

Brigham Young University- Idaho
Promoting Creativity and Innovation in the Workplace

Brooklyn Morrill

Sister Julie Spilker

English 252

18 October 2021

Introduction: Creativity in the Workplace

Humans are naturally curious, innovative, and problem solvers. With these natural tendencies in mind, another one to consider is creativity. Every person will not have the same perception of creativity since it is so individualized and based on a person's background, culture, education, and interest. (Shao Introduction) There are so many areas in life where creativity should be valued and accepted, the workplace is one of them. Creativity in the workplace is an interesting topic for many reasons but one of the biggest is because there are people who have worked for companies that welcomed innovation and others who required that their employees stick to the status quo. Having had experience with both companies, an employee knows that it is more rewarding to be creative and see their ideas come to life instead of being shut down the moment they try something new. Creativity and innovation should be promoted in the workplace because employees are happier, companies do better financially, and new ideas are generated.

Creativity & Innovation – What are they?

As mentioned earlier, creativity can be something that is considered to be individualized. And innovation, some might just see that as thinking of a smart way to do something. Both are correct ideas. A good definition is, "creativity is 'the thinking of novel and appropriate ideas' whereas innovation is 'the successful implementation of those ideas within an organization. Another way of thinking about this is that creativity is the new or original idea, but innovation is the process by which that idea is turned into practice.'" (*Managing Creativity and Innovation in the Workplace*) For some, it can be easy to be creative but not innovative. New ideas are generated all day long but is there any action being taken from these ideas? Creativity and innovation go hand in hand so that ideas are created, and things are made to better the conditions of something.

The Environment of a Workplace

There are many things that affect how creative an employee can be on the job. Their job description and title definitely play a role. Especially in how they perceive themselves and what they are capable of doing. The flow of the office is also another varying factor. According to an article titled, “Does the Design of the Workplace Affect Individual Creativity.” We learn that “open-plan office design reduces the cost of real estate and enhances communication and creativity among colleagues...” (Samani) This is an example of innovation and helping a business do better financially. When boundaries are broken, and collaboration is more common, more complex ideas will be formed. Google is a leading expert in promoting creativity in the workplace. In their office design, they have places where teams can collaborate but also spaces for their employees to brainstorm and reflect creatively. Not to mention they even provide spaces for relaxation and fun. How would you like to have a bowling alley at work? You can see firsthand the spaces that Google provides for their employees. (See figure 1.1 and 1.2)



Figure 1.1: A space for employees to exercise and associate with their fellow Googlers in Zurich. (Hartmans)



Figure 1.2: The Google Offices located in Dublin featuring wide open spaces for single work or collaboration. (Hartmans)

It is clear they established helpful spaces in their offices, and continually do their best to make their employees comfortable. In turn, they have happy employees who are extremely happy with their jobs. Not to mention that they are a booming company with insane amounts of success. Creativity fuels the fire at Google, without it, they wouldn't be where they are today! Giving employees a positive environment to work in makes them happy and provides a platform for their creativity to thrive.

Finances Are Balanced by Creativity

In many of my previous college courses, especially Organizational Principles and Theory with Professor Eric Embree at Brigham Young University-Idaho, we explored how companies organize and reward their workers. He shared a story with us that leaves me pondering the situation to this day. There was a man who worked for a large corporation as a mailroom worker. I cannot recall the company, nor find the story online but the concept remains the same. He knew the mail system and the details of how everything functioned. After thinking about the system, he started exploring ways that it could run more efficiently. He ended up taking the idea to his supervisor and they implemented it in their department. It worked so well that it started to be implemented in other departments in the company. This idea ended up saving the business thousands of dollars in paper products. This company now gives this innovative worker a check each year for all the money they have saved because of his genius idea and planning. Because the worker was innovative and brave to share his idea, he was simply rewarded for his efforts. The employee in this story was most likely proud of his efforts and the company did better financially because of it.

