

The 9 habits of effectively killing creativity

In these times of looseness, frivolity and small percentages, it is clear that **corporate creativity** is vastly overrated. **Innovation** seems to be a new religion – even the bags of potatoes in the supermarket have the word written on them – while nobody dares to ask what’s wrong with the good old stuff! After all, deep in our conservative hearts, don’t we all think about the past as “the good old days”?

That is why we have compiled this list of attitudes, behaviors and guidelines for the rightful manager to help him to abolish the foolishness of creativity in the workplace. Trust me, we have tested all of these rules against **creative climates or cultures** extensively, mostly through observation from the bottom-side of corporate ladders.

Habit #1: Bury them alive in their comfort zone

People naturally seek comfort. As a manager, it is your task to keep your people in their comfort zone. After all, giving a challenge to people is preparing your position for a potential disaster. Through challenge you will test and improve their skills. In every challenge you give your people, you will create more skilful people. People who are constantly challenged and slightly pushed out of their comfort zone, get far more self-motivated in what they do. And who would want motivated employees? It won’t be long before they will be after your job. So if you want some rest and peace, you bury them alive in their comfort zone.

Habit #2: There must be rules, processes and procedures

Whoever said “Tell them which mountain to climb, but don’t tell them how to climb it” has never been in charge of procurement an organisation. People will order the most expensive or weirdest kind of climbing material to get up there where you want them. People need guidance, everybody knows that. If you don’t hold the hands of your children while crossing the street – remember that we are in an economic turmoil – you don’t know what will happen, so you will expect

the worst. The same applies to the working environment. Freedom, empowerment ... good for the competition, but not for us!

Habit #3: Keep your secrets secret

The success of the Secret is no surprise, we all love secrets, certainly those that create our success. There is only one real reason behind the argument of those who claim that you should trust the people working for you, and that you should share your secrets in full openness. It is: **GO RUN WITH THE CROWN JEWELS OF YOUR EMPLOYER AND BUILD YOUR OWN FORTUNE UPON THEM!** You will notice that some of the people you have shared your company secrets with, are not even smart enough to put the second part of that mission into reality. They will just give away your secrets for free in a blog or any other means of online web 2-ish waste of time. And then there is that growing I-trust-you-you-trust-me community ... as if my workers would trust me. Those are the wishy washy communities that hold hands during meetings and kiss each other at the office every morning as if they were your relatives. Forget it ... they will trust you as long as it is in their interest. One day, you'll be stabbed in the back with a double edge kitchen knife that is sharp enough to stab you, but not sharp enough to make a clean hole. When you are not in the office, and your staff is supposed to work, worry! Call in often, check and double-check their work ... after all, it's worries that give you that distinguished look that comes with age.

Habit #4: Workers are there to work

Even Google has abandoned the idea of giving people idea-time. Giving people the time to work on their own ideas seems like as stupid as sharing your with your competition to keep them alive. It is even worse, because you can always make more money, but you can't win back time. Once an hour of work is gone, it is really gone. So end this evaporation of working hours, and let them suffer as much as you have to pay for them. After all, you, as a manager, are the idea-person. If those people working for you would really have those good ideas then why are you their boss and not the inverse?

Habit #5: Be serious

Somebody told me once that seriousness is one of the greatest diseases of modern society. Well, let me tell you, if you are not serious about business, your customers or your staff will never take you serious. Seriousness creates the stress that makes people pay attention so that they won't do anything wrong, and stick within the rules. Seriousness is the tool that creates the fear that you want in your people, because fear creates obedience. You don't want your people to laugh at their silly mistakes, or worse laugh at your mistakes and put your words in perspective. What you say is absolute, not relative! After all, you are the manager, and they are not.

Habit #6: "Divide et impera"

Flavius Josephus already described the strategy in his book *De Bello Judaico*. Divide and rule is a strategy as old as the Roman Empire, and they knew how to rule. What worked then, still works now. It is conflict between the people below you that keeps you in control.

Habit #7: Ignore their input

The best thing I ever did was hiding a shredder in the idea box. While people thought this was an intelligent idea box that immediately processed and scanned their ideas, their submissions were immediately shredded to pieces. When people come to you to give their opinion, or worse, their ideas, it means a few things. For a start, it means that they do not have enough work on their hands. The ideas they propose to you, must come from somewhere, and usually it comes from valuable time they stole from your company because they have been doing nothing instead of working as is stated in their employment contract. Secondly, and worse, when they submit an idea to you, they expect you to do something with it. Now hold on, who do they think is in control here? Right, you are! So if their idea would be so wonderful, why is it that you haven't thought about it before they could? Probably because the idea is a waste of company time and resources in the first place.

Habit #8: You are the Absolute Ruler

After all, you are the manager, and that is for a very good reason. You are not the manager through election; you are not the manager with your own departmental parliament. You are the chosen one! Democracy does not have its place in profitable, commercial organizations. So you do not have to explain your decisions. You do not have to let others influence your decisions. Be aware, at the end of the day, it is your ass if things go wrong. When shit hits the fan, it will be your job and your money that is on the line.

Those who do let their workers advise them, should think about the motivations that underpin the advice. My friend, they are after your job, and the sooner it becomes vacant the better. So think again, before you follow that advice from your friendly, experienced and wise employee.

Habit #9: When spotting danger, appoint a committee

The biggest danger that threatens your job, is risk. It is everywhere, and your people will gladly take risk if you allow them to. So it is your task to make sure that nobody takes any risk at all. But you can't be 100% sure, can you? The first important task here is to cover yourself, so that if someone takes a risk, it is their job that is on the line, not yours. Corporate governance literature as well as compliance literature is a good place to start, but does not go far enough. In addition to that, you need a myriad of rules, regulations, processes and procedures. Lots of norms and standards will help too. And your most important resource here is the set-up of committees, especially with lots of people from multiple departments and high positions, who have no expertise whatsoever on the topic that it is about. It also helps to throw in a few people with uninformed opinions, as well as some legal advisors. Remember to put in your committees more than one from the same kind but with opposite characters and positions. This way you make sure that they will disagree and keep debating until the opportunity that drives the risk is gone. If you are still afraid that something good may come out of this effort – suppose that the risk is associated with a really good idea or a unique opportunity – then let everyone sign a non-disclosure agreement upfront, with severe penalties.

Now really

If you, like us at [Braindrums](#), are not the kind who subscribe to all or any of the above, there is still hope. We do believe in the need for **creativity at the workplace** and can help you to create stimulating, innovative and **creative climates** and cultures in teams, departments and organisations. We use effective and easy to use tools to evaluate just how creative a climate within an organisation, a department or a team can be. We compare your climate with the climate of truly innovative as well as stagnating companies, to see where you should focus on to improve the **climate for creativity** in your team, your department or your organisation. Based upon this evaluation, we construct an action list together with the management and the team to improve the climate. A limited number of you can **try this tool for free**, so [contact us](#) now!