

**AHL3300 – AHL5300**

# **Creativity & Innovation**

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**7 to 9:50 PM – 200 Wilbrod 104**



**AHL3300 – AHL5300 – Creativity & Innovation**

# **Fostering Creativity in Teams**

**By Cristian Zaelzer Ph.D.**



# 1

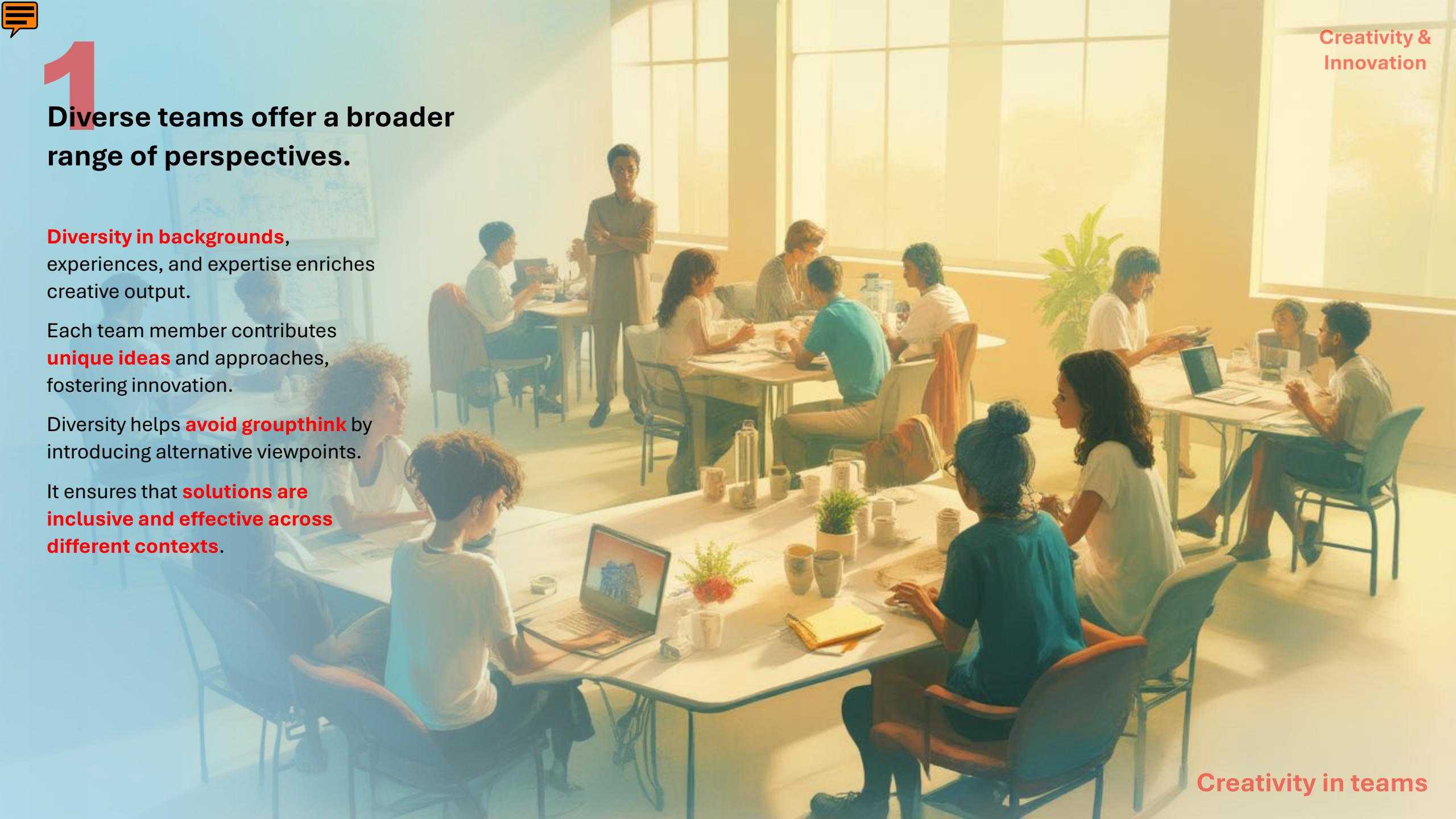
## Diverse teams offer a broader range of perspectives.