The Creative Generation of New Ideas

In the book, *Work Rules!: Insights from Google That Will Transform How You Live and Lead*, author and Google people leader Laszlo Block says, “Pick an area where your people are frustrated and let them fix it. If there are constraints, limited time, or money, tell them what they are. Be transparent with your people and give them a voice in shaping your team or company. You’ll be stunned by what they accomplish.” (Block 149) New ideas are generated when frustrations are felt or when there are problems to be solved. If a manager or team leader lets their team loose to exercise their creativity and innovation it will instill a sense of trust in the team members that they have been tasked with something important. When someone knows that they have been given the power to make a change to a problem that bothers them, they are going to work hard and think about all the possible solutions so the situation can be better.

“Creativity often comes when you take an idea from its original context and you move it somewhere else.” (Harford Tim) This applies in the workplace because often employees are working on multiple projects or maybe they oversee different parts of the business. As they take the issues they are facing and put them into context in other areas it is likely they will have a lightbulb moment where they miraculously think of the perfect solution. Brainpower and creative ideas are something that is established over time, and it is done by piecing different principles and perspectives together to a point that they work effectively. This is a concept known to athletes as cross-training. (Harford, Tim) You can also cross-train your mind. “...researchers took 18 randomly chosen medical students and they enrolled them in a course at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, where they learned to criticize and analyze works of visual art. And at the end of the course, these students were compared with a control group of their fellow medical students. And the ones who had taken the art course had become substantially better at performing tasks such as

diagnosing diseases of the eye by analyzing photographs. They'd become better eye doctors. So, if we want to become better at what we do, maybe we should spend some time doing something else, even if the two fields appear to be as completely distinct as ophthalmology and the history of art.” To encourage creativity and out-of-the-box thinking in the workplace, employers should encourage their employees to find diverse topics they are interested in and learn about them. Their knowledge will help generate new ideas or at least provide an alternative perspective so that the creative ideas can blossom.

The Opposing Viewpoint

There are some people who may argue that if employees are allowed to be creative and innovative in the workplace then they are going to spend too much time thinking of new ideas and solutions rather than actually doing the work they were originally hired to do. The generation of these ideas is not cheap, why would companies pay their own people to be creative when it is something that could be contracted out to experts on an as-needed basis. While the thought is valid, often the people that have excellent solutions are those who experience firsthand the work environment.

Others may argue that when employees are left to use their creativity that there will be more workplace disagreements. Unfortunately, conflict and disagreements are a part of life. Everyone can't get along 100% of the time. (From Conflict to Creativity) To improve this situation is to offer times of free discussion, brainstorming sessions, and opportunities to let out all the ideas without shame or guilt. This will allow for open communication and hopefully less disagreements in the workplace.

Lastly, 32% of people don't feel comfortable thinking creatively in their career so why should they have to do something they don't feel like doing? First off, it is good to step outside of someone's normal feelings so they can grow and change. While to some, creativity may not seem super important now, they realize clearly later on how important of an aspect it is for them. (See Figure 2.1) It is very likely that people just aren't realizing the potential that awaits in a creative and innovative atmosphere.

My Personal Viewpoint

I believe the statement, "For people to innovate, they have to first be comfortable believing they can be and are creative. It's a frame of mind." (Julka) I think that while creativity is somewhat of a risk, it is vital for humans to express themselves. (Wahl) When they are courageous enough to express themselves, then that is when they will start to find more satisfaction in their job and make wiser decisions. I think that as people can see and feel their impact, they start to take more responsibility and treat their job as though they are the owner and that they aren't just working for someone else. Responsibility and belonging will change the approach of employees. Allow them to create and innovate and you will be absolutely amazed by the results.

