken. Mere inspired ideas are not enough. They must be well thought out and implemented.

This model simply provides a method of creative problem solving. There are several other

creative models, but the evidence is overwhelming that none of them really works in practice (Amabile, 1988). Thus, there is no exact recipe for creativity. If creativity was a process, by this time its operations would have been reduced to formulas and recipes, which intelligence and method could apply to produce great art and great science (Barzun, 1989)

A Model of Corporate Creativity

Creativity is the search for novel ideas and their development and appropriate implementation to the present context. But, how does one search and develop novel ideas? Experts say, it can be done by nurturing the factors that influence corporate creativity. In turn, creativity is the product of the compatibility of three sets of factors: organizational characteristics, group characteristics and individual characteristics. It shows that corporate creativity is directly influenced by organizational characteristics and the amount of creative behavior that occurs within work groups. In turn, the group's creative behavior is influenced by group characteristics and individual creative behaviours

of its members. Individual creative behavior is directly affected by a variety of individual characteristics. The double-headed arrow between individual and group and between group and organizational characteristics indicate that the various characteristics influence each other.

Individual Characteristics

Individual characteristics determine individual creativity. A relaxed frame of body and mind is the sine qua non for the creativity process. It is commonly believed that while people with high IQs show different levels of creativity, those with low IQs are likely to exhibit low creativity. But contrary to this stereotype, it has been proved that this conception is not only inadequate but has been largely responsible for the lack of progress in the understanding of creative people (Guilford, 1950). There is no connection between intelligence and creativity above a certain level of intelligence. Being more intelligent does not guarantee a corresponding increase in creativeness. It just is not true that the more intelligent person is necessarily the more creative one (Mackinnon, 1978). Similarly, the notion that a person's creativity diminishes with age is also far from true. More than a hundred years ago, George Beard, a New York doctor, after a detailed study of more than a thousand biographies of eminent people, concluded that creativity peaks just before age forty and then begins a slow decline (Beard, 1874). However, now it is asserted that, a person's age tells little about whether he or she will be involved in a creative art (Robinson & Stern, 1997). Further, research indicates that sex rarely influences creativity. Male and female managers do not differ in their levels of creativity (Robinson & Stern, 1997).

There are a host of personality characteristics that are associated with creativity. Creative people are highly motivated individuals who spend considerable time in acquiring and developing both tacit (implied) and explicit knowledge about their field of interest or occupation. They desperately want to gain expertise in their field.

The conventional wisdom "Risk-taking and creativity go hand in hand"- is still alive today, though perhaps in a less extreme form. It is simplistic and misleading to always associate creativity with risk-taking. It keeps companies from reaching for the potential creativity in every one and in every situation. As Peter F. Drucker (1985) wrote :

The popular picture of innovations- half pop-psychology, half-Hollywood- makes them look like a cross between Superman and the Knights of the Round Table. Alas, most of them in real life are unromantic figures, and much more likely to spend hours on a cash flow projection than to dash off looking for 'risks'.

This observation explains why most people involved in creative acts in companies are more cautious than reckless. It may well be that the especially risky creative acts have received an inordinate amount of attention in the historical record, leading to general belief that creativity is bred by risk. Although some people are more risk-oriented than others, for corporate creativity caution is more often in order than taking a risk.

Creative people have initiative. Intellectual curiosity, the desire to understand, is derived from an urge as basic as hunger or sex, the exploratory drive (Koestler, 1964). They are enthusiastic. They are not adapters. "Adapters are those who seek to solve problems by 'doing things better' They prefer to resolve difficulties or make decisions in such a way as to have the least impact upon the assumptions, procedures, and values of the organization" (Matherly and Goldsmith, 1985). In contrast, creative individuals are dissatisfied with the status quo. They look for new and exciting solutions to problems. They are creative thinkers. They exhibit creative job skills. The skill itself does depend quite a bit on personality traits as well as on how a person thinks and acts. How a person thinks depends upon his thinking style. Different people have different thinking styles: analytical