Diversity in backgrounds, experiences, and expertise enriches creative output.

Each team member contributes unique ideas and approaches, fostering innovation.

Diversity helps avoid groupthink by introducing alternative viewpoints.

It ensures that solutions are inclusive and effective across different contexts.



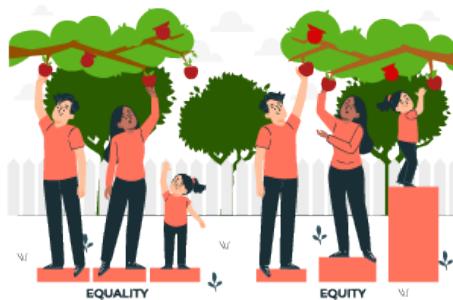
Creativity in teams



# 1

**Equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI/DEI)** creates a workplace where everyone feels valued and respected and has the opportunity to contribute their unique perspectives. This leads to improved employee morale, increased innovation, better decision-making, and a stronger ability to attract and retain top talent, ultimately enhancing an organization's success.

## Key components of EDI:



### Equity:

The idea that all people should have fair conditions to participate in society, recognizing that they may not have equal access to resources, opportunities, or benefits.

Hence, a differential treatment or resource redistribution may be necessary to achieve equality.

### Diversity:

Recognizing and appreciating the differences between individuals, including race, gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, and abilities.



### Inclusion:

Actively creating an environment where everyone feels welcomed, respected, and able to participate fully.



# Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI/EDI)



## 1 Why DEI is Important:

### Enhanced creativity and innovation:

A diverse workforce brings a broader range of ideas and experiences to the table, leading to more creative solutions to problems.

### Improved employee engagement and retention:

Employees who feel valued and included are more likely to be engaged in their work and stay with the company.

### Better decision-making:

Considering diverse perspectives helps to identify potential biases and leads to more well-rounded decisions.

### Attracting top talent:

Companies committed to EDI are more attractive to a broader pool of skilled candidates.

### Positive company culture:

A culture that promotes EDI fosters a sense of belonging and respect for all employees.

### Meeting customer needs:

Reflecting the diversity of the customer base allows a company to understand better and serve their needs.

### Legal compliance:

Promoting EDI helps prevent discrimination lawsuits and ensures adherence to legal requirements.

# Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI/EDI)

Creativity in teams

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# 1

## Diverse teams offer a broader range of perspectives.

### Activity

1. **Divide** the classroom into groups according to the following: **Field of studies, Gender, and Origin.**
2. Now **divide** the class into **four teams**. Each team should have one member from a **different background** set in the previous step.
3. **Assign** one of the four following projects:

**Project 1.** Design a device to capture colour from real life to reproduce it digitally.

**Project 2.** Create an anti-thief system to avoid the robbery of cars in Ontario.

**Project 3.** Create an easy-to-use app to help you replace imported products with Canadian-made products.

**Project 4.** Design a fast-check app that connects to AI to discard misinformation in social media quickly.



2

## Leaders should model curiosity and openness.

A good leader effectively communicates their vision, actively listens to their team, fosters strong relationships, empowers individuals, takes accountability for outcomes, demonstrates integrity, and inspires others to achieve goals by leading by example, all while adapting to changing situations and promoting innovation.



How to spot a  
good leader?



# 2

## •Clear Communication:

Articulates goals and ideas clearly, ensuring everyone understands the direction.

## •Active Listening:

Pays attention to team members' concerns and feedback.

## •Empowerment:

Provides autonomy and trust to team members to make decisions and own their work.

## •Relationship Building:

Creates a positive and collaborative environment by valuing individual contributions.

## •Integrity:

Acts ethically and consistently with their values, setting a moral example.

## •Accountability:

Takes responsibility for both successes and failures.

## •Visionary Leadership:

Sets a clear direction and inspires the team to achieve long-term goals.

## •Adaptability:

Responds effectively to changing circumstances and challenges.

## •Positive Attitude:

Maintains optimism and motivates the team during difficult situations.

