

I M.Sc. Psychology

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UNIT 4: PROBLEM SOLVING AND CREATIVITY

Problem-solving is a mental process that involves discovering, analyzing, and solving problems. The ultimate goal of problem-solving is to overcome obstacles and find a solution that best resolves the issue.

The best strategy for solving a problem depends largely on the unique situation. In some cases, people are better off learning everything they can about the issue and then using factual knowledge to come up with a solution.

In order to correctly solve a problem, it is often important to follow a series of steps. Researchers sometimes refer to this as the problem-solving cycle. While this cycle is portrayed sequentially, people rarely follow a rigid series of steps to find a solution.

The following steps include developing strategies and organizing knowledge.

1. Identifying the Problem

While it may seem like an obvious step, identifying the problem is not always as simple as it sounds. In some cases, people might mistakenly identify the wrong source of a problem, which will make attempts to solve it inefficient or even useless.

Some strategies that you might use to figure out the source of a problem include:

- Asking questions about the problem
- Breaking the problem down into smaller pieces
- Looking at the problem from different perspectives
- Conducting research to figure out what relationships exist between different variables

2. Defining the Problem

After the problem has been identified, it is important to fully define the problem so that it can be solved. You can define a problem by operationally defining each aspect of the problem and setting goals for what aspects of the problem you will address

At this point, you should focus on figuring out which aspects of the problems are facts and which are opinions. State the problem clearly and identify the scope of the solution.

3. Forming a Strategy

After the problem has been identified, it is time to start brainstorming potential solutions. This step usually involves generating as many ideas as possible without judging their quality. Once several possibilities have been generated, they can be evaluated and narrowed down.

The next step is to develop a strategy to solve the problem. The approach used will vary depending upon the situation and the individual's unique preferences. Common problem-solving strategies include heuristics and algorithms.

- **Heuristics** are mental shortcuts that are often based on solutions that have worked in the past. They can work well if the problem is similar to something you have encountered before and are often the best choice if you need a fast solution.
- **Algorithms** are step-by-step strategies that are guaranteed to produce a correct result. While this approach is great for accuracy, it can also consume time and resources.

Recap

Heuristics are often best used when time is of the essence, while algorithms are a better choice when a decision needs to be as accurate as possible.

4. Organizing Information

Before coming up with a solution, you need to first organize the available information. What do you know about the problem? What do you *not* know? The more information that is available the better prepared you will be to come up with an accurate solution.

When approaching a problem, it is important to make sure that you have all the data you need. Making a decision without adequate information can lead to biased or inaccurate results.

5. Allocating Resources

Of course, we don't always have unlimited money, time, and other resources to solve a problem. Before you begin to solve a problem, you need to determine how high priority it is.

If it is an important problem, it is probably worth allocating more resources to solving it. If, however, it is a fairly unimportant problem, then you do not want to spend too much of your available resources on coming up with a solution.

At this stage, it is important to consider all of the factors that might affect the problem at hand. This includes looking at the available resources, deadlines that need to be met, and any possible risks involved in each solution. After careful evaluation, a decision can be made about which solution to pursue.

6. Monitoring Progress

After selecting a problem-solving strategy, it is time to put the plan into action and see if it works. This step might involve trying out different solutions to see which one is the most effective.

It is also important to monitor the situation after implementing a solution to ensure that the problem has been solved and that no new problems have arisen as a result of the proposed solution.

Effective problem-solvers tend to monitor their progress as they work towards a solution. If they are not making good progress toward reaching their goal, they will reevaluate their approach or look for new [strategies](#).

7. Evaluating the Results

After a solution has been reached, it is important to evaluate the results to determine if it is the best possible solution to the problem. This evaluation might be immediate, such as checking the results of a math problem to ensure the answer is correct, or it can be delayed, such as evaluating the success of a therapy program after several months of treatment.

Gestalt approach to problem-solving Adapted their problem-solving approach from perception. Perception inherently involves restructuring. • Two views of Necker cube seen by restructuring image to see as “right” or “left” Person often has to restructure a problem in order to gain insight into its solution.

Insight problem solving in monkeys: Kohler (1927) Monkeys showed “insight” during problem-solving.

