



**Sparking
Workplace
Creativity and
Innovation -
a Business
Owners Guide**

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- As a business owner, igniting the creative and innovative spark within yourself and your team is crucial.
- This guide is designed to help you uncover and cultivate these qualities, to help transform your business and drive success.

WHAT IS CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION?

- At a high level, creativity is the ability to transform inputs into different outputs.
- It is important to note that creativity is not just about producing something new or different; it is also about finding unique solutions to problems and making connections between seemingly unrelated things.
- This could be seeing relationships between things that are not related on the surface or identifying connections where others might not see them.
- On the other hand, innovation is the implementation of those creative ideas into tangible products, services, or processes.
- There is also an element of newness to innovation. It is about creating something that never existed before or improving upon something in a way that pushes boundaries and creates meaningful change.

Why Are Creativity and Innovation Important?

- Creativity and innovation are vital for progress and growth, impacting every aspect of your business. Without them, your business may stagnate.
- Both creativity and innovation require a willingness to explore and take risks. You need to be willing to consider new things and test new ideas. To risk new experiences and outcomes.
- To spark new ideas, you may need to change your current methods, letting go of traditional ways of thinking, embracing flexibility and be willing to experiment with a new variety of frameworks and ideas.
- **Creativity and innovation thrive in collaborative environments that embrace diversity to create unity.** As multiple people contribute diverse perspectives, creativity and innovation will flourish.
- Innovation can only happen when people are willing to challenge the status quo so encourage your team to question the established norms and best practices - they may no longer be your businesses best practices.

*“You cannot solve a problem with
the same level of thinking that created it.”*

(attributed to Albert Einstein)

How to Spark Creativity and Innovation

- Now that we have discussed what creativity and innovation are and why they matter, let's talk about how to spark creativity and innovation in your business, for you and your team.

Strategy #1: Embrace Curiosity

- Curiosity is the fuel for creativity and innovation. It is essential to have a curious mindset, always questioning and seeking knowledge.
- How do you develop curiosity in your business? **One of the best ways is by constantly asking questions and encouraging your team to adopt a curious mindset.** Never stop questioning. Never stop looking for new, and different ways to think. Never accept things the way they are. Continuously look for new and diverse ways to understand and approach the work you and your team do.

Strategy #2: Create a Safe Space

- For creativity and innovation to thrive, individuals need to feel safe to express their ideas without fear of judgment, criticism or ridicule from management or colleagues.
- **When individuals feel safe, they are more likely to take risks, think outside the box and explore.** They are more likely to pursue novel ideas and venture down valuable rabbit trails they may otherwise avoid. Negativity about new ideas stifles creativity and innovation.

Strategy #3: Surround Yourself With Diverse Perspectives

- When you surround yourself with people who think differently than you, you are more likely to come up with unique solutions and ideas.
- Examine your current circle of influence in your business. Is it diverse? Are you getting perspectives from different individuals, within different departments? Or are you getting the same type of perspective from all those around?

- Who can you add to your circle of influence to help expand you and your team's thinking? What types of diverse perspectives can you bring into your business? Seek out individuals who challenge your thinking, your team's thinking, and your general business thinking, so you're pushed to see things from different angles.

Strategy #4: Experiment, Fail, Learn, Repeat

- If you are not willing to fail, you'll never succeed. The reality is that mediocrity is safe. It is easy to stay within the lines, stay comfortable and follow the status quo.
- Encouraging a culture where failure is seen as a step towards development and growth helps embrace creativity and innovation.
- Remember - failure is not a reflection of a person's worth or intelligence. It is a necessary step in the process of progression.
- It can therefore be helpful to reframe failure as a step in the right direction. An opportunity to learn and improve, moving you, your team, and your business closer to breakthrough ideas.

"I have not failed.

I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work."

