News on Creativity and Innovation related topics

creative**4**business

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Dear Reader,

Welcome to the October edition of **Innovation Matters**, the ninth of 2010.

Starting this month we have a series of top tips, just jump to the left hand side of this page to find yours.

This month's articles are all related to Creativity rather than the wider topic of Innovation.

First of all there is a look at how **bullying in the workplace** can affect **Creativity** and hence the bottom line.

Crowdsourcing has become very popular but **does it always work?** Read some of our thoughts on the topic.

Have you ever wondered why you have trouble applying learning from a training course in the workplace? It is even harder with creative

Learn to live with looseness Allow a degree of ambiguity or uncertainty.

When managing Creativity we must allow for the fact that not everything can be managed precisely. It also allows us to 'hedge our bets' or keep options open. Only make decisions when you have to.

If you want something to watch why not see Derek's interview for **Guru View TV**? To take a look click here.

techniques so why not slip them in the back door using **Guerrilla Creativity?**

If you have missed previous editions of Innovation Matters you can find them in our newsletter archive.

As always, your thoughts and feedback are welcome.

Happy reading,

Derek Cheshire

Ban The Bullies Or Creativity Will Suffer

Much has been written about bullying within organisations. Depending on which survey you read, statistics show that anything between 30% and 50% of workers are affected. The large spread may even be indicative of the fact that in some countries and cultures, workplace bullying is under reported. It goes without saying that this topic should be addressed purely from an HR point of view, but what else is it doing to your organisation?

On a personal level, bullying directly affects the motivation of employees. The effect on extrinsic motivation may simply mean that as an employer you notice a decrease in performance. Intrinsic motivation will also suffer as employees ask 'why should I make extra effort at work?' As an employer there is a double whammy here if you are not seen to be tackling the issues. Along with knowledge and experience, intrinsic motivation is one of the biggest drivers of Creativity on a personal level so ignore bullying at your peril.

Creativity is also one of the major components of Innovation, something that many of us strive for in the current tough economic environment. One of the underlying principles for embracing Creativity and Innovation is the new type of 'network' that needs to exist within our organisations. It is more informal than those shown in structure charts and helps us to share ideas and expertise. These networks are 'soft', they are not built from cables and computers, and they incorporate real people, your employees. Such networks are built on trust and sharing and are of course easily damaged by systematic bullying i.e. bullying that is not personal but which is accepted as the norm.

There are so many more things that you could also be damaging by ignoring individual and systematic bullying such as team working, scanning your external environment, developing initiative, organisational learning and decision making. 'So what?' you may say 'Why should I care?' To answer this simply take a look around you. The world has changed and to cope with the changes you need to change too. Old fashioned change management is not as effective as it used to be and to continually demolish and rebuild your organisation structure is expensive.

Wouldn't it be nice if you had an organisation that changed according to its environment, that could change shape and function as the economy changed, and which could, as part of its normal day to day operation generate ideas for new products, services and processes? This is all possible, from the smallest business to the largest most bureaucratic government department. But you will never achieve any of this if bullying or harassment is rife within our

organisation. Apart from physical or verbal abuse, this also includes deliberately delegating boring tasks, not carrying out annual reviews or withholding professional development opportunities.

Get started now before it is too late. You owe it to your employees and the other stakeholders involved in your business.
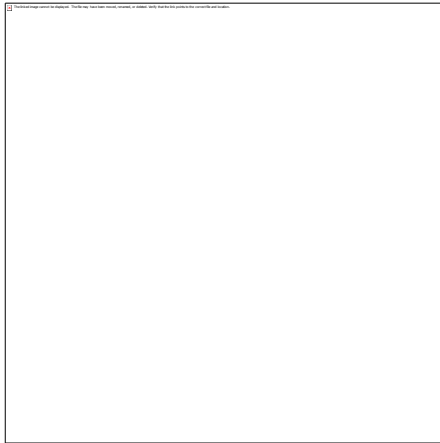
Crowdsourcing - Why It May Not Work For You

This is not an attempt to malign the use of crowdsourcing as a valuable technique, it is simply a way of pointing out that it is not a 'cure for all ills' as some people seem to think. Any technique used incorrectly or inappropriately can be at best ineffective and at worst damaging or disruptive (in terms of both cost and reputation).

Following the recent election and subsequent formation of a coalition government here in the UK, much was made of the need to consult widely and get the input of real people to help in the formation of government policy. Ignoring the fact that this was probably a political ploy and that nearly all of the suggestions collected have been ignored completely, this was never going to work. But why?

The first (and possibly least important) reason was the method of idea collection. Simply gathering ideas electronically via bulletin boards or email is a very blunt instrument and places limits on how much people can say. Neither does it allow other contributors to build or add to the contributions of others. This would be a very good time to build a huge virtual nominal group!

Secondly, the biggest error when attempting to make radical (or progressive as the government labelled them) changes is to consult those at the sharp end, the people who are involved in day to day delivery. This seems harsh at first, but if you think about it the resulting ideas are not likely to be radical, just ways of trimming costs or reducing waiting times. The question for this group of people is 'what should the service look like?' not 'how should the service be delivered?'. These people can still participate in consultation but with a different label. They need to take a step backwards and see the bigger picture.

Rather than try to trim money from everyone's budget, a holistic view is needed. Just as in a business when Marketing and Finance are no longer contained entirely within their respective departments, our new government

should take a wider view. The questions should be 'what is the best way to provide relevant education for our children?' rather than 'how can we keep exam grades up and chop 40% from the budget?' To answer these types of questions simply asking people their opinion will not do. Maybe this is not coalition thinking and radical and progressive politics really are not on the agenda.

Guerrilla Creativity - Creativity that works!

That's guerrilla not gorilla, although I'm sure that apes are very creative in their own way. Have you ever been on a course, say project management, leadership or even assertiveness and then wondered why you had such a hard time dealing with colleagues or perhaps loved ones when you returned? What is your reaction when a colleague returns from a course? At a guess you say to yourself "don't you try any of that stuff on me, I'm not going to succumb to your tricks or mind games".

Despite the fact that most of us are responsible adults, we become childish when we think someone may be trying to influence us. The question is how to use our new found skills without anyone noticing. The answer is of course not to tell anyone that we are using our newly acquired skills! When introducing creative thinking techniques the problems are usually made worse by colleagues thinking that they will always be outside of their comfort zone and then battening down the hatches and resisting all your attempts to involve them.

Next time you wish to use reverse brainstorming, do not start your sentence with 'I think that we will try and use reverse brainstorming on this one'. The words different, change, creativity and uncomfortable immediately flash before your colleagues' eyes. Why not start your session with a pitch like that below:

"How many of you have encountered negative colleagues in the workplace? Would you like to be able to harness this negativity for the good of the company?"

First of all your colleagues only think that you are trying out a technique or showing them how to use it (which of course you are) and secondly they will jump in because they of course do not wish to be seen to be negative themselves. This type of approach can be used in all sorts of situations. This is guerrilla creativity, sneaking in by the back door, and it works.

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