or initiative, conceptual or experimental, social or independent, logical or value driven. It was believed that an analytical, logical and sequential approach to problem solving is the function of the left side of the brain (left-brained thinking) and an initiative, value-based, and independent approach is the function of the right side of the brain (right-brained thinking). However, recent researchers have questioned this explanation. According to Dr. John C. Mazziotta, a researcher of the University of California at Los Angeles School of Medicine, “the left brain/ right brain dichotomy is simplified and misleading”. What scientists have found instead is that creativity is a feat of mental gymnastics which engages the conscious and subconscious parts of the brain. It draws on everything from knowledge, logic, imagination, and intuition to the ability to see connections and distinctions between ideas and things (Smith, 1985).

How a person thinks and acts is largely determined by another factor, i.e., motivation. A scientist can have outstanding educational credentials and could be great in generating new perspectives with regard to problems. But he/she simply won't do it, if he / she lacks the motivation to do it. All forms of motivation, i.e., extrinsic and intrinsic do not foster creativity. Rather, intrinsic motivation is far more essential. According to Arthur Schawlow, a Nobel laureate in Physics, “the labour of love aspect is important. The successful scientists are often not the most talented, But the one who are just impelled by curiosity. They've got to know what the answer is” (quoted form Ambaile, 1988). This “labour of love aspect” is highly intrinsic in nature. Thus, creative people are motivated by intrinsically interesting aspects of the work itself such as interest, enjoyment, challenge, appreciation, and satisfaction rather than reward structures, which are extrinsic incentives. Creativity is also related to experience. But to stimulate creativity what is important is the quality of experience rather the quantity of experience.

Group Characteristics

Individual creativity is often supported by work-group creativity. Group creativity is influenced by a set of group characteristics. Every group should start with a clear mission and vision that is shared by all the group members. Group composition represents another explanatory variable. Research result suggest that, homogeneity among group members, while desirable from some perspectives, is not particularly facilitative of creative group outcomes. Rather diversity seems to foster group creativity (Woodman, 1993). Rosabeth Moss Kanter, a management expert who was one of the first to investigate this relationship found that innovative companies deliberately used heterogeneous teams to solve problems (Kanter, 1983; Larkey, 1996). Creative decisions are made only when different ideas, perceptions, and ways of processing and judging information collide. Therefore, IBM deliberately encourages diversity and trains all employees in a two-day workshop on diversity to embrace diverse viewpoints and culture. Hewlett Packard (HP) another major innovative company also adopts the same practice. Carly Fiorina, CEO, Hewlett Packard, says, “Invention is at the heart and should of what HP has been about. Invention depends fundamentally on creativity. And, creativity springs from workforce diversity. Therefore, diversity is critical to creativity”(quoted from Annual Report, 1999). However, an optimum level of cohesiveness that supports open interaction, diverse viewpoints and playful surroundings is essential to facilitate group creativity. Therefore, Kodak has created a humor room where employees can relax and have creative brainstorming sessions. The room contains joke books, videotapes of comedians, stress-reducing toys, ad software for creative decision-making (Caudron, 1992).

Work-groups should also be given more freedom and challenges. Consider a recent transformation at Proctor & Gamble. Once a hotbed of creativity, P & G had in recent year seen the number of its product innovations decline significantly. In response, the company established

Corporate New Ventures (CNV), a small cross-functional team. The CNV team was allowed to elect its own members. Members of the CNV team also were given a clear, Challenging strategic goal; i.e., to invent radical new products that would build the company's future. The team was given enormous latitude about when, where, and how they approached their work. This changed environment has resulted in tremendous creative work. In the three years since its inception, CNV has handed out 11 projects to the company for execution. Not surprisingly, given CNV's success, P & G is beginning to expand both the size and the scope of its CNV venture [cited in Ambile, 1998]