- Demonstrated productive “new way of structuring elements showing insight and creativity”
- Deep useful understanding of the nature of the problem
- versus trial-and-error (a.k.a., reproductive // tried and true // rule-based) problem solving (e.g., of the cat-in-the-box of Thorndike, 1898). Solved problems by using tools. Sultan stacks boxes to reach bananas.

Types of Problems

Three common categories of problems include **Inducing Structure, Arranging, and Transformation.**

Inducing Structure

Some problems involve finding relationships between elements.

Example: “Pineapple is to fruit as cabbage is to_.” In this analogy problem, the answer, “vegetable,” requires people to figure out the relationship between “pineapple” and “fruit” and apply a similar relationship to “cabbage.”

Arranging

Other problems involve arranging elements in a way that fulfills certain criteria.

Example: The answer to the problem “Arrange the letters in LEPAP to make the name of a fruit” is “APPLE.”

Transformation

Other problems involve making a series of changes to achieve a specific goal, a process called **Transformation**.

Example: A familiar riddle describes a situation in which a man has to take his fox, his chicken, and his tub of grain across a river in a boat. The boat will hold only him and two of his possessions at any one time. He can't leave the fox and the chicken on the riverbank by themselves because the fox will eat the chicken, and he can't leave the chicken with the grain because the chicken will eat the grain. He also can't take the fox and the chicken in the boat together because the fox will eat the chicken when he's occupied with rowing the boat. The same goes for the chicken and the grain. How will he get all three across? First he takes the fox and the grain across. He leaves the fox on the opposite bank and takes the grain back with him. He then leaves the grain on the bank and takes the chicken across. He leaves the chicken on the opposite bank and takes the fox back with him to retrieve the grain.

Approaches to Problem Solving

There are many strategies for solving problems, including trial and error, algorithms, deductive reasoning, inductive reasoning, heuristics, dialectical reasoning, forming subgoals, using similar problems, and changing the way the problem is represented.

Trial and Error

Trial And Error involves trying out different solutions until one works. This type of strategy is practical only when the number of possible solutions is relatively small.

Example: It's dark, and a man is trying to figure out which button on the dashboard of his newly rented car switches on the headlights. He might press all the available buttons until he finds the right one.

Algorithms

Algorithms are step-by-step procedures that are guaranteed to achieve a particular goal.

[Previous page](#)

Example: A chocolate chip cookie recipe is an algorithm for baking chocolate chip cookies.

Deductive Reasoning

Deductive Reasoning is the process by which a particular conclusion is drawn from a set of general premises or statements. The conclusion *has* to be true if the premises are true.

Example: If the premises “All birds have wings” and “A penguin is a bird” are true, then the conclusion “A penguin has wings” must also be true.

Inductive Reasoning

Inductive Reasoning is the process by which a general conclusion is drawn from examples. In this case, the conclusion is likely, but not guaranteed, to be true.

Example: Given the premise “All the butterflies Fred has ever seen have wingspans of less than two inches,” Fred might conclude, “All butterflies have wingspans of less than two inches.”

Heuristics

A **Heuristic** is a general rule of thumb that may lead to a correct solution but doesn't guarantee one.

Example: A useful heuristic for finishing a timed exam might be "Do the easy questions first."

Dialectical Reasoning

Dialectical Reasoning is the process of going back and forth between opposing points of view in order to come up with a satisfactory solution.

Example: A student might use dialectical reasoning when she considers the pros and cons of choosing psychology as her college major.

Forming Subgoals

Forming subgoals involves coming up with intermediate steps to solve a problem. This is a way of simplifying a problem.

Example: Susan is asked to solve the analogy problem "Prison is to inmate as hospital is to ____." Susan's subgoal could be to figure out the relationship between "prison" and "inmate." Once she achieves this subgoal, she can easily find the answer, "patient."

Using Similar Problems

A problem is often easier to solve if it can be compared to a similar problem.

Example: Mike has to give his two-year-old daughter a bath, but she resists because she is afraid of the water. Mike remembers that he convinced her to get in the kiddie pool last week by letting her take her large plastic dinosaur toy with her for "protection." He gives her the toy again, and she agrees to get in the tub.

