

Creativity and Innovation Competency Development Activities

Competency Definition

Develops new insights into situations and applies innovative solutions to make organizational improvements; creates a work environment that encourages creative thinking and innovation; designs and implements new or cutting-edge programs/processes.

Developmental Activity Levels

All (A)

Applies to all competency levels

Beginner-Basic Knowledge (B)

A person at the Beginner-Basic Knowledge level has limited experience applying the competency. He/she applies general knowledge in common situations but has limited practical experience in applying the competency in a work environment presenting more complex situations.

Mid-level (M)

A person with mid-level proficiency has applied the competency repeatedly and successfully in the performance of his/her job but still has much to learn about the advanced aspects or behaviors associated with the competency. A person at this level can usually apply the competency on his/her own.

High (H)

A person at the High level has extensive knowledge of and experience with this competency and can apply the competency exceptionally well on the job without assistance. At this level one is an expert and has enough experience to teach the competency to others.

Articles, Books, and Websites

A Von Oech, Roger, [A Whack on the Side of the Head: How You Can Be More Creative](#), Warner Books, December, 1998.

In this revised edition, you'll find a provocative, enlightening discussion of the ten "mental locks" that stop you from being more creative - and the keys that open them.

A Saunders, Rebecca, [Better Brainstorming](#), Harvard Management Communication Letter, November, 1999. C9911C

What do you do when you need to generate new ideas, and traditional brainstorming sessions aren't doing the job? Harvard Management Communication Letter surveyed creativity experts

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and came up with ten tips for jumpstarting stalled brainstorming sessions.

A Michalko, Michael, Cracking Creativity: The Secrets of Creative Genius, Ten Speed Press, July, 2001.

Michalko has researched and analyzed over 100 of history's greatest thinkers-from Leonardo da Vinci to Charles Darwin, Thomas Edison to Walt Disney to show readers how creative people think and how to put their secrets to use. Packed with practical exercises and strategies for stimulating creativity, this book will change the way you think and open up a world of innovative solutions to challenges that you face every day.

A Von Oech, Roger, Willett, George (Illustrator), Expect the Unexpected or You Won't Find It: A Creativity Tool Based on the Ancient Wisdom of Heraclitus, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, September, 2002.

Heraclitus lived 2,500 years ago, but his adages, including "You can't step in the same river twice" and "Dogs bark at what they don't understand," remain surprisingly relevant today. Expect the Unexpected or You Won't Find It uses 30 of Heraclitus's epigrams to unleash creativity.

A Putzier, John, Get Weird! 101 Innovative Ways to Make Your Company a Great Place to Work, AMACOM, May, 2001.

A collection of out-of-the-box best practices for high performance in the workplace, offer readers innovative tips, tools, and techniques for spicing up life at work, while increasing productivity. The book features a powerful, yet down-to-earth style, and advice for changing the culture of any workplace.

A Gelb, Michael J., How to Think Like Leonardo de Vinci: Seven Steps to Genius Every Day, Dell, February, 2000.

Author Michael Gelb describes seven critical principles that can refine the use of intellect and teach the reader the unchanged art of thinking clearly and fulfilling one's potential by incorporating advice and examples from one of history's undisputed geniuses, Leonardo de Vinci.

A Borins, Sandford F., Altshuler, Alan D., Innovating With Integrity: How Local Heroes Are Transforming American Government, Georgetown University Press, October, 1998.

Innovating with Integrity presents a comprehensive portrait of the local heroes-front-line public servants and middle managers-who are reinventing state and local government, and it offers practical recommendations for innovating successfully.

A Keith H. Hammonds, "No Risk, No Reward", Fast Company, April, 2002.

This article presents nine lessons on the power of breaking the mold, the genius of the

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unexpected move, the thrill of standing out from the crowd, and the virtues of conservatism.

A Barry J. Nalebuff, Ian Ayres, Why Not? How to Use Everyday Ingenuity to Solve Problems Big and Small, Harvard Business School Press, September, 2003. Illustrated with examples from every aspect of life, this book offers simple techniques for generating ingenious solutions to existing problems and for applying existing solutions to new problems. It will help you take the things we all see every day and think about them in a new way.

M Dorothy Leonard & Walter Swap, When Sparks Fly: Harnessing the Power of Group Creativity, Harvard Business School Press, February, 2005.

The authors of this book sweep aside conventional thinking about creativity and offer proven strategies for stimulating and directing the group dynamics that lie at the heart of innovative thinking. They outline and analyze each step in the creative process and give practical suggestions for managing teams.

M/H Blanchard, Kenneth H., Carlos, John P., and Randolph, Alan, Empowerment Takes More Than a Minute (Abridged Edition), High Bridge Company, February, 1998.

This book suggests how managers can achieve true, lasting results in their organizations by moving from a command-and-control mindset to a supportive, responsibility-centered environment for employee development.

M Bradford, David L. and Cohen, Allan R., John Wiley & Sons, Managing for Excellence: The Guide to Developing High Performance in Contemporary Organizations, April, 1997.

This book is intended for managers whose job is to turn leadership strategies into a personal commitment on the part of the individual. Managing for Excellence shows how to lead--how to motivate employees to get routine jobs done creatively and productively, while preparing them to take greater responsibility.

M/H Gary, Loren, Six Surprising Insights About Innovation, Harvard Management Update, May, 2002. HMU U0205C

Firms in high-profile industries such as telecommunications or biotech don't have a monopoly on creativity. Sometimes, it is the companies operating beyond the media spotlight, in less-than-glamorous sectors, that can teach you a surprising amount about innovation. Here are six insights about innovation that can prompt your team to think in productive new ways.