Structural problem solving procedure and supportive supervision also enhance creativity (Oldham and Cummings, 1996; Roth, Schaefer, and Switzer, 1995). One of the most commonly used procedure that is irrevocably linked with creativity is brainstorming. Brainstorming means using the brain to storm a problem. It is intended to promote fluency and flexibility in groups, each of which has been associated with creativity. Fluency is the ability to generate many ideas easily; flexibility is about coming up with many different kinds of ideas. However, the assumption that group fluency and flexibility results in creative outcomes is now questionable. The recent research studies show that brainstorming actually has only a minimal effect on the creativity of a group's solution to a problem (Stein, 1975; and Perkins, 1988).

Another problem solving approach is synetics which assists in generating a variety of ideas. As Barron(1968) put it : "Synetics in operation depend, heavily on two mechanisms making the strange familiar and making the familiar strange. The first of these is a search for similarity, so that when confronted with a new problem, we ask ourselves whether it is not an old problem had we but the wit to see it. Seeing even partial resemblances may lead to the application of familiar methods in solving the new problem. Making the familiar strange is a way of shedding preconceptions and perpetual habits. Innocence of

vision, a certain naiveté and ingenuousness characterize the creative individual. If the qualities can be cultivated, the novelty of invention and problem solution should be increased'.

Organizational Characteristics

Employees creativity is directly influenced by organizational characteristics. There are instances of many reputed companies which have made innovation their business and would not have survived if they had not focused on employees' creativity. Such organizations mostly focus on creativity via organizational characteristics. For instance, the MNCs like Adobe, Cadence, Texas Instrument, Body shop, Du Pont, IBM, 3m, Microsoft, Sierra System, and also the home grown companies like Ranbaxy, Wipro, Infosys, Sasken Technologies, Murgappa Group in their own way have institutionalized the art of creativity and converted it into a practicing science.

Corporate culture is the heartbeat of the process of creativity. What really drives a company is not its fancy methodologies and complicated technologies, but an underlying "cult of innovation". According to Tom Kelley, the General Manager of IDEO, a successful design firm in silicon valley, this cult of innovation is what allows the companies to get beyond the political gamesmanship that stifle traditional companies (quoted from Rajawat and Gupta, 2001). Corporate culture is defined by an organization's norms and values. Values reflect beliefs about what is important. Norms are the widely shared and strongly held social expectations about the appropriate attitude and behavior. Organizations having strong and well-shared norms and values significantly promote creativity.

An innovative corporate culture is characterized by openness, trust, collaboration, flexibility, teamwork, power-balance, and risk-taking. Building of the innovative culture starts with the hiring process. Organizations must recruit the best people with the right skills people who think differently and will perceive the same thing in ways that the normal person would not think of. For

instance, the Body Shop, a UK based multinational company founded in 1976, which markets more than 400 personal-care products in 600 retail outlets world-wide today, constantly launches its search for creative staffing during the hiring process. The same practice is also adopted by Ranbaxy, 3M and Adobe. Once the hiring process is over, the vision and mission of the organization should be clearly communicated to the incumbents. Ron Matthews, CIO of Philips Hager and North says, “Executives must cascade strategic plans down to the employee level. Employees need to know where the ship is headed so they can direct their energies to what is important to the business”. (Quoted from Naiman, www.Creativityatwork.com).