Changing the Way a Problem Is Represented

A problem may be easier to solve if it is represented in a different form.

Example: If hundreds of guests at a banquet are trying to figure out where they are supposed to sit, written instructions might not be easy to follow. A seating chart, however, makes the seating arrangement easy to understand.

Obstacles to Effective Problem-Solving

Researchers have described many obstacles that prevent people from solving problems effectively. These obstacles include irrelevant information, functional fixedness, mental set, and making assumptions.

Irrelevant Information

Focusing on irrelevant information hinders problem-solving.

Example: A familiar children's riddle goes like this: As I was going to St. Ives, I met a man with seven wives. Every wife had seven sacks, every sack had seven cats, every cat had seven kits. How many were going to St. Ives? People may think of this as a complicated math problem, but

in reality, only one person, the “I,” is headed to St. Ives. The seven wives and their respective entourages are headed the other way.

Functional Fixedness

Functional Fixedness is the tendency to think only of an object’s most common use in solving a problem.

Example: *Rachel’s car breaks down while she is driving through the desert. She is terribly thirsty. She finds several soda bottles in the trunk but no bottle opener. She doesn’t think of using the car key to open the bottles because of functional fixedness.*

Mental Set

A **Mental Set** is a tendency to use only those solutions that have worked in the past.

Example: *When Matt’s flashlight hasn’t worked in the past, he’s just shaken it to get it to work again. One day when it doesn’t come on, he shakes it, but it still doesn’t work. He would be subject to mental set if he keeps shaking it without checking whether it needs new batteries.*

Making Assumptions

Making assumptions about constraints that don’t exist prevent people from solving problems effectively.

Example: *Another familiar riddle goes as follows: A father and his son are driving on a highway and get into a terrible accident. The father dies, and the boy is rushed to the hospital with major injuries. When he gets to the hospital, a surgeon rushes in to help the boy but stops and exclaims, “I can’t operate on this boy—he’s my son!” How can this be? If people have a hard time answering, they may be making a false assumption. The surgeon is the boy’s mother.*

Stages of Problem Solving

Gestalt psychologists suggest that problem solving behaviour also follows the stages that are followed in creative thinking: preparation, incubation, illumination or insight and verification. These stages have already been discussed in the earlier section. According to Polya , there are four stages involved in problem solving and these are as given below

Stage 1: Define, understand and think about the problem. In this stage, there is identification of the actual problem, attributes of the problem, area of knowledge involved in solving the problem and collecting relevant information.

Stage 2: Devise a plan for solution. This stage includes thinking of alternate ways to solve the problem and preparing a flowchart of solution.

Stage 3: Carry out the plan. This stage of problem solving is to execute the solution of the problem.

Stage 4: Looking back. This involves verifying that the problem solved was the one originally defined, and also checking reasonableness, criteria and constraints as well as communicate results. Creativity and Problem Solving

Strategies of Problem Solving Even if the operator has all the basic knowledge and background skills, yet there is no guarantee that they will solve the problem successfully. In order to be successful in solving a problem, an additional element needed is to have a general strategy that can be used for problem solving. A strategy is a set of sequential steps (or procedure) used by a problem solver in arriving at a solution. The strategy should help the operator by guiding him/her to efficiently extract relevant data from the problem space and by giving a planned approach to solving the problem. Cognitive psychologists have described two major types of strategies generally used by an operator and these are termed as algorithms and heuristics. Let us see what these are: 4.3.4

Algorithms An algorithm is a strategy that ensures the correct solution of the problem, if the well-defined rule of the solution is properly followed. In an anagram problem, an algorithm would be attempting all the possible letter sequences until the correct and meaningful word is found. There are four essential properties of an algorithm:

- 1) Each step of an algorithm must be exact. An algorithm must be precisely and unambiguously described, so that there remains no uncertainty.
- 2) An algorithm must terminate. The ultimate purpose of an algorithm is to solve a problem. If the process does not stop when executed, one will not be able to get any result from it. Therefore, an algorithm must contain a finite number of steps in its execution.
- 3) An algorithm must be effective. It must provide the correct answer to the problem.
- 4) An algorithm must be general. This means that it must solve every instance of the problem. For example, a program that computes the area of a rectangle should work on all possible dimensions of the rectangle, within the limits of the programming language and the machine. Although algorithm is a guarantee to reach to the solution, the effort and time involved in using it is so great that a human operator rarely uses this strategy.

