

Using Creativity In the Comm Center

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CREATIVITY IS SEARCHING FOR ANSWERS AND GENERATING QUESTIONS, WHICH CAN BE VERY BENEFICIAL IN THE CALL CENTER ENVIRONMENT.

CREATIVITY IS NOT WHAT YOU THINK IT IS, AND IT ISN'T JUST NICE to have in the workplace—it's essential. How do we identify a creative person? Do we really understand the creative process and what being creative is? Following are the results of a survey with the question, "What are the qualities of the most creative person you know?"

High self-esteem, self-motivated, artistic, flexible, smart, funny, spontaneous, confident, not worried about other opinions, hard working, bright, different thinking, busy, does a wide variety of things, open-minded, bold

We understand creative as it applies to art, what we need is a better understanding of creativity when it comes to thought. We need more unique contributions in our work and workplace because the only constant is change.

Defining Creativity

Many people recognize visual arts as creativity, but that's a limited way of thinking about creativity. You will be surprised by the many ways you can apply yourself to be more creative in your work. Following is a small example of the expanded definition of creativity

Ask ten people to identify a creative person, nine will describe an artist who draws, paints or does a craft of some sort. Every human with hands to hold a drawing instrument can draw. It isn't the inability to draw that restricts their creativity—it's their definition of draw. Any work of art is creative because it comes from nothing and is given form by someone. The product is the end result of the creative process—this creative process is the same for each person.

Where we become blocked is when we care more about the product than the process.

You exterminate your creative potential when you have expectations of how any artistic expression should look. Of course every artist has expectations, but you can free the creative spirit if your expectations are that the end result is not as important as the process you used to get there.

Idea Expression

Let's leave the visual artist expression to explore another edge of creativity—**idea creation**. Another aspect of a creative personality is the fluency with which he/she generates a number of new ideas. Not only does the creative person think of good ideas, but he/she also thinks of many ideas, explores and records them. This type of creativity is what enables a person to be a great leader. At work we often accept continuing problems with *"Oh well" or "I don't want to get involved, there may be negative consequences."* If you wish to be a more creative person at work, you must give yourself permission to explore any and all solutions by using critical thinking questions. Asking yourself the following questions regarding a particular problem or idea may help you find the creative answers you've been looking for:

- What would have to happen for this to change?
- What are we trying to do and how can it be done better?
- What is the interest in this?
- What would it look like if we...?
- What have we tried so far?
- What didn't work before and how can we do it differently?
- What haven't we tried?

When do we need idea generation? We think it's only to solve a problem. If that were true there would never be a CAD. Incident cards, and status cards seemed to work, but CAD worked better, faster and could generate a lot more ways for the important data we were gathering to be used. We wanted to use new technology to do something better. You can purposely look at anything and wonder—is there a better way?—without trying to solve a problem.

In call taking we call it perception correction—or allowing new information or the elimination or setting aside of existing thoughts, beliefs or perceptions in consideration of others.

Mutating Existing Creations

Another definition of personal creativity would include the ability to take existing objects and combine them in different ways for new purposes. One more simple definition of creativity is the action of combining previously unconfined elements. For work, what is already being done—or what combination of things is being done—which could have different purposes if someone allowed for new thought?

Making the Old New

When 9-1-1 first came into our area we were asked to count the number of calls we had and the amount of time we spent on the air, which included transmissions that weren't logged and calls that were generated on outside lines. We didn't have any way to do this until someone came up with an old-to-new use idea. We dug out the old punch time clocks and punched a card everytime we answered the phone, and had a card for the times we were dispatching. This worked very well because we only had to gather stats for one week. This is just an example of how you can mutate things to fit your needs.

Question Status Quo

Another way of looking at creativity is playing with the way things are interrelated. Creativity is the ability to generate novel and useful ideas and solutions to everyday problems and challenges—by thinking differently—by not accepting the status quo.

Here is an example. Some female police officers were complaining about the gear they had to wear that seemed to be designed for men, not people with hips. They were pointing to the bruises on their hips from the gun belt. They also complained that male officers didn't have to go through the struggle they did trying to use the ladies' room. Most creative ideas come from need (necessity is the mother of invention). What are some ideas you have for this problem?

When faced with a new roadblock, think beyond the status quo—but not to challenge the authority or need—to identify the interest in keeping things the same and satisfy the interest while making the needed changes to make it all better.

Remember that there is no particular benefit in keeping things the same except that change makes many people uncomfortable. *"If it ain't broke, don't fix it."* We've heard that in relation to implementing 9-1-1 and if we waited for everything to be broken before we fixed it, we would be living in chaos.

How to Push Creativity

To quote Charles Cave, *“All people can be creative, but those who are recognized as being creative have an awareness that others don’t. Creative people seem to be able to tune in more to their thought patterns and give self-permission to expand and explore other ideas or thoughts without reservations.*

His ideas parallel the goals we have for thinking outside the box. Being aware is at the root of intelligence. Awareness plays a major role in many aspects of thinking and learning. Perhaps the culmination of awareness of consciousness, metacognition, styles, language and problem-solving skills, is the expression of creativity, which can be learned. You are now more aware of a greatly expanded definition of creativity.