Another major factor that could flower the creative genius of employees is to create an open, collaborative, and idea-friendly environment- an environment that allows free flow and generation of ideas, knowledge sharing and provides freedom, flexibility, and support to individual creativity. Each employee should be encouraged to generate ideas, and each idea should be duly acknowledged. Chrysler’s Minivan is said to have been invented by a refugee from Ford. At Adobe, every employee is encouraged to come up with an idea. Proper infrastructure is provided and resources are earmarked for this purpose. Each idea is evaluated by a council of 10-15 people to determine its marketability. The Japanese industries, which have become the benchmark for world-class efficiency use a key concept, **Soikufu** – Creative thinking and inventive ideas, which means capitalizing on workers suggestions. The Chairman of Toyota says, “One of the features of the Japanese workers is that they use their hands as well as their brains. Our workers provide 1.5 million suggestions a year and 95 percent of them are put to practical use. There is almost tangible concern for improvement in the air at Toyota” (Imai, 1986). Similarly, many Indian organizations such as Tisco, Reliance Industries Ltd., National Aluminum Company Ltd. (NALCO), Vishakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP), Steel Authority of India Ltd. (SAIL)etc. have very successfully

implemented the Suggestion Scheme, under which they encourage employees to explore ideas and suggest it for improving productivity, efficiency, and profitability of the organizations. For instance, during the financial year 2001-2002, VSP Received 29, 963 suggestions from its employees, out of which it accepted 5, 434 suggestions and implemented 2, 654 suggestions (48.84%), which resulted an estimated savings of Rs. 1, 356 lakhs.

A highly collaborative environment demands a high trust culture. An innovative organization trusts its employees with all the best that it can provide to enable them to develop in the right perspective. At Sasken Technologies, every desk has ISD and STD facility, there are no locks and keys there. The employees can work round the clock if they choose to and there is no nine-to-five schedule in the company. A Collaborative environment also demands idea and knowledge sharing among organizational members. Consider how 3M and Honda have consciously tried to get their employees to share information.

3M functions as a kind of corporate petri dish that fosters the spirit of innovation in its scientists and engineers. Technical people are encouraged to swap information and ideas in the halls. Once a year, the company holds its own private trade show. Each of its more than 115 research labs sets up a booth displaying the latest technologies, and for three days scientists, like hucksters at a fair, try to “sell” their work to each other. A corporate committee of 3M scientists oversees all research, making sure there is no duplication and allowing for cross-pollination of new ideas among divisions.

At Honda, Research-and -development recruits spend three months making cars, and a further three selling them at dealerships. They then spend six months rotating through a verity of R&D jobs. Experiencing every part of the company ‘hands-on’ is, Honda reckons, the best way to encourage them to come up with useful ideas. If they are to be creative, firms need to be able to pool their employees’ knowledge, but that can be difficult if research engineers, tucked away in their

laboratories, fail to understand the needs of customers (cited in Fortune, 1990).

Organization Design and Policy

Organization design and policy are the other determining factors. To encourage employees to develop their insights and imagination and unleash breakthrough ideas, organizations should break away from the traditional control structure. Traditional company structures emphasize control rather than creation-through-experiment. F. W. Taylor, the pioneer of scientific management, summed this up to Harvard students in 1909. "Your job is to find out what your boss wants and give it to him exactly as he wants". Such a view precisely explains why fresh ideas are much harder to push up through a hierarchical organization than across a flat one. In contrast, many Japanese companies are trying to evolve a "paperweight" structure. Japanese paperweights are broad and flat, but perhaps the most straightforward organizational structure encourage creativity. Keeping in view its relevance, many traditional companies are gradually breaking away from the rigid organization structure. For instance, the State-owned Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics (CAIR), Which was earlier under the defiance ministry, has made a breakaway form traditional and established practices to promote employees' Creativity. It has launched IRIS and CAIR comes under its jurisdiction so that all operational freedom and flexibility could be enjoyed by the body.

