

Chapter 3: Everyone is creative

- One of the fundamental principles of Innovation Management is "**Believe in Creativity.**" Creative thinking involves leaving the known and entering the unknown. It is about burning new neutral connections in the brain so that creative ideas have the opportunity to surface. Many people stop themselves from experiencing new things and only want to stay in their **comfort zones**. Many people stop themselves from being creative because they do not believe in their ability to be creative.
- The second fundamental principle of Innovation Management is "**Be curious**". Great creative thinkers have an insatiable appetite for understanding how things work and for connecting new thoughts with old ones. They feel free to challenge their own assumptions and those of others.
- The third principle of creative thinking is "**Discover new connections**". Many ideas already exist in some form somewhere in the universe-in some other department, organization, industry sector, or country. Finding these ideas and then experimenting to mix and match or cut and paste them into new ideas is the essence of creative thinking.
- Is creative thinking the domain of only a few? **The answer is "No"**. If the definition of creativity is "the discovery of a new connection," then **everyone** has the ability to be creative.
- The most important factor in creative thinking is a person's own belief in his creative ability. A leader cannot just ask people to be creative. They must first believe that they are.
- Not everyone is creative in the **same way**. Everyone has different preferences and talents for creativity in different areas of their life.
- There are many situations in everyday life in which an individual's creative-thinking talent is needed.
- The left side of the brain is thought to dominate language, logic, and scientific and analytical tasks, while the right side of the brain is thought to dominate visual, spatial, and artistic tasks. In essence, the left side deals with more details while the right side deals with more abstract processes. Over time, the right brain has become associated with creativity.

- We are all unique individuals. Each of us has different ways of expressing our talents, knowledge, values, and interests.
- We all have the capacity to be creative, but we express this potential differently.
- We approach innovation and change with our own unique blend of the four Innovation Styles. These four Innovation Styles are *Visioning*, **Exploring**, **Experimenting**, and **Modifying**. The styles tap into unique preferences for such things as setting clear goals, developing new rules, relying on current standards, looking to the future, working with details, and so on.
- Everyone is creative but that everyone approaches creativity in different ways. By recognizing each person's **unique talents** as well as their unique Innovation Styles, we can greatly enhance both the quality of interaction within the group and the output of the group.
- Many organizations have found that **collaborative innovation** works best when a combination of diverse thinking styles exists.
- It is basic human nature to be curious, to try new things, and to learn by discovering new connections. Somehow, along the way, this natural creative talent has been blocked. Through self-judgment and the conditioning of others, people stop looking for new ideas, stop trying new approaches, and stop discovering new connections.
- There are three common obstacles to creative thinking which we must eliminate:
 - **Obstacle 1: Hesitancy to Try New Things:** The fear of making a mistake and the fear of what others may think can lock a person in their own creative thinking prison. Everyone is naturally full of creativity but our "voice of judgment" takes over.
 - "We tried that a few years ago and it didn't work."
 - "We've never tried that so it won't work."
 - "We've always done it this way."
 - "We don't want any mistakes so do it the way it's always been done."
 - **Obstacle 2: "The Right Way"**
 - "That's not the way it's done in our industry."

- "Don't rock the boat."
 - "The board won't go for that idea It's too radical."
- **Obstacle 3: We Want Control:** Noncreative thinkers are typically unwilling to let go of their opinions.
 - "We never had to do that before."
 - "We've just finished writing the vision and mission statements. We don't want to have to change them."
 - "We know the old way will work."
- The **ability to unlearn and the ability to forget** some of what has been taught are fundamental skills for creative thinking. Some of the "rules" and "ways of doing things" will have to be unlearned in order to make way for new ideas.
- **Accept Failure:** Remember that creative thinking also involves failure. A person should not stop trying just because perfect results are not produced on the first attempt.
- **Be curious:**
Without curiosity, a person has great difficulty discovering new ideas. Being curious involves
 - **Have an open mind:** It is difficult to discover innovative solutions with a closed mind. When the mind holds onto or sets fast on one idea, it is no longer free to create. In effect, the creative mind starts to shut down. It tunes out and closes off the possibility of new discoveries.
 - **Gain a broader perspective:** Ideas and solutions are everywhere. How broad is the idea-gathering process in your organization? Are you actively scouting out different perspectives from a variety of sources, from people outside your company, from people in other industries or government agencies, from people from other countries? Are you casting the net wide enough?
 - **Ask probing questions:** You cannot be a curious thinker if you are afraid to ask questions. Ask probing questions and do not be afraid to ask again if the person avoided answering the original question. Some people have been taught not to ask questions, especially of their

elders or of people in positions of power for fear of embarrassing them. This is a hurdle that needs to be overcome if the creative spirit is to flourish.

- **Build Your Observation Skills**
 - Sam Walton, the founder of Wal-Mart, made it a habit when visiting his competitor's stores to look at the details and find at least one idea or example to take back to his organization.
 - Developing a curious mind requires better observation skills. Practice trying to "see more." For example, when you are sitting in a restaurant, waiting in an airport lounge, or standing in line at the bank, observe more.
- **Let Outsiders Bring in Ideas**
 - Widen the search for ideas to the far corners of the organization where great ideas may be hidden.
 - Why not ask the "experts" for their perspective?
 - Why not look at international companies?
 - Why not ask people unrelated to the problem for their perspective?
- **Dig a Little Deeper to Understand These Perspectives:** There are often hundreds of ways to look at a problem. Sort through the range of facts, memories, emotions, observations, perceptions, and impressions. Turn the problem around and look at it from new angles.