



CFO

Plus LLC

Partners In Growth

Our mission is to provide information and strategies to business owners and managers for improvement in the effectiveness of its business management so that key objectives can be realized.

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Unleashing Creativity and Innovation

Sometimes it's the little things that really drive you crazy. Small things like 23 toll-free numbers
Unleashing Creativity and Innovation

What's the next great idea?

Just a few years ago, who would have dreamed that putting water in a bottle and selling it for \$1 would amount to beans?

You get the drift ... but how do you put yourself and other workers in a creative mode to even think of a great idea? How do you motivate your staff to remain cutting-edge in their thinking, when all they want to do is complete the next project, close a new deal and go home at the end of the day?

Unleashing creativity and innovation doesn't happen overnight, but you can begin by thinking differently about the way you and your organization invest time, effort and resources into the creative process. It's a proven fact that the best workplace inventions and ideas throughout history weren't accidental at all, although we're conditioned to believe they were because it's so much more "glamorous" and exciting to actually believe Michael Dell became a millionaire overnight. It actually took him quite a bit of time building and selling computers out of his dorm room to even scratch the surface.

While it may be true that penicillin was discovered through a strange case of mold, finding your next big idea doesn't have to be a surprise, and the time you invest in this activity should be considered golden. It's a fact that successfully innovative companies are more likely to generate growth rates of 20 percent or more than less innovative ones, and companies that generate 80 percent of their revenue from new products consistently double their market capitalization within five years.

Organizations that rely only on their leaders will find themselves terribly uncreative, because this approach sends innovation to the fringes of a company. It presumes that the organization is, by nature, dull and slow, and that innovation can only be spurred on by a handful of creative types whose official job is to be innovative. As a result, this squelches most workers' ideas because they don't see it as their role to drive innovation.

In addition, many people believe creativity can only be driven by the company oddball or eccentric who may be "hip" and "happening." Think of the cool cats who sip lattes and think of great ideas all day long. Think again! Certainly, organizations should not discourage this from occurring, but creativity isn't the process of thinking of a great idea by sitting under the Juniper tree. It's a process of planning.

How do you accomplish the creative process? Here are some tried-and-true methods that have spawned more than one great idea.

- **Notice Everyone** – Innovation is all around you, and usually begins from the bottom-up. In your own company or organization, the mailroom guy and the low-rung administrative assistant may be the most creative people on staff, and yet, you have no notion they have an inclination to think of anything outside the norm. Ask them for feedback and advice. Put them on creative teams and tell them you appreciate their efforts. Emphasize that this is more than the company's suggestion box; you're looking for more creative ways to accomplish your goals and drive performance.

Unleashing Creativity and Innovation (cont.)

- **Go for the Biggest Obstacle First** – It might be easy to concentrate on more creative ways to provide, for example, continuing education to your staff, but you're more likely to achieve bottom-line results by tackling something bigger and more immense – like the sales process. If the largest problem is finding staff who can “close the deal,” then you've got to concentrate on coming up with solutions to tackle the issue head-on.
- **Create a Business Case** – When the challenge is identified, you need to devise various ways to solve it, and the natural inclination is to brainstorm and use problem-solving methods. If you work in teams, bring them together. After the team agrees on a viable solution, the next step is to create a hypothetical (yet in actuality, it could be real) business case to support new recommendations. This quickly illustrates whether the creative idea might work. Once you've tested and modified the proposed solution, if it seems to work, then present a formal proposal to the organization's leaders.

Remember that creativity and innovative thinking shouldn't be done in a vacuum; it should involve everyone in your organization, and although it might seem far-fetched, every idea should be considered for its worth.

World-class companies innovate every day in some way or another. Highlight innovations other companies have enjoyed. For more ideas on how to tie performance measures with innovation, give us a call.