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Creating Creativity - Part 2 of 2

One of the great misconceptions surrounding creativity has to do with new ideas. Most forms of creativity are not about new ideas. In reality, there are all types of creative talents that contribute to results. Creativity exists everywhere at all levels. The key is to understand these variations and know how to tap into them for creating value. Therefore, creativity is more about the full range of outcomes, not that one big idea. This broader approach to creativity is much more sustainable than the traditional and narrow approach of seeking some breakthrough idea.

The entire range of creative outcomes is well documented in the book Breakthrough Creativity by Lynne C. Levesque. Levesque has extended the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator into eight creative talents, providing us with a comprehensive "Creativity Model" for integrating creativity into everything the organization does.

1. Adventurer – Very spontaneous, detail oriented, and highly skilled in getting around obstacles.
2. Navigator – Somewhat cautious and calculating, righteous, very practical, and consistent.
3. Explorer – Enjoys discovering new things, brings about change, and likes to brainstorm.
4. Visionary – Sees things way into the future, can grasp complex situations, highly focused.
5. Pilot – Enjoys managing projects, decisive, clarifies how to get things done.
6. Inventor – Somewhat internal and private, great thought into how things work, good at creating conceptual models.
7. Harmonizer – Good at getting people to work together, builds consensus, diplomatic.
8. Poet – Strong value system, deep thinker, good communicator, somewhat reflective.

The real challenge is to recognize and leverage all of these eight creative talents. For example, a "Harmonizer" is very useful for nurturing a situation that has conflict and different viewpoints. A "Pilot" is very useful for outlining the detail steps for getting a project completed. Knowing how to place and mix these creative talents together is the key to unleashing enormous value associated with creativity. So one of the best roadmaps to creativity is to embrace the eight creative talents. Most people are gifted with two creative talents, a primary creative talent and a secondary creative talent. Therefore, if an organization wants to leverage all eight creative hot spots, then you will need a diverse group of people for covering all eight creative talents. The interplay of all creative members working together is the hotbed engine for creative results.

Once you have the full range of creative talents in place, you can use a team approach for maximum creative outcomes. To make sure the creative process works, you may want to set some creative ground rules for your teams:

1. Continuous flow of ideas – Initial ideas are often marginal and you must keep pushing and brainstorming around each idea to get to the next idea. It's also a good idea to walk away from your session and then comeback a few days later refreshed. This helps produce the highest quality ideas from your brainstorming sessions.
2. Clearly defined problem or objective – Make sure you drill down to the source of a problem. Root cause analysis or simply going through the so-called Five Why's can help.
3. Not afraid of conflict – Given a highly diverse group of people, expect some conflict. Conflict is not bad as long as you manage it properly. For example, never get personal in the process – try to stick to the factual information involved, things that are relevant.
4. Solid collaborative dynamics – Make sure the team is really working well and not stuck in some kind of food fight. If you have certain folks holding the creative process back, then deal with these issues immediately.
5. Implement the Team Recommendations – If the creative team process makes specific recommendations to solve a problem, then you should try to implement it; otherwise why did you form the team. If the team sees that its outputs are going no-where, then the whole process will dry-up fast.

In conclusion, most of us seem trapped within a narrow definition of creativity, looking only at certain types of outcomes, such as great music or artwork. Creativity is much more than great music or artwork. Creativity takes any form that adds value to the current situation. And the best structure for understanding this creative process is to embrace and build on the eight creative talents. This is a well-grounded model that any organization can start using today.

"We should also acknowledge that often society itself resists creativity. The artist or thinker may challenge long-standing beliefs or behavioral and political norms. Many of our greatest achievements occur precisely because a group of individuals acting in concert elevated the ethical, intellectual, creative, and social character of each group member."

The Hothouse Effect: Intensify Creativity in Your Organization Using Secrets from History's Most Innovative Communities by Barton Kunstler, Ph.D