Here's What a Leader Needs to Do to Build Creativity Among Teams

With shortening profit margins and increasing competition across sectors, leaders have a lot on their plates today and reinventing the wheel is no longer an option. In an ever-changing business ecosystem, its teams that are often expected to come up with creative, 'out-of-the-box' solutions to their business problems. While managing such a team would've sufficed in the past, ensuring a team is able to contribute and problem solve in an effective manner is the job of a modern-day leader.

Delivering the right results that are in tune with consumers demand requites focus attention and creative problem-solving. So can leaders ensure that their teams work this way?

Here are a few tips:

1) Support and build an innovative culture

To be creative is not an innate ability nor is it a magic spell that can be conjured at any moment. Like most other human abilities, the ability to be creative is only reliable if practiced often.

Creativity is a constant battle between refinement and not letting details be the blinders that keep you from stretching your creativity. When employees start to fall into a rut, they need a supportive environment to help get them out of it. Else the rut might become habitual and comfortable enough to stop employees from being creative.

Leaders have to play close attention to the monotony of work. One way of breaking the cycle is to allow pockets of space within the organizational work structure for exploring their creative sides. For example activities like Friday, fun-day projects can take teams away from their computers and instead help problem solve.

It's critical that leaders create a culture that promotes innovation and creativity. And more often than not, it begins with simple tweaks to the daily routine of their teams. The potential means are limitless, but the end goal is to nurture a culture that helps the team look at things from a fresh perspective.

2) Build a knowledge-sharing process

One of the best ways to help each member of the team is by setting up opportunities for them to work together. Leaders can greatly benefit from such platforms of cross-learning; such processes not only improve the cohesion between different teams but also facilitate knowledge sharing. This kind of knowledge transfer is greatly beneficial for teams that are prone to working in isolation.

Leaders can themselves facilitate such process by scheduling a regular time to go around to the team's desks and have informal chats. These can help them to stay up to date on the challenges that the team is facing with their projects; be a sounding board for potential solutions. This provides employees a means to address their roadblocks. A leader might also choose not to always offer a direct solution but rather pair them up with another team member so they can solve it together. Team meetings can also be effectively used for this purpose.

By encouraging the team to collaborate on reaching solutions to their problems, leaders can help cultivate creativity within the team. But it's also necessary to then set up a time to share what they've learned with the team. This helps everyone have access to the acquired knowledge and the next time the problem repeats itself, instead of starting from scratch, there already exists a record of institutional knowledge on the problem that was previously tackled.

3) Encourage new tools and skills

Heavy workloads and tight deadlines can render any team susceptible to letting things fall through the cracks. Technology can be a great savior when it comes to building creativity while also ensuring day-to-day work is performed well. It's up to leaders to ensure their teams are exploring new tools and techniques that help them manage their work better.

Creativity in today's age is also greatly dependent on how fluent one is with the latest technologies within their respective fields. This ensures the creative impulses lead to executable results. But leaders can only know what tools can help their team if they themselves make it a priority to be informed about such developments. As team tackles newer challenges, both the leader and the team will be able to make educated decisions on which new tools and skills will help the team achieve success.

4) Promote change

Change is at the heart of creativity. Any creative endeavor is, in essence, a departure from the norm. So a leader who isn't able to make the team comfortable with change wouldn't be able to do much to build their creative abilities either. The more one promotes change within the team's culture the more likely is one bound to unlock creativity within the team members.

To get started, they can change how their team members approach a project that they've done numerous times. For example, allow the employees to invite different members to a brainstorm or meet one-on-one with collaborators and stakeholders on the project. Sometimes even consulting with a different set of team members can open up new perspectives to change and make their work more efficient. But promoting such an attitude towards the team's work will help leaders make their team members more comfortable to figuring out creative solutions to their work problems.

Good talent is difficult to get hold of in the first go; business ready, creative talent even rarer. But the ability of creativity is certainly something that leaders can develop within their teams. By allowing a uniquely brilliant bunch to be in a culture that promotes change, creates knowledge sharing platforms, and helps them learn more about the latest tools and skills, leaders can create a path of development for their team. Although no easy feat, it is slowly becoming a business need, which the modern leadership structure has to sooner or later respond.

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