Similarly, 3M has also a fluid and flexible organization structure. Its organizational policy insists that 30 percent of its annual worldwide sales can be generated from the new products introduced. Therefore, it encourages its employees to spend even 15 percent of their time on their won projects to generate ideas. Necessary financial support is provided to employees to develop their ideas into products and market them. As a result, more than 60, 000 innovative products have been developed since the inception of the company in 1902 (Rajawat and Gupta, 2001)

The spirit of creativity requires constant stimulation. Therefore, the structure of the organization must be backed with an appropriate to rap the rewards of the success would definitely help to create. Obviously, the most common form of reward is money. At Sasken Technologies, the high performers and creative employees are rewarded with bonuses or stock options. At Adobe India, an employee who successfully develops and idea is rewarded monetarily. Adobe conducts regular staff meetings and any achievement is awarded cash amounts ranging from \$ 5, 000 to \$ 7, 000. Cash reward does encourage people to be creative, but it does not always work. Sometimes it acts negatively at least when people feel that they are being bribed. Money, by itself, does not make employee passionate about their jobs. Therefore, in order to develop more passion and interest in their job, many companies are providing nonmonetary or intrinsic rewards to their star performers. For instance, Du Pont provides hero status to those who show how to get products to the market place more promptly and more creatively. In Sasken Technologies, when a team works on a given design and fills for a patent, they offer cash rewards at every stage. But that's not all. They also appreciate their work and honour these high performers formally. Therefore, the motivation level of its employees is very high. Steel Authority of India Ltd. rewards employees for their innovative works. For instance, on 4th February 2002, Mr. J. S. William, Senior Operator (CCS) in Bhillai Steel Plant was honoured with the Prestigious Shram Vir award from the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India. The award carried a cash reward of Rs. 60, 000 and a merit certificate. He was also felicitated by the Chairman of SAIL on the same day because of his innovative idea of installation of a system for automatic cutting of blooms. Implementation of the Idea not only saved substantial amount of foreign exchange, but also improved he yield of rails and reduced the breakdown time at the Rail Mill.

At 3M, employees are motivated by recognition from their peers. 3M offers awards such as the Golden Step Award and the Pathfinder Award.

Former CEO Lou Lehr described how the spotlight focuses, bells rings, and the video cameras roll on the publicly approved teams success (Kelley, 1991, Labich, 1988; and Mitchell, 1989). Bob Swanson; founder of Ganetech, a biotechnology company, understood what motivated his scientists. He let them publish their findings right away in leading journals. Recently, another strategy is being adopted by many successful companies i.e., turning their employees into entrepreneurs. 3M is a good example of such employee entrepreneurship.

Technology also influences corporate creativity. No organization can be truly innovative, unless it has a proper communication system. The failure of large organizations in America to innovate is primarily the result of a communication gap, not a decline in ingenuity (Rusenfeld and Servo, 1984). Every organization has necessary channels of communication to ensure effective communication between employees who depend on each other to do their work. However, most organizations overlook the importance of unanticipated communication between employees who do not normally work together. And these exchanges of information often lead to unexpected creative acts. Therefore, every organization must promote this kind of within-company communication to promote creativity. Another factor which has an overriding impact on corporate creativity is the size of the organization. The assumption that majority of creative acts seem to occur in the larger organizations has now become a source of research. Of course it has already been proved in large Japanese companies. (Robinson and Stern, 1997).

Last, but not the least, is the opportunity for continuous learning. Sierra Systems provides sufficient opportunities to its people to stay at the forefront of new technology. And gives them a variety of assignments in a fast paced environment. Employees are provided with the tools and training they need to grow, including access to self-help instruction and tutorials on the Internet. The Body shop strongly cultivates creativity through education. Franchises and store managers participate

in executive training at corporate headquarters in England. Managers are taught in the training sessions to unleash the passions of their staff (Gundry, Kickul, and Prather, 1994). In 1991. Du Pont created the Centre for Creativity and Innovation. Although the Centre is staffed by only three full time employees , it has the support of 10 facilitators- creativity training ‘volunteers’ who hold full time Du Pont jobs outside the Centre. In this way, Du Pont conducts in-house creativity training. The top level management renders all kinds of support to the Centre. A Senior Manager sponsors each creative problem-solving workshop and attends as a participant, not just as an observer. The companies support for creativity training is expressed by Edgar Woolard. Chairman, “We intend to provide hero status to those who show us how to get products to the market place more promptly and more creatively (Gundry, Kickul, and Prathar 1994)