Heuristics Heuristics are general suggestions or “rules of thumb” that are useful in solving a variety of problems. Heuristics are powerful and general. They do not ensure a correct solution to the problem. That is why there are so many of them and if one does not work, another may be tried upon. General heuristics are usually context free and apply across many different situations. Specific heuristics are used in specialised areas, like applying the conservation of momentum principle to solve collision problems in physics, or telling students to check the units, neglect small terms, or use crude approximations. Means-end analysis Probably the most common and general heuristic is the ‘means-end analysis’. Simply stated, this heuristic says to do something to get a little closer to the goal. This heuristic helps break down a problem into pieces. For example, the ultimate Intelligence and Creativity goal is taken in short term goals and each of these short term goals will have to be achieved and doing so helps the person to get closer to the goal and ultimately reach it. If a large problem is broken down into pieces, it is important to self monitor the sub goals, that is whether the person has achieved it or not. This self-monitoring is

known as meta-cognition. Meta-cognition is essential for any extended activity, especially problem solving, because the problem solver needs to be aware of the current activity, of the overall goal, the strategies used to attain the goal and the effectiveness of those strategies. Working backward This strategy starts with the goal state and the operator moves backward toward the initial state. This strategy is found to be very useful in solving problems like paper-pencil maze. Sometimes the problem solver uses this method by combining it with the means end analysis. However, working backward is useful only when the end state is uniquely well defined with an unclear initial state. Analogies Heuristic of analogy uses experiences of strategies used to solve past problems in solving a current problem. This strategy relies on discovering common attributes among various problems solved at previous occasions and the problem being faced presently.

CREATIVITY

The most advanced thought process, creativity, involves production of uncommon and novel ideas that are highly relevant to the situation. Creativity is defined as something different from intelligence and as a parallel construct to intelligence, but it differs from intelligence in that it is not restricted to cognitive or intellectual functioning or behaviour. Instead, it is concerned with a complex mix of motivational conditions, personality factors, environmental conditions, chance factors, and even products (Michalko, 1998).

4.2.1 Meaning and Aspects of Creativity Creativity is a goal directed thinking which is unusual, novel and useful. Many of such creative thinking become so important that they influence the whole human civilisation and are called as historical creativity.

The Mona Lisa, the laws of thermodynamics, the laws of motion, the theory of relativity are some of the ideas that were never thought before and changed the human civilisation altogether in a great way in their respective spheres of life. Although we can accept its existence and importance, it has been a highly difficult task for the researchers to define creativity.

Newell, Shaw and Simon (1963) have explained the nature of creativity on the basis of following four criteria: a) Novelty and usefulness b) Rejects previously accepted ideas c) Requires intense motivation and persistence d) Results from organising the unclear situation in a coherent, clear and new way.

Sternberg (2006) reports five commonalities in the research of creativity. These are:

- 1) Creativity involves thinking that aims at producing ideas or products that are relatively novel and that are, in some respect, compelling.
- 2) Creativity has some domain-specific and domain-general elements in the sense that it needs some specific knowledge, but there are certain elements of creativity that cut across different domains.

- 3) Creativity is measureable, at least to some extent.
- 4) Creativity can be developed and promoted.
- 5) Creativity is not highly rewarded in practice, as it is supposed to be in theory.

Divergent thinking is a thought process or method used to generate [creative](#) ideas by exploring many possible solutions. It typically occurs in a spontaneous, free-flowing, "non-linear" manner, such that many ideas are generated in an emergent cognitive fashion. Many possible solutions are explored in a short amount of time, and unexpected connections are drawn. Following divergent thinking, ideas and information are organized and structured using [convergent thinking](#), which follows a particular set of logical steps to arrive at one solution, which in some cases is a "correct" solution.

