



5 Tips to Boosting Workplace Creativity

By Carrie Hays

Looking for ways to inject a little creative thinking into your day-to-day activities at the office? Here are a few tips to try...

1. **Conduct a self-assessment:** Are you the type of manager who not only tells employees of the goals, you also spell out in detail, how to accomplish the goals? When employees don't have to think for themselves, they lose the ability to contribute their best ideas. They simply go through the motions, becoming under-motivated, and under-engaged. How can you reverse this dynamic? First, let employees know of the goal, and then let them create ways to accomplish it. (Remember, your way may not be the best way!)
2. **Find opportunities for employees to work on projects they love.** People tend to be more creative when working on something they find personally motivating. How would you know this? Try asking your employees these 2 questions. Then use the answers to guide your decisions when assigning projects:
 - a. What about your job makes you want to jump out of bed in the morning?
 - b. What makes you want to hit the snooze alarm?
3. **Establish ground rules at meetings that will encourage creative thinking and discourage the dismissal of ideas.** For example, you might say: "During our meetings, we will:
 - a. Not allow any statements such as "We can't do that; our policies don't allow it." Or "We tried that before. It didn't work then and won't work now."
 - b. Invite others to "shoot holes in the idea" when a course of action or solution is suggested.
 - c. Reconsider our organization's rules by identifying any policies, guidelines, or norms that would get in the way of implementing the idea. (Then discuss changing them!)
 - d. Give a Starbucks Gift Certificate (or similar gift item) to any idea-generator whose idea is new.

4. **Do you want to encourage employees to see challenges with a fresh set of eyes in order to develop innovative solutions?** One quick and cost-effective way is to try a new location for your next team meeting. A change in venue stimulates people to view things from different perspectives. Another inexpensive method is to decorate your meeting space: Place sheets of brightly colored butcher paper on the tables, and strew crayons around the tables. Add small jars of Play-Doh or a Slinky or two. Encourage people to use the toys to think creatively.
5. **Start your weekly meeting with a “Quote of the Day”.** Invite great thinkers, writers, and business minds to your meetings by having team members take turns sharing an inspirational quote while others try to guess the author. Add the quotes to your company website or save them in a journal for periodic reflection.

Carrie Hays is an accomplished trainer, management consultant, and facilitator with over twenty years of management and organizational development experience. Known for her expertise at facilitating customized workshops, retreats, and meetings designed to heighten organizational effectiveness, Carrie works with a variety of audiences ranging from small teams to groups of up to 600 participants. She is a certified practitioner of Myers Briggs Type Indicator, and the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. Carrie can be reached at (707) 255-5555 x 112 or chays@newlevelgroup.com.