## •Innovation:

Encourages creative thinking and new approaches to problem-solving.

## •Developing Others:

Provides mentorship and opportunities for growth within the team.

# A Good Leader's Actions

# 2

## Leaders should model curiosity and openness.

### Activity

1. **Professor will allocate** individuals in each group as leaders based on their participation in previous classes.
2. . Each person assigned as a leader will evaluate herself/himself/themselves using the previous guidance on desirable leadership features and **follow those guidelines** as behaviour patterns.
3. **If others** in the group **disagree** with the leadership, it will be important to establish the reasons and evaluate a new leader who better fits the profile of the leader.

# 3

## Psychological safety encourages open idea sharing.

Creativity flourishes when team members feel safe expressing themselves without fear of ridicule or punishment.

Psychological safety nurtures trust, openness, and honest communication. Leaders should foster such an environment.

It allows individuals to share unpolished ideas, which can evolve into groundbreaking innovations.

### Creating psychological safety:

- **Promote open communication:**

Encourage open dialogue where everyone feels comfortable sharing their ideas, concerns, and **questions without fear of repercussions.**

- **Practice active listening:** **Pay full attention** to what others are saying, demonstrate empathy, and **avoid interrupting.**

- **Value diverse perspectives:** **Make it clear that different viewpoints are appreciated and necessary** for a productive discussion.

- **Give constructive feedback:** Provide **feedback in a respectful and supportive manner, focusing on the idea** rather than the person.

- **Lead by example:** Be open to **sharing your own ideas**, admitting when you don't know something, and actively **soliciting feedback from others.**

- **Set clear expectations:** **Establish ground rules** for respectful communication and idea sharing at the beginning of discussions.

- **Acknowledge contributions:** Recognize and **appreciate all contributions**, regardless of whether they are fully developed or not.

- **Foster a learning culture:** **Encourage curiosity** and a willingness to learn from each other, viewing mistakes as opportunities for growth.

- **Create a safe space for dissent:** **Allow people to express dissenting opinions without fear of being criticized or ostracized.**

- **Address concerns promptly:** **If someone feels uncomfortable** or unsafe sharing an idea, **address the issue directly and take steps** to rectify the situation.

# 4

## Brainstorming generates a pool of creative ideas.

Structured brainstorming sessions allow teams to think freely and build on each other's ideas.

This collaborative approach uncovers unexpected solutions.

Encouraging quantity over quality during brainstorming reduces pressure and maximizes creativity.

## Some brainstorming techniques (Popular ones)

### Reverse brainstorming

Typical brainstorming considers solutions to a problem. Reverse brainstorming asks to ideate on the problem instead of the solution. It helps teams anticipate any future obstacles that might arise. To help frame this way of thinking, use a [Reverse Brainstorming Template](#) to get the team started.

### Random word brainstorming

The team is given a problem and must shout out the first words they think of, regardless of what they are. This brainstorming method is extremely fast and usually very efficient at solving a defined problem. The [Random Words Brainstorming Template](#) can help get you started. You can also write the ideas to give more privacy to the creative; under that change, it becomes the “Rapid Ideation” Method.

### The 5 Whys Method

It also aims to look at the root causes of a problem to stop that same issue from arising again. This method attempts to curb the problem before it can reoccur by asking the question “Why?” over and over until it can no longer be answered. Once you reach this stage, you have arrived at the root cause of the issue. Check Miro’s [5 Whys templates](#).

### SCAMPER model

The [SCAMPER model](#), originally a game aimed at fostering imagination in adolescents, forces your team to view a problem through seven filters: substitute, combine, adapt, modify, put to another use, eliminate, and reverse. The SCAMPER method is ideal when you start from an existing product to change or improve it into a new product.

### Starbursting

Starburst brainstorming focuses on getting the team to ask questions instead of coming up with answers.



# 5

## Structured ideation processes prevent chaos.

While creativity thrives on freedom, innovation requires direction.

Structured techniques like mind mapping or SCAMPER (Substitute, Combine, Adapt, Modify, Put to other uses, Eliminate, Reverse) channel creativity into actionable outcomes.

These frameworks help refine and prioritize ideas.