(attributed to Thomas Edison)

Strategy #5: Optimise Your Environment

- The work environment you and your team are in can play a crucial role in creativity and innovation. When it comes to sparking new ideas, surroundings can either hinder or enhance the process.
- Create spaces and time that inspire thought and allow time for quiet reflection.
- This does not mean that you need to become minimalist to be creative and innovative. It does mean that you need to recognise how the surroundings impact on you and your team.
- **Optimising the environment to create a mental space conducive to creativity and innovation is key.** This is a personal choice, though a good starting point is asking your team what works for them; it may involve practicing meditation, taking breaks to go for a walk in nature, engaging in physical activity, or surrounding yourself with inspiring and thought-provoking objects.

Strategy #6: Utilise Mind Mapping

- Mind mapping is a way of visually organising and connecting thoughts and ideas. It is a great tool for sparking creativity and innovation because it allows you to see the connections between different concepts and come up with new, innovative solutions.

- By utilising mind mapping, you and your team can generate new and creative ideas and see how they all connect and work together to form a cohesive strategy.

Strategy #7: Take a Break

- Have you ever noticed how you have a lot of promising ideas when you are not actively focusing on a problem? **Why does this happen?**
- It is because when you are not actively thinking about a problem, your mind has the opportunity to make connections and form new ideas without any restrictions or pressure.
- **So, if you or your team are feeling stuck or overwhelmed with trying to produce new ideas, take a break.** Go for a walk, listen to music, meditate, or do something completely unrelated to the problem at hand.

Strategy #8: Establish Constraints

- You may be tempted to think that creativity and innovation have no boundaries or limitations, but this is not always the case. **Constraints can force us to think outside the box and find unique ways to work within the given parameters.**
- When you are in the middle of the creative process, look for ways to establish reasonable constraints on yourself or your team. This may look like creating a deadline, limiting the number of inputs you utilise, or even limiting the budget for a project.

Strategy #9: Collaborate and Brainstorm

- Two (or more) minds are better than one, and when you bring together a group of diverse individuals with different backgrounds, perspectives, and skill sets, magic can happen.
- **Collaboration allows for the sharing of ideas and insights.** It allows everyone to benefit from the experience and creativity of others. It creates unity.
- We have touched on this already, but when collaborating and brainstorming, it is important to create a safe and open environment where everyone feels comfortable sharing their thoughts without fear of judgment.

Strategy #10: Embrace a Growth Mindset

- **The reality is that creativity and innovation are like muscles.** The more they are used, the stronger they get. Or, to put it another way, the more a person's creative muscles are exercised, the more naturally they will flex and produce innovative ideas.
- So, embrace a growth mindset throughout your business and team when it comes to creativity. Believe that you can constantly improve and develop your creative skills.

- If you are struggling to be creative, think of it as if you were doing a hard physical workout. You would not quit just because it was hard or an assumption that you could not get any stronger.

Strategy #11: Boost Your Mood

- Research has shown that a heightened, positive mood can increase problem-solving abilities. Of course, that raises the question of how to boost mood. Tried and tested ideas, include:
 - Practicing gratitude
 - Use positive affirmations daily, or before creative brainstorming sessions
 - Engaging in physical activity
 - Spending time in nature
 - Surrounding yourself with positive people
 - Engaging in a creative activity
- If you or members of your team find yourselves in a less-than-good mood, creativity is unlikely to flow. It may be helpful to pause your creative activities and take the time to boost that positive mood.

WHERE WILL CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION TAKE YOU?

- By continuously nurturing and cultivating our creativity and innovation skills, we can unlock new levels of potential within ourselves and our team.
- This persistent effort will lead to fresh ideas and insights, driving our business forward in ways we never thought possible.
- Remain positive, remain persistent. Do not stagnate. And keep pushing the boundaries of what is possible.

*"Keep your thoughts positive because your thoughts become your words.
Keep your words positive because your words become your behavior.
Keep your behavior positive because your behavior becomes your habits.
Keep your habits positive because your habits become your values.
Keep your values positive because your values become your destiny."*

(Mahatma Gandhi)