The psychologist [J.P. Guilford](#) first coined the terms convergent thinking and divergent thinking in 1956.

What is the Difference between Convergent and Divergent Thinking

What is Convergent Thinking

Convergent thinking is a type of thinking that involves finding the most effective answer to a [problem](#). In other words, this type of thinking involves a single and well-established answer – usually, the most correct answer. Therefore, there is no room for ambiguity. Convergent thinking involves accuracy, speed, and logic. It is most effective in situations where a problem already has an answer, which needs to be recalled or determined through decision-making strategies. When you have to answer multiple-choice tests, quizzes, or standardized tests, you use convergent thinking. Questions in these tests generally have one correct answer. You have to find out the answer through [knowledge](#), logic, or deduction. The answer you produce is either 100% right or 100% wrong. In brief, there are no other possibilities.

What is Divergent Thinking

Divergent thinking is a type of thinking that involves generating creative ideas to explore many possible solutions. It involves opening your mind in various directions and trying different solutions for a problem. Moreover, divergent thinking is spontaneous, free-flowing, and non-linear and produces many unique and original ideas. It involves many possible solutions or ideas in a short amount of time.

Unlike convergent thinking, you cannot use divergent thinking for multiple-choice tests or quizzes that involve questions having a single answer. This is because there is no right or wrong answer in divergent thinking.

Here are some examples of divergent thinking:

- A brainstorming session in an office to create an advertisement
- Planning a trip from New York to Oregon (there are multiple routes as well as modes of transportation you can use)
- Using a stack of blocks to find out how many shapes you can come up with
- Writing a caption for your social media post

What happens in the four stages of creativity?

1. **Preparation:** This first stage is all about gathering information. This is the stage where you do [user research](#) and [empathize](#) with the users in order to define the problem and your users' needs. Some people think that creative ideas just pop up from a vacuum, but creative ideas are always solutions to a problem or a need. At this stage, you also use various [ideation](#) methods to help you understand, attack and build your design problem and creative idea from various angles. You provoke your habitual thinking in order to better understand your design problem, your idea and your design space.
2. **Incubation:** At this stage, you take a step back from the problem and allow your mind to wander to let it contemplate and work the problem through. You nurture the unconscious thought process, for example, by staying open to the ideas that come to you while you do the dishes or go for a walk. You open your mind to all ideas—even the crazy ones.
3. **Illumination:** This is the third stage. This stage essentially describes the classic “eureka!” or “aha” moment of insight. However, the fact that illumination has an entire stage devoted to it shows that it's essentially not just a quick moment of insight and helps us understand that it's something we can—and should—work towards achieving. The third stage is what most people think is a classic characteristic of a creative person, but creativity is a process which even the most seemingly unimaginative people can learn to manage and nurture.
4. **Verification/implementation:** At this fourth stage, you build on the “aha” solution. You evaluate, analyze and build on your idea. You then polish it to make sure that it's both useful and novel. At this stage, you would also often choose to prototype and [test](#) your idea in order to find out if it meets the users' needs which you defined at the preparation stage—and, if so, polish it as needed.

What Blocks People from Creativity and Creative Thinking?

One of the most essential skills for solving problems in business is creativity. At the same time, our workspace is rarely the first thing that comes to mind when we think of creativity, innovation, and inspiration.

If you feel blocked from creative thinking or your team is struggling to think outside the box when solving problems, it's a good idea to familiarize yourself with some of the most common causes of creative blocks.

Once you understand *why* people are being blocked from creativity, you can then come up with a solution that will encourage innovative thought in the office.

Let's take a look at what blocks people from creativity and what you can do to overcome creative blocks in the workplace.

What Is a Creative Block?

When someone is creatively blocked, they don't have access to their creative impulses or modes of thinking. It's common for people in creative professions to face creative blocks periodically, but it can also occur in the office.

Creativity is essential for coming up with solutions to unusual problems and strategizing the future plans of your brand. When you or your team is facing a creative block, it can be a serious obstacle to your goals and desired outcomes.

What Are The Benefits of Having a Creative Workplace?

