

Making Creativity Practical: Innovation That Gets Results

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Creative solutions can be challenged and defended in the pursuit of profitability. But first, creativity must be demystified. The process of making creativity practical provides leaders with a problem-solving approach that produces high-quality ideas that are appropriate to the task—which means groups and organizations can implement them with less risk.

Executive Summary

Creativity is crucial to an organization's survival. Managers know this, and often they are responsible for instigating and implementing creativity in their organizations because they are called to solve problems and deliver results. A process of practical creativity can help leaders manage innovation in a way that produces answers that the organization can implement.

To make creativity practical, managers will want to carry out five related activities. One, they will want to state the problem in a way that encourages creative problem solving. Two, they should become familiar with different problem-solving styles. Three, they should learn and understand creative pathways connected to problem-solving styles in order to set a direction for their innovation efforts. Four, they need to lead their teams or work groups in generating ideas. Finally, leaders will want to evaluate those ideas to select those that are most likely to be effective.

Managers who doubt that the creative process can reliably produce results—that it can be made practical—are reminded that only the idea-generation stage needs to run without limiting interference. Managers are free, and are encouraged, to guide other parts of the process toward results that their organizations can support and implement. In essence, this is the core of practical creativity.

Practical creativity reconciles creativity with management and is linked to the context of problem solving, grounded in reality, and focused on productivity. Managers are often trained to minimize risks and to value predictability, but creativity is risky and unpredictable. Managers can use a process of practical creativity to solve problems efficiently and to manage the problem-solving process by altering it to more closely align with the organization's current challenges.