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Fostering Staff Creativity To Enhance Productivity

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Discerning the important from the urgent is an attribute of a proactive leader. Urgent things can keep you so busy that you neglect making time for the important creative endeavors from which break-through solutions and new ideas are born. Commit to making the time for yourself and your staff members to apply some strategies the creativity experts say will help you and your people get your creativity in gear.

As you do this, assess your organization's culture and do all you can to begin removing any of the following organizational blocks that deter people from releasing and effectively using their creativity: Clinging to the established; Resistance to new ideas; Smugness; Perceived threat to security and status; Feelings of transgression into private territories; Feelings of dependency; Attitudes of no time for creativity; Competition vs. cooperation; Lack of interest in resolving problems; Expectations of busyness for busyness sake; Isolation of creative people; Fear that ideas will be stolen; Threatening organizational channels; and Inability to enlist involvement.

Here are things the creativity experts indicate you and your staff members can encourage one another to do to help release personal creativity and enhance optimum productivity.

BELIEVE YOU ARE CREATIVE - Reinforce your intuition and its own importance and it will work hard for you. Everyone has the potential to release his intuitiveness and creativity. It is an attribute of every human being.

FOLLOW YOUR CURIOSITY - Ask until you understand why your organization has certain policies and procedures and take certain actions. Discover why something is a particular shape. Find out why a process is designed as it is. Explore something in nature until you fully understand it.

USE LATERAL THINKING TECHNIQUES - Edward De Bono developed many techniques to stimulate creative thought. By using lateral thinking techniques, we can generate creative ideas on demand. Spend 20 minutes a day in a comfortable spot where you will be undisturbed and let your mind wander wherever it will. There are other creative ideas which bubble to the surface given time and quietness of the mind.

TRY SOMETHING NEW - Do a small measure of something which doesn't harm you in any way and which you think you won't like. Fear responses have often been adversely conditioned by the prejudices of others. Vulnerably stretch yourself and discover whether your creativity has been constrained by some of these fears.

WORK TO INSPIRATIONAL MUSIC - Classical music is usually recommended as the most effective. If this goes against your grain, stretch yourself and see if it works. If not, experiment

to determine what type of music is most effective for you.

TAKE A BREAK - When you find yourself not knowing what to do next on a high energy task, do something completely different for a short time or sleep on it.

ACTIVELY SEEK VARIETY - Consciously seek out what you have not sought out before. Be open to new experiences, new sources of information. Each month read a book or magazine completely unrelated to your career, business or usual interests. You will find solutions to problems and fodder for possibilities in the most unexpected places. The more varied your interests, the greater the chance of cross-fertilization, of combining two or more things that have not been combined before. Look for relationships between things that are not related. Go somewhere you have never been before. It does not have to be miles away. It can be a place in your city you have never visited.

EXERCISE YOUR INTUITION - Is your intuition like a muscle that is rarely used and stretched? Just like any of your other muscles, if you don't use it, you'll lose it! As you frequently exercise your intuition, you will need to have a small notebook or a mini tape recorder available to make notes of all the ideas that come to you. The more you record your intuitive thoughts, the more you will find coming your way.

BREAK LIMITING HABITS - Our own limiting habits are what often keep us from being more creative. The more you follow a limiting script, the less you can improvise. Breaking even little limiting habits can open your intuition enough to allow new connections to happen, new points of view to form.

STRUCTURE YOUR RIGHT CREATIVE ENVIRONMENT - Some people like to listen to music; others prefer silence once they are in the creative flow. Experiment until you find what works for you.

ALLOW YOURSELF TO INVEST IN CREATIVE TIME - Plan time to explore seemingly random thoughts and bits of information and experiences, allowing them to bounce around and bump into each other. Allow for incubation time by "sleeping on ideas" without consciously massaging them. Take time away from the immediate demands of work and home and dedicate yourself to the creative task at hand. Time may so precious to you that taking time to develop your creativity may seem unrealistic. However, investing even five minutes will make a difference in everyone's creativity and ultimate productivity and contribution.

USE ALL OF YOUR SENSES - The more you use all of your senses to gather and process information, the greater the chance of those pieces of ideas connecting with each other to create something new.

LET GO OF WHAT YOU KNOW - Get into the frame of reference of a child or beginner, intellectually and emotionally. Conventional wisdom may say something cannot be done, and then unconventional wisdom goes right ahead and does it successfully. Focus on looking at

things through new eyes.

PERSEVERE WITH YOUR CREATIVE PROJECTS - Avoid the temptation to give up on yourself or your project because the going gets tough. Engaging in creativity is not necessarily easy. You will be vulnerable to making many mistakes, but the up side is that you will learn a lot from them! Making mistakes is to be expected when you are being creative. They are a natural part of the process. Keep going within reason, acknowledging that an important part of being creative is knowing when to abandon an unproductive idea.

Creativity is a complex, multi-faceted process that is at work in all of us. Much wrong thinking has developed relating to the process. One wrong notion is that creative people are born that way and the creative flair misses others. Nothing could be further from the truth. Creativity can be developed, sharpened and amplified because it is a natural part of us all that can be nurtured. Begin nurturing your own and other's creativity now!

If you need help in mastering and implementing any of the skills and tactics mentioned, I'm here for you! Please visit the Call-A-Coach section of my web site for more information.

About the author:

Dr. Mac shares with business owners the practical knowledge and insights he gained as a small company CEO. He founded Sycamore Ranch, Inc. when 27 and as CEO led his partners and a staff of 100 for 16 years in developing and operating the 50 acre recreational facility. Years later, he integrated what he learned from his Doctoral program at USC with his practical business experiences and began consulting. For four decades Mac's coached business owners in mastering and applying "how to" leadership and managerial skills for: Hiring and retaining only the top ten percent producers; Optimally deploying and supervising staff to maximize their personal motivation; Developing high integrity leadership teams; Facilitating mutual performance accountability and peer coaching processes; and, Integrating his Intentional Business Integrity Process into their company operations. Mac has served leaders in manufacturing and high tech companies; accounting, banking and insurance enterprises; medical and health care organizations; service and retail oriented businesses; as well as educational, governmental and non profit organizations. Q&A ProActive Leadership 888-648-5552 or MacAdam@PALConsulting

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