M/H Multiple Authors, The 2002 HBR List: Three Cheers for Creativity (Sometimes) (HBR, On Point Collection), HBR, On Point Collection, March, 2002. HBR 9446

Companies must master both innovation and best-practice replication--but they must also keep them separate. The authors of this 4 article collection explain how to do just that, by taking most of what you know about routine management and standing it on its head, knowing when it's time to banish creativity, and understanding when to rely on replication versus innovation in growing

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your business.

M Blanchard, Ken, Randolph, Alan, and Carlos, John P., The 3 Keys to Empowerment: Release the Power within People for Astonishing Results, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, June, 1999.

Author Ken Blanchard gives managers the tools they need to implement an empowerment plan step by step. Employees can experience a new sense of ownership, excitement and pride in their work, while managers will see levels of achievement not possible using more traditional approaches.

M/H Monahan, Tom, John Wiley & Sons, The Do It Yourself Lobotomy: Open Your Mind to Greater Creative Thinking, March, 2002.

Tom Monahan's techniques for creative problem solving are simple and memorable. Whether you're brainstorming solo or in a group, the exercises in this book will help you move quickly and productively toward innovative solutions.

M/H Sittenfield, Curtis, "The Most Creative Man in Silicon Valley", FastCompany, June, 2000.

Stanford Graduate School of Business Professor Michael Ray has taught some of the best-known innovators in Silicon Valley how to be more creative. It's no wonder that both students and executives are clamoring for his lessons.

M/H James A. Autry, The Servant Leader: How to Build a Creative Team, Develop Great Morale, and Improve Bottom-Line Performance, Prima Publishing, September, 2001.

This book shows you how to remain true to the servant leadership model when handling day-to-day and long-term management situations. You'll learn how to manage with respect and honesty and how to empower employees to achieve new levels of satisfaction. Servant leadership will produce fulfilling emotional, psychological, and spiritual rewards for everyone involved. It will enhance productivity, encourage creativity, and benefit the bottom line.

M/H Gittell, Jody Hoffer, The Southwest Airlines Way: Using the Power of Relationships to Achieve High Performance, McGraw-Hill Trade, December, 2002.

For managers looking to increase productivity, encourage teamwork among employees, and build a fiercely loyal, dedicated, and innovative workforce, here is one way to go--The Southwest Airlines Way.

M/H Farson, Richard, Keyes, Ralph, Whoever Makes the Most Mistakes Wins: The Paradox of Innovation, Free Press, June, 2002.

The authors suggest that some failures may not only be inevitable on our road to success, but might actually help us attain it. Since crises, setbacks, and adversity help shape and advance our lives, the authors argue, why can't enlightened managers also turn them into forward movement

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in the workplace?

Activities

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M Identify a location/ function that could be more efficient or add greater value, and analyze what is problematic, what could be done differently, and who needs to change what they are doing. Ask those who are involved for ideas on what to change and how.

M Recruit co-workers from different work groups to meet with you to help round out your solution to an identified problem.

M Take action to build support for promising solutions and/ or technology whose value may not immediately be obvious to your organization.

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Coaching Suggestions for Managers

H Ask for a change proposal from your staff members by having them look around your organization for ideas and then propose changes in work flow, assignments, procedures, standards or other aspects of the work or environment. Ask for justification including the pros and cons.

H Avoid telling people exactly what to do and how to do it. Instead, describe the end results you are looking for, and ask them to generate their own ideas for how to approach it. Point them to resources that might help, but have them get back to you with their ideas. Review what they come up with, and if it looks like it will work, let them run with it.

H Challenge staff members to be more innovative by encouraging them to question how things are done. (What can be better? Why do it this way? What else are others doing?)

M Delegate accountabilities and discretion to team members. Discuss what you expect and what latitude a person will have to choose a course of action. Be clear and follow through by allowing discretion and encouraging risk taking designed to achieve or enhance results. Do not withdraw support or punish people if they take an appropriate risk or make a well thought out decision that does not work - the developmental goal is to encourage appropriate risk-taking in a high performance climate.

H Encourage and support calculated risk taking when it increases the chance of success without being blind to the problems, obstacles and effort required. If the person can describe how the benefits outweigh the costs of doing so, accept an unusual or slightly risky plan.

H Encourage experimentation. When faced with a tough challenge, ask others to brainstorm options or changes that could succeed where current practice fails. Allow them to try new things. Debrief learning's from experiments with new approaches to identify what was effective

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and ineffective in achieving change goals.

M Encourage generation of creative ideas by having staff members create a "suggestion box" (e-mail, voicemail box, etc.) to collect ideas. Have him/her screen the ideas, select the best and pursue it. Be sure recognition is given to the person who provided the idea, and encouragement is given to others who contributed. Make sure the process continues and is rewarded.

H Ensure that local TSA managers get to know and evaluate their employees' education and capabilities so that they can be fully utilized within their jobs and organization.

M Give staff members' discretion and control by assigning them to challenging projects or new activities and then allowing them to proceed without micromanaging their work. Make yourself available as a sounding board but let them make their own decisions. Give them control over budget, staffing and other resources they may need to do the assignment.

M Support staff members taking initiative by encouraging them to push back on you if they feel you are restricting their exposure to new activities or unique opportunities. Publicly acknowledge team members for initiative taken and the results that they achieve. Let people know up-front that the job is really theirs end-to-end, and do not double-check unnecessarily or micromanage.

M When working with an employee, insist that he or she identify ways to improve the way routine tasks are handled.