A creative mindset in the office can produce many valuable benefits to any organization. Not only can it increase productivity and enhance problem-solving in the office, but it can also boost morale and improve your team's ability to work together.

When your workplace promotes and encourages creativity, there can also be long-term benefits. Over time, you'll find that engagement and interaction in the workplace are improved and will lead to an increased ability to attract and retain top-notch employees.

What Blocks People from Creativity?

Anyone can experience a creative block, and it can happen for numerous reasons. Let's look at some of the most common causes of creative blocks to help you identify the best possible solution to your innovative drought.

1. Mental Blocks

In some cases, people will face a creative block when they are stuck in familiar ways of looking at things. When facing a problem, they fail to see a number of viable options because they are trapped by their own thinking.

On the other hand, a person can have so much invested in a project or problem that they freeze up when trying to come up with a solution. If they feel that the stakes are high, they might be unwilling, at some level, to even entertain potential creative solutions or take the first steps towards completing a project.

2. Being Too Routinized

Having the right [habits and routines](#) is an essential part of maintaining a healthy lifestyle and a productive work life. At the same time, having too strict a routine can limit an individual's creative thinking and expression.

We all have comfort zones that help us feel stable and safe; there isn't anything inherently wrong with that. However, [experiencing positive stress](#) or *eustress* can result in several positive feelings, including inspiration, flow, motivation, and creativity.

If you are dealing with a creative block or you feel your team is lacking in creative thinking, it's possible that you could all use a soft push outside your respective comfort zones.

3. Being Too Serious

Some people on your team might be perfectly creative in their home life and hobbies but struggle to think creatively when in the office. There is certainly a focus on consistency, conformity, and professionalism in the office, and some individuals might feel this is counter to how they express themselves creatively.

4. Not Having Creative Outlets

Creativity is a lot like a muscle, and it needs to be exercised to display its full strength. If you feel that creative thinking is lacking in your business, it's possible that your team doesn't have creative outlets they use either in their professional or personal lives.

If you're looking for ways to tap into your employees' creative processes, check out our assessment entitled [Encouraging Innovation Through 5 Key Conversations](#).

5. Personal Problems

When a person is thinking creatively, it means that they have extra energy to burn. It is a skill that demands focus. If someone is dealing with personal problems— whether it be divorce, a death in the family, or medical issues— they don't have a lot of mental energy to put towards thinking innovatively.

6. Not Separating Creation From the Critique

We all know that not all ideas are good ideas. However, constantly redlining thoughts before they even fully emerge from your mind disrupts your ability to think creatively.

Expressing oneself creatively and critiquing the product of creativity are two separate steps. If you feel your team is creatively blocked because they are afraid their ideas will get shot down right away, consider holding brainstorming sessions that focus on creating and collecting ideas before having a separate session to critique and redline those ideas.

7. Burnout

When a person constantly feels overwhelmed and swamped, it can lead to the form of exhaustion known as burnout. If you or anyone on your team has been dealing with physical, mental, or emotional stress in an excessive and prolonged way, it can result in feeling completely drained.

It's possible that the creative block you're facing is due to being burned out. When your body and mind are firing on all cylinders constantly, there isn't a lot of excess energy for creative thinking or innovative ideas.

There are many things you can do to overcome burnout, including:

- Establishing a daily routine that creates better work-life balance
- Practicing mindfulness
- Starting and maintaining an exercise regime
- Building breaks into your schedule
- Taking time to relax and care for your mental health

- Making sure you're getting adequate sleep and eating a healthy diet

8. Poor Communication

When it seems like you're struggling with creativity blocks from an entire team, it's possible that it has to do with a communication breakdown. There will inevitably be some tension between teams when working together, but this kind of issue can throw a wrench in everyone's ability to think creatively.

If you're wondering how to improve communication skills in the workplace to overcome creative blocks, check out [these eight activities to boost workplace communication](#).

9. Being Afraid of Taking Risks or Being Wrong

If you or your team is afraid of making mistakes, taking risks, or being wrong, it can seriously hamper creativity. Creativity is an active and positive process that can get completely derailed if someone is unwilling to make even the slightest error.

