

# CREATIVITY AT WORK

## How Leaders Can Inspire and Encourage

**The future is creative.** It will remain people who create visions for organizations, who identify solutions to problems and who encourage their colleagues. These capabilities are called durable skills. Creativity is one of those durable skills. Prioritizing creativity and innovation can also enhance employee engagement and retention.



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### Strategies to Boost Creativity

- Adopt a growth mindset—and encourage one in others—in which creativity is part of a cycle of learning.
- Be vocal about the importance of creativity to the organization.
- Harness organizational Human Resources activities and processes—such as onboarding, training events, and performance reviews—to reinforce the role of creativity in the organization's success.
- Give employees “permission” to be creative.
- Recognize when processes and workloads could prevent employees from thinking creatively.
- Encourage employees to move around away from their workspace to create physical and emotional energy and to sharpen their creative focus.
- Model uncoupling from office technology each week (or each day) to enlarge the mental space for innovation.
- Accommodate employees' balance between collaboration and time alone.
- Sprinkle “pop-up” learning activities into the professional development mix to strengthen employees' creative thinking mindset and skills.
- Provide updated tools so employees can act upon their creativity.
- Delegate the destination, not the directions for getting there.
- Help employees rest and recharge to power creativity.
- Embrace reasonable risk-taking and the potential for mistakes.
- Host a quarterly “sprint”—concentrated efforts by cross-functional teams over a brief period (a few days to a week) to address a specific challenge.
- Give employees time to dedicate to passion projects of their choosing.
- Use “brain break” activities to motivate and refocus employees through interaction, reflection, and movement.
- Periodically take a pulse-check of the status of psychological safety (whether employees feel safe about being more creative).
- Deploy regular “paper clip challenges” and similar activities as creativity boosters.
- Create opportunities for employees to informally share professional and personal knowledge, such as skills and hobbies.
- Counter employee self-talk that can block their creativity.
- Remind employees to seek diverse points of view for input and feedback.
- Use more inclusive alternatives to traditional brainstorming, such as brain writing, mind mapping, round robin brainstorming, and breaking larger groups into smaller teams that share back with the larger group, among others.
- Pose “what if” questions so new possibilities can emerge.
- Get creative about meetings: change locations, involve employees as facilitators, and incorporate informal chats.
- Build in “ideation time” (silence) before group discussions.
- Recognize and reward creative efforts and progress, not just outcomes.

### Spaces to Inspire Creativity

- Commit to valuing human-ness amid technological change.
- Manage distractions through spaces that support both individual concentration and face-to-face connection.
- Be intentional about redesigning and locating spaces for creativity.
- Rearrange furniture, if possible, to stimulate creativity.
- Encourage employees to personalize their workspace.
- Support both physical and virtual collaboration.
- Provide spaces that allow for a range of posture choices: sitting, standing, reclining, and perching.