Creativity plays a vital role in achieving excellence. Therefore, every organization must strive to nurture creativity. However, it is often found that creativity is undermined unintentionally everyday in work organization. It gets killed much more often than it gets supported. The organizations in pursuance of achieving business excellence exert excessive discipline and excessive rigidity in structure – too much control that systematically crushes employees’ creativity. Therefore, an organization has to be built in such a way that business objectives are attended to, and creativity also flourishes. Building up such organizations requires us to understand precisely how best to manage creativity so that creativity can flourish, and does not get stifled.

Some strategies that may be adopted by the managers/ leaders to make their organizations more creative and innovative are given below.

Understand Yourself

The key to a company’s creativity or lack of it is its leaders be they the managers or CEO of the company. According to Goran Ekvall of the University of Lund, Sweden, 67 percent of the statistical variance accounted for on the climate for

creativity in an organization is directly attributed to the behavior of the leader (Ekvall, 1996) Therefore, start the creativity management process with yourself. Understand your own behavior. Identify your own style and gain insight into the ways your preferences and choices unconsciously shape your style of leadership and patterns of communication. Always keep in mind that your style can stifle the very creativity you seek from your employees. Consider the experience of Jim Shaw, Executive vice-President of MTV networks, who once said:

I have always characterized the creative, right-brained, visionary-type people as dreamers. What I've realized is that when a dreamer expressed a vision, my gut reaction was to say, "Well, if you want to do that, what you've got to do is A, the B, then you have to work out C, and because you've got no people and you've learned that saying that to a creative type is lined throwing upon the dream. When I say that stuff too soon, the dreamer personalizes it as an attack. I've learned not to put all of the things that need to be done on the table initially. I can't just blurt it all out-it makes me look like a naysayer. What I've learned to do is to leak the information gradually, then the dreamer knows that I am meeting him halfway.

Thus, Shaw realized that his leadership style and communication patterns were unconsciously Shaped by his cognitive preferences. In fact his automatic reaction initially stifled the very creativity he sought from his employees (Quoted from Leonard and Straus, 1997).

Improve Yourself

A manager's behavior is the major influence in determining whether an organization will grow to be successful, creative, innovative, or stagnate and die. A story from ancient China illustrates the attitude today's managers must take if they wish to make their organization succeed: When Yen Ho was about to take up his duties as tutor of the heir of Ling, duke of Wei, he went to Ch' U Po Yu for advice. "I have to deal", he said, "with a man of depraved and murderous disposition. How is one to deal with man

of this sort?" "I am glad", said Ch' U Po Yu, "that you have to do is not to improve him, but to improve yourself" (cited in Firestein, 1996). If managers really want to make their employees creative, they must also be creative. They must serve as a role model for their people. Think about people, learn by watching others. Therefore, by demonstrating their willingness to try new things and being flexible, they may encourage others to take risks-creative risks that may well take the organization to the top.

Understand Your Role, Responsibilities and Challenges

There are no excellent organizations without excellent managers as Tom Peters claimed. Managers must understand their role and responsibilities. They need to make a proper alignment among organizational objectives; strategy, culture and people to stimulate creativity. They are expected to play three kinds of roles simultaneously – that of an architect, network builder and juggler to facilitate creativity. The manager as an architect/ engineer uses strategy, structure, competencies and cultures to build robust organizations to get today's work and tomorrow's innovation accomplished. The manager, as a network builder and politician, builds cliques and coalitions in service of innovation and creativity. And finally, the manager as an artiste / juggler builds and integrates on the tensions and contradictions inherent in organizations (Tushman, Anderson, and Co' Reilly). To be a good manager, one must have the competencies and behavioural flexibility to balance the diverse management skills required to promote creativity. Above all, the commitment, cooperation, openness, flexibility, clear direction, leadership qualities of managers are equally vital. Managers should learn to loosen their control over employees to unleash creativity, to act as a catalyst instead of an obstacle, and not to let their decision-making style stifle those employees who have a different style. Creative and participative leadership should not be in a boutique form but with the backbone of strategy.

