



Why Is Practical Creativity Important?

Organizations hold their managers responsible for results. They also look to their managers for innovative ideas. In that kind of climate, success, even survival, requires renewal – and renewal demands creative thinking. But it can be difficult for individuals in organizations to embrace creativity because it can be a hard thing to manage. Creativity requires a free hand to explore new ideas. Organizational challenges often require fast answers. Balancing those needs, making the right trade-off, requires leadership and innovative tactics.

Every successful manager can find original and helpful solutions. To remain successful, managers must be adept at solving problems, whether they are the usual challenges of working more efficiently with fewer resources, for example, or challenges of a more unusual kind – finding a new way to frame a problem, to define a product, or to take the organization into a different area of endeavor. There is no single best creative problem-solving method. But targeting innovation to make the creative process controllable and predictable can help managers solve problems in a way that's timely and dependable.

Every organizational challenge is unique in terms of its details, the context of the organization's culture, the willingness of work groups to embrace the give and take of ideas, and the support the organization gives to the hunt for new solutions. As a technique, targeted innovation enables leaders to manage a creative process so new ideas come faster and can be implemented to solve specific problems.

Even if the organization ardently supports innovation, the creative process has never fit easily into the manager's world. It's a

The Practical Truth of Creativity

Organizations must discover ways to foster creativity, because the practical truth is that it leads to future success. Practical creativity reconciles creativity with management. It is linked to the context of problem solving, grounded in reality, and focused on productivity. It differentiates between types of creative ideas, specifies the factors that determine when one type of creativity is more likely than another to be productive, provides directions for producing those ideas, and offers tactics for evaluating them.

process not often nor clearly linked to the job of management. In the past it was often seen as aesthetic, not productive. It was often regarded as a luxury that managers could not afford. Few organizations would take that stance today. The pace of change is too rapid, the global marketplace too splintered, the rush of information too great, and the demands of clients and customers too unpredictable for any organization to ignore the necessity of creativity. That reassessment of creativity's value casts it as ensuring long-term renewal. Leaders who can't spark creativity in others and also deliver results surrender the wealth of their organization to their competitors.

Managers are often trained to minimize risks and to value

predictability. These are important to the short-term survival of an organization. Creativity is risky and unpredictable, but it's essential to long-term organizational success. Managers can use targeted innovation to make creativity a more efficient problem-solving process by altering it to more closely align with the organization's current challenges.