# 4

## Brainstorming generates a pool of creative ideas.

### Activity

1. Create a Miro account in <https://miro.com/>
2. Choose from the following methods for Brainstorming; click on the link to open a template in Miro to work with your teammates.

**Reverse brainstorming:** [Reverse Brainstorming Template](#).

**Random word brainstorming:** [Random Words Brainstorming Template](#).

**The 5 Whys Method:** [5 Whys templates](#).

3. Use the following 15 minutes using these methods to brainstorm.

# 5

## Structured ideation processes prevent chaos.

### Activity

1. Open your Miro account at <https://miro.com/>
2. This time, our brainstorm will start with a solution already in place and use the SCAMPER method to change that solution, modify it, adapt it, or improve it to our market or needs.
3. Each team will need to research current solutions to their problem.
4. Open the [SCAMPER model](#) template in Miro to work with your teammates.
5. Use the following 30 minutes using these methods to brainstorm.

# 6

## Clear goals align team creativity.

Defining a common objective focuses the team's efforts and ensures alignment.

Goals provide a sense of purpose, making it easier to evaluate and refine creative ideas.

They act as a guiding light, balancing freedom and accountability.





# 6 S.M.A.R.T. Goals



Example of a SMART project goal:

**Goal:**  
Increase website traffic **by 20%** within the next quarter.

**Specific:**  
Increase unique website **visitors** by 20%.

**Measurable:**  
Track website traffic using **Google Analytics**.

**Achievable:**  
Based on historical data and planned marketing initiatives.

**Relevant:**  
Aligned with the **company's goal** to expand its online presence.

**Time-bound:**  
To be achieved within the **next three months**.

When setting project goals, consider:

**Communication:**

Clearly communicate goals to all team members and stakeholders to ensure alignment and understanding.

**Flexibility:**

Be prepared to adjust goals based on changing circumstances or new information.

**Regular review:**

Monitor progress against goals and make necessary adjustments throughout the project.

# 6

## S.M.A.R.T. Goals

### Activity

1. Set your S.M.A.R.T. Goals for the project.
2. You can use a template here in, [S.M.A.R.T. Goals Template](#).

# 7

## Feedback loops improve team creativity.

Constructive feedback refines ideas, while acknowledgment of contributions boosts morale.

Feedback loops keep the creative process iterative and focused.

A balance of encouragement and critique helps maintain momentum.

### Asking for Feedback:

#### General:

- "What are your overall thoughts on [project/presentation/idea]?"
- "What did you find most valuable/interesting/challenging about [project/presentation/idea]?"
- "Is there anything you think could be improved?"
- "What was your biggest takeaway?"
- "What surprised you most?"

#### Specific:

- **Clarity:** "Was the message clear and easy to understand?" "Did you find the presentation easy to follow?"
- **Engagement:** "Did you find the presentation engaging?" "Were you interested in the topic?"
- **Content:** "Was the information accurate and relevant?" "Was there anything missing?"
- **Delivery:** "Was the presentation delivered in a clear and confident manner?" "Was the pace appropriate?"
- **Visual Aids:** "Were the visuals effective in supporting the presentation?"



# 8

## Cross-functional collaboration stimulates fresh ideas.

Collaborating across departments or disciplines integrates diverse skill sets and viewpoints.

This cross-pollination generates innovative solutions that a single discipline might overlook.

It fosters a holistic approach to problem-solving.

## Activity

What ideas did different members of the team propose, and how did their backgrounds may have an impact on their contribution?



# 9

## Celebrate both successes and failures to sustain motivation.

Recognizing successes validates effort, while embracing failures normalizes risk-taking.

Celebrations reinforce a positive atmosphere, motivating teams to continue experimenting.

They create a culture where creativity is valued as a process, not just an outcome.



# Exercise

## Activity

**Deliver a prototype for:**

**Project 1.** A device that captures colour from real life and makes it available for digital applications.

**Project 2.** An anti-thief system to avoid the robbery of cars in Ontario.

**Project 3.** An easy-to-use app to help you replace imported products with Canadian-made products when you go to do groceries.

**Project 4.** A fast-check app that connects to AI to discard misinformation in social media.