

What's Blocking You?

Leadership strategies to help employees avoid hindering creative thinking.

By Nicole Hoffmann

We have all been there. Sitting at our desk staring blankly at our screen waiting for inspiration to hit. When we have these blocks, we might get up and take a walk, or sit and free write until an idea comes to us. We know what works for us, but how do we help employees avoid hindering their own creative thinking?

British author Ken Robinson once said, **“You can’t just give someone a creativity injection. You have to create an environment for curiosity and a way to encourage people and get the best out of them.”** (Burgis, 2016). One of the biggest inhibitors to creative thinking is the loss of curiosity. Curiosity, which is valuable in every stage of the creative thinking process, is essential when searching for new challenges (Ruggiero, 2015, p. 105). Unfortunately, curiosity can be lost in the mundane task of our day-to-day work. The same is true for employees, so how can you help them regain their curiosity?

To help your employees regain their curiosity you can teach them the following six techniques (Ruggiero, 2015, p. 107):

1. **Be observant.** When employees try to be more observant, they are trying to look closer at things that have become familiar to them. They begin to look and listen to the people and places around them with more interest (Ruggiero, 2015, p. 108).
2. **Look for imperfection in things.** Looking for imperfection in things does not mean employees seek out the bad; it means they become aware of where improvements can be made (Ruggiero, 2015, p. 108).

3. **Note dissatisfactions.** When employees note dissatisfaction, it creates an opportunity to solve a problem. Whether its dissatisfaction with things in their own life, or those from someone else, each is an opportunity to use creative thinking to find a solution (Ruggiero, 2015, p. 110).
4. **Search for causes.** Employees that allow their mind to wander and search for the cause of things opens up the possibilities for creativity (Ruggiero, 2015, p. 110). For example, what caused a person to think to drink milk from a cow for the first time? If they can drink milk from a cow, what other animal milk can they drink?
5. **Be sensitive to implications.** Employees who are sensitive to implications are able to explore the extent of the impact that comes with each new discovery, invention, or idea (Ruggiero, 2015, p. 110). Robots can replace people in certain jobs, those people will need new jobs, creative thinking creates new jobs, etc.
6. **Recognize opportunities brought by controversy.** Instead of employees viewing controversy as one side against another side, they should take the opportunity to explore new perspectives and enrich their understanding (Ruggiero, 2015, p. 111).

Once employees regain curiosity you want to put that curiosity to use. You can do that by creating opportunities. Give your employees the opportunity to brainstorm.

Brainstorming sessions give employees a designated time to sit and let ideas flow freely. This is not the time to decide what ideas are good or bad, it is the time to get ideas out (Burgis, 2016).

Another way to avoid hindering creative thinking is by empowering employees. Ask new employees for their ideas immediately. This allows them to be involved and feel like part of the team (Burgis, 2016). It also shows them that you value them and their ability to think creatively.

Leaders need to create work environments that encourage positive morale (Burgis, 2016). They need to find what motivates employees and use it! Some ways to motivate and raise moral in the workplace

are by recognizing individual and group achievements, making time for fun in the office, allowing time for personal projects, changing up the routine, promoting within the organization, and making sure our employees feel heard (DeMers, 2015).

An organizations success is determined by the success of its employees. It is your job as leaders to help them avoid impeding on their creative thinking process by helping them regain their curiosity and by allowing time for brainstorming. You must also make sure that your employees feel empowered to come up with new ideas and feel comfortable sharing them. At the end of the day, you must combine these things with a positive work environment that values high morale.

References

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