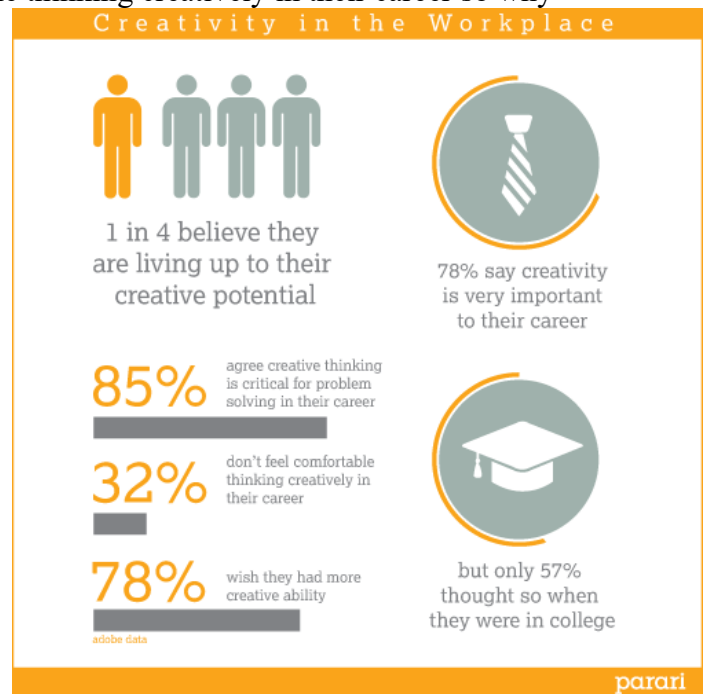


Figure 2.1: People believe that creativity is a vital part of their career and the statistics in this survey show. (Problems with Creativity...)

Conclusion: Creativity is for the Best

If you are an employer, reconsider how you allow your employees to be creative and innovative in the workplace. If you are an employee, think of ways you can courageously be innovative and creative in the workplace. In the end, creativity is for the best. It helps companies and financial institutions have better work environments, more financial stability, and new ideas of how things should be done. Creativity will only help you soar, so be brave, and let that innovation and creativity flow!

Works Cited

Bock, Laszlo. *Work Rules!: Insights from Inside Google That Will Transform How You Live and Lead*. John Murray, 2016.

“FROM CONFLICT TO CREATIVITY: How Resolving Workplace Disagreements Can Inspire Innovation and Productivity.” *Publishers Weekly*, 15 Oct. 2001, p. 58. *Gale Literature Resource Center*, <https://byui.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip&db=edsglr&AN=edsglr.A79412713&site=eds-live&scope=site>. Accessed 9 Oct. 2021.

Harford, Tim, director. *A Powerful Way to Unleash Your Natural Creativity*. *TED Talk*, Nov. 2018, https://www.ted.com/talks/tim_harford_a_powerful_way_to_unleash_your_natural_creativity?language=en. Accessed 9 Oct. 2021.

Hartmans, Avery. “These 26 Photos Prove Google Has the Coolest Offices around the World.” *Business Insider*, Business Insider, 9 July 2017, <https://www.businessinsider.com/google-offices-worldwide-photos-2017-7#employees-in-zurich-can-play-soccer-and-basketball-right-inside-the-office-3>.

Julka, Samantha. “Five Mistakes That Can Stifle Creativity in the Workplace.” *Indianapolis Business Journal*, 8 Feb. 2019. *Business Insights Global*, <https://byui.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&A>

uthType=ip&db=edsbig&AN=edsbig.A577029102&site=eds-live&scope=site. Accessed 9 Oct. 2021.

Managing Creativity and Innovation in the Workplace. Pergamon Flexible Learning, 2007. *BYU-Idaho Catalog*,

<https://byui.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip&db=cat03146a&AN=BYUID.5081303&site=eds-live&scope=site>. Accessed 9 Oct. 2021.

“Problems with Creativity in the Workplace.” *Parari*, 8 Apr. 2015,

<http://pararigroup.com/problems-with-creativity-in-the-workplace/>. Accessed 20 Oct. 2021.

Samani, Sanaz Ahmadpoor, and Sayed Mohamad Alavi. “Does the Design of the Workplace Affect Individual Creativity?” *Performance Improvement*, vol. 59, no. 5, 1 May 2020, p. 6. *Gale Academic OneFile*, EBSCOhost, <https://doi.org/10.1002/pfi.21917>. Accessed 9 Oct. 2021.

Shao, Yong, et al. “How Does Culture Shape Creativity? A Mini-Review.” *Frontiers*, *Frontiers*, 1 Jan. 1AD, <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01219/full>.

Wahl, Erik. “The Importance of Creativity in the Workplace.” *All Business*, Dun & Bradstreet, 14 Feb. 2021, <https://www.allbusiness.com/the-importance-of-creativity-in-the-workplace-24566-1.html>. Accessed 6 Oct. 2021.