



Inspire extraordinary performance in yourself and others

## Move Over, Structure! Make Room for Creativity

To inspire results that make an impact use current challenges to generate new, creative and innovative solutions.

Have you ever had a stuck-in-a-rut experience when you and your team brainstorm the same old, tried and true ideas to solve the problems facing your organization? Ever feel like a critical branch of creative and innovative ideas is hidden just below the surface? Generating creative ideas to tackle the challenges you and your team face is critical to your ongoing success in a changing environment.

### Be Aware of the “We’ve Always Done It This Way” Syndrome

Established routines are valuable in any business. Routines that are established and productive shouldn’t be eliminated. Leaders that can ferret out and eliminate routines that have become dysfunctional are taking the first step in creativity.

Look around your organization. Where have you or your team practiced the “we’ve always done it this way” philosophy? Innovate when your routines are stale and dysfunctional. Each “we have always” or “in the past we” that you hear means you are focused on the past and not focused on the future.

### Create an Environment in Which Innovation Flourishes

For the time being, suspend attitudes of perfectionism. You’ll need to foster an environment that rewards team members to speculate, predict and muse. Your team members will need to both think and act differently than they normally do. Try meeting in a new place or off-site to jump start creativity. Ensure that the meeting takes place in a comfortable environment and that all of the supplies and information needed is close at hand.

Pick team members from varied backgrounds to promote creativity. Ask more questions related to the problem. Ask follow up questions. Don’t feel pressured to jump to solutions until the problem is well defined. Encourage team members think out loud, utilize flip charts to write down all of the ideas that are generated no matter how farfetched or abstract. Now is not the time to edit or discard ideas.

Ask a team member to jot down all of the comments that are made during the session. Make this information available to each team member. You might use flip chart pages or one of the many types of shared computer software that is available for group meetings. Write all input down without editing. Draw, if appropriate.

### Enabling the Creative Process for your Team

Plan to spend slightly over half of your session defining the problem in detail. Record the comments of the group, focusing

specifically on the causes, the outcomes, and any related issues. Get detailed and define what is working and what is not working. Organize and categorize the information by grouping similar issues together. The team is looking for patterns or repeated themes in the information in order to generate new ideas and ultimately, the solution.

Next, take time to brainstorm as a group possible solutions and approaches to the problem. It is important that the process remain positive. No criticism of ideas is allowed at this point. No idea is too silly or outrageous! Criticism shuts down the creative process and forces your team back into old, established routines. Don’t go there yet.

As the flow of ideas slows and flip chart pages fill up, review the ideas that have been recorded. Now you can add back some structure into the process. Determine the top few ideas that have an interesting twist and choose the ones that created the most energy in the room. Analyze each worthy idea in terms of both positive and negative qualities and any impact that the solution might have on other areas. Again, record this information for the group as you discuss. Step back take a look at the list again. Can some of the ideas be combined to come up with even better solutions?

Schedule follow-up sessions to fine tune solutions and work them into plans that can be implemented. Allow for the formation of task assignments for members between the sessions. Ensure that all members have the written materials that have been generated during the sessions for reference. Add more structure to the process as you get closer to presenting solutions for approval and before implementing.

### Evaluate and Celebrate Success

Give credit to the team where it is due. Because the team is diverse, members can more effectively ensure a smooth roll-out. “Pilots” can be used to test out a solution. Allow for feedback and revision on the solution after the “pilot”.

### Key to Breakthroughs – Select an Outsider to Conduct and Facilitate the Meeting

Give us a call if we can be of assistance facilitating a Creativity Session for your team. As a leader, you can be much more effective if you can fully participate in the session rather than leading and facilitating the meeting. In our experience, leaders gain amazingly clear insights through undistracted, first hand participation and observation in the meetings.

We at T Squared Leadership, LLC are dedicated to improving your leadership and business results. Contact us at (719)359-5132 or tom@t2leadership.com for more information.

creativity