Stimulate the Factors that Bolster Creativity

There are some factors that support or facilitate the creativity process- these are functional or constructive factors which need to be stimulated. Given below is a list of such factors :

- i) **Work Environment** : Create an open, supportive, monitoring environment and allow employees to have fun and play around. Avoid excessive discipline, excessive rigidity in organization structure, and too much control over employee behavior. Clearly determine the mission and vision of the organization and never continually change the goals. Make sure employees are not bogged down with specific tasks all day long. Provide them more autonomy and freedom to experiment. Encourage risk-taking, open communication, information sharing and teamwork. Allot more resources and provide continuous performance feedback to employees. Also, learn to tolerate the mistakes and failure of the employees.
- ii) **Alignment** : No company can ever be consistently creative and innovative, unless it is well aligned. In general, to align means, “to bring into line”. In a corporate setting, alignment means, the degree to which the interests and actions of each employee support the organization’s key goals. A company must be strongly aligned in order to promote creativity. The higher the degree of alignment, the more consistent would be creativity. Misalignment always shuts down creativity.
- iii) **Organic organizational Design** : Organic organizational designs such as matrix network designs and collateral group structures increase organizational creative performance.
- iv) **Resources** : Resources – financial, technological, human, material are the cornerstones of an organization. To achieve excellence, organizations with substantial

financial, technological and human resources have greater strategic flexibility and probability of enhancing employees’ creativity than organizations limited resources.

- v) **Encourage Diversity** : Encourage work-force diversity. Remember, diversity is an opportunity, not a threat to creativity
- vi) **Encourage Ideation** : Encourage individual employee and team to ideate. Freely and generously recognize these ideas. Don’t criticize the mistaken ideas or errors. Treat erroneous ideas as opportunities for learning.
- vii) **Information Sharing** : There must be open sharing of information between employees. Information should flow freely not only into the organization, but also within the organization.
- viii) **Continuous Learning** : Learning plays a vital role in creativity. Provide enough opportunities to employees for continuous learning. Cultivate creativity through education and training.
- ix) **Reward** : Reward original, valuable and actionable ideas. Keep in mind that intrinsic rewards are greater motivators than extrinsic rewards.
- x) **Communication** : Create a good communication system in the company. Emphasis more upon within-company communication to facilitate communication between employees who do not normally work together. There are three ways an organization can promote this kind of within-company communication : (a) provide opportunities for employees who do not normally interact with each other to meet; (b) ensure that every employee has a sufficient understanding of the organization’s activities to be able to tap its resource and expertise; and (c) create a new organizational priority – all employees should

know the importance of being responsive to requests for information's or help from other employees because that response might very well be the key to a creative act.

Conclusion :

Managing creativity is indeed a difficult job. There is no such cookbook strategy for creativity management, otherwise by now, it would have been reduced to a formula or recipe.

Successful companies see creativity and innovation as a basic function that needs managing- and then they manage it by developing new products on customer's needs, encouraging employees to ideate, rewarding them for good and actionable ideas, refusing to punish those whose ideas do not pay-off, and tolerating the mistakes committed by them. However, good ideas do not go very far unless they have a champion or sponsor with the passion or the power to push them. The person who can play a powerful role in this context is the manager. Managers can be effectively involved in the creative management process at least in three ways; as an architect/ social engineer, as a network builder / politician, and as a juggler / artist. They have to root-out factors that kill creativity and stimulate factors that foster creativity. These multiple roles and responsibilities alongwith associated managerial competencies are the essential ingredients of better creative management. Better management of creativity may evolve a truly innovative company where creativity doesn't just survive, but actually thrives.

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