10. Perfectionism

If you have it in your head that anything you produce or say needs to be perfect, you'll likely hold yourself back from the ability to be creative. When you need a creative solution to a problem in the workplace, being a perfectionist will leave you drawing a blank.

To overcome this, you have to separate the tasks of thinking creatively and critiquing the resulting ideas.

11. Believing They Aren't the Creative Type

Sometimes, people are creatively blocked because they don't believe themselves to be creative people. It's common to associate creativity with being highly skilled at drawing or a musical instrument, pushing some people away from recognizing their creativity.

Creativity is like a muscle that needs to be [built and strengthened](#). When an individual goes through their whole life assuming they aren't creative, it simply means they haven't started working to develop their creative muscles yet.

12. Not Knowing What's Expected

Your workplace may suffer from a creativity drought simply because people aren't clear about what is expected of them. If this is the case, there's a good chance your team is more concerned with looking busy than coming up with creative solutions to problems. By clearly outlining the expectations in the office and outwardly encouraging creative thinking, you might find a shift in the tone of the office over time.

Tips For Boosting Creative Thinking in the Workplace

Understanding why you or your team is creatively blocked is an essential step to solving the problem. However, there are some general tactics you can take to boost creativity in the office.

1. Establish a Clear Vision

One important step you can take to boost creativity in the workplace is to establish a clear company mission and vision. Beyond that, you should reiterate these ideas often and ensure that your employees know your brand's strategies.

Doing so can help to overcome the issue of your team feeling left in the dark and unaware of what's expected of them. When you share information with them about the goals and mission of the company, it's much more possible for them to put their head in the game and be invested enough to offer creative solutions to problems.

2. Promote Continuous Learning

Creativity is something that can essentially dry up if you aren't learning new things and taking in novel information. For this reason, it's a good idea to encourage your employees (and yourself!) to engage in activities that offer new methods and knowledge.

You can help your team continue their learning journey by supporting their efforts to attend conferences, events, and classes related to your field.

3. Bring in Speakers

One great way to encourage creativity is to hear new ideas and perspectives. To help boost creativity in the office, consider bringing in some speakers that are industry experts who have new, innovative ideas. This could even become a monthly event that occurs to help keep everyone's creative juices flowing.

4. Move to a Different Environment

No matter how much you love your desk or conference room, sometimes being in a familiar work environment can keep you locked in the same modes of thinking. If you feel like you or your team is uninspired, the solution might be as simple as moving to a different space to think about the topic at hand.

5. Provide a Stimulating Atmosphere

The environment we spend our time in significantly impacts our mood, and some atmospheres are more likely to promote creative thinking than others.

Consider making modifications to your office when it comes to the lighting, color, temperature, and sound. For example, if your office is constantly humming with activity, consider offering a quiet place where your team (or you!) can focus on the problem at hand.

6. Encourage Individuality

Before people feel comfortable offering creative ideas, they need to know that their thoughts are valued. In the office, it's easy for people to become part of the pack rather than think and act individually, particularly if they believe this is what the company culture dictates.

If they realize that you appreciate and hear the insights they offer, though, you'll find creativity in the office improves overall.

7. Consider Implementing Flexible Work Hours

If you feel that creativity in the office is lacking because your team is dealing with a lot of personal problems, it's possible that implementing flexible work hours could help to relieve some of their stress, offer them better work-life balance, and reduce the occurrence of burnout. If flexible scheduling would help your team have the mental space they need to think creatively, this could be well worth the effort.

8. Act on Good Ideas

One of the best ways to encourage your team to be creative is to act on the good ideas that come up during brainstorming sessions and acknowledge the positive aspects of other ideas.

When someone comes up with a good idea, implement it and wait to see the positive outcomes. If there is a beneficial result from their concept, share it with the team to give them credit. You'll find that when you publicly commend a good idea, more solid creative ideas will start coming forward.

Boosting Creativity in the Workplace: Final Thoughts

When we think of creativity, we often think of people as artists, musicians, and inventors. The truth of the matter is, though, that everyone is creative. When we can harness our creativity in the workplace, it can lead to better problem-solving skills, increased flexibility, better team performance, and more.