

**"REAPING THE WHIRLWIND: MANAGING  
CREATIVE PEOPLE"**

by

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**REAPING THE WHIRLWIND:  
MANAGING CREATIVE PEOPLE**

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## ABSTRACT

This article addresses the challenge that lies in transforming creative but unorthodox methods into constructive organizational action. Creative people are often considered to be trouble-makers, but in fact they can be a source of innovative products or processes for their organization. The paper begins with a discussion of what creativity really is, looking at both the populist notion and the idea of genius. Subsequently, some of the early developmental elements which contribute to an individual's creativity are explored. Creativity takes one of two possible forms as a result of these developmental experiences: constructive or reactive. Examples of well-known artists, writers and composers are given to illustrate these forms of creativity. Finally, the article shows how an awareness of the roots of creativity is essential in an organizational setting. Concrete suggestions are given for managing creative people in the context of organizational, cultural, and leadership variables.

Managing logical and orderly left-brain oriented people is a pleasant experience. The organizational world suits their specifications. They like analyzing anything and everything; rules and regulations make them feel secure. They do what is proper and correct; they conform. In contrast, creative right-brain people are a pain in the neck; their drummer is slightly off beat. These people can be baffling as their way of doing things is much more disorderly, unorthodox and unconventional. And their playful, intuitive methods can wreak havoc in a by-the-book organization. Their thought patterns are divergent, relational, and associative; they deal with problems by circling them in a zig-zag, erratic fashion until they light upon a solution.

But before concluding that the successful organization should root out all right-brain oriented people like bad weeds, consider this: if you want your organization to go places, if you want to succeed in the global corporate Olympics, you need these creative types. Organizational mavericks are often a source of innovative products or processes that will help you best the competition.

### *Characteristics of Creative People*

What differentiates these creative people from common mortals? How can you recognize them? How can you acquire and nurture them in your organization?

In this day and age it is sometimes hard to know what creativity really is. We have a tendency to overuse the word. It is tempting to attribute the potential for creativity to just about anyone. It is even considered derogatory to label someone "uncreative." After all, anything is feasible in this age of self-help books and seminars. The power of positive thinking is virtually guaranteed to boost creativity, for only a small amount of money down and low monthly payments.

Hucksters of creativity will argue: "You too can become a famous rocket scientist! You want to become a Nobel prize winner? Just follow these five easy steps. The reason you aren't there yet is because you haven't realized your creative potential. You have it in you. You only need the proper conditions for your genius to be released and expressed. Your right-brain potential is there, just waiting to be actualized!"

Thus speak modern-day snake oil salesmen. But what does such an attitude toward creativity imply? All too often the definition of creativity veers from the sublime to the ridiculous as people weigh the value of creative basket weaving, creative Monopoly, or even creative sex. The point that is often overlooked, however, is: if anybody can join the creativity "club," then is it worth the trouble?

There is something to be said about the populist notion of creativity in that most individuals do possess a certain amount of unrealized potential and could be more productive, given the right circumstances. Skills can be improved, talent developed. Real creativity, however, necessitates special gifts. I feel that creativity is a rare, and often fleeting, quality; something to refer to with a capital C. Truly creative people experiment constantly and apply their knowledge in very novel ways, or throw out preconceived ideas altogether. This goes beyond innovation, or the implementation of good ideas; in fact, established patterns are shattered to produce new paradigms.

I believe art and music, inventions and discoveries, new theories of chaos and order require true creativity. The airplane is an example of a truly creative idea, as was the concept of the wheel in its time. The discovery of penicillin is in the same class as a Mahler symphony, to my mind. The conceptualizations of creative geniuses such as Copernicus, Newton, Darwin, Freud and Einstein form some of the basis principles of Occidental culture.

I see creative people as individuals who possess a considerable amount of conceptual fluency in that they are able to produce highly unusual ideas very quickly. Wherever a problem may lead, they will follow, and in fact are often able to mentally leap ahead to imagine solutions. They have an enormous amount of energy and willpower. They are also very independent in their judgement, are non-conformist, have a sense of playfulness, accept their own impulses, and possess a rich, even bizarre, fantasy life.

Let me elaborate on some of the characteristics of creative people. First, I have to emphasize the importance of curiosity. Truly creative people are very inquisitive. They are also intuitive. Remember, that intuition is just another form of reasoning, albeit one which depends on unusual channels of information. Their heightened intuition makes creative people very sensitive to the stimuli around them. They notice things that would be unconsciously screened out by others. This is partly explained by the fact that they are able to handle cognitive complexity; they can visualize forests, and at the same time, recognize the individual trees. They recognize patterns where others would hear cacophony. Moreover, they internalize these impressions and make connections. There is also a visionary element to their behavior. They are driven by a sort of "magnificent obsession" towards distant goals. They are persistent and compulsive, and are not afraid to take risks. And, although their work may seem effortless to an uninformed observer, in fact it is often a long series of advances and set-backs. Truly creative people are also very autonomous, independent people; conformity and social norms are not for them. They dare to be different. They don't feel the need to fit in. Creative people are also characterized by a high tolerance for ambiguity; they do not aim for premature closure. They can tolerate the tension and suspense which comes with leaving questions temporarily unresolved. On the other hand, they are prone to anxiety, perhaps because they are not satisfied with what they produce.

### *Stimulating Creativity*

So what about the rest of us? Is it possible to be creative to a small degree and make the most of it? Evidence shows that **there is some hope**. Attempts to stimulate the process in less gifted mortals can yield positive results, for example, more divergent (associative) thinking processes in contrast to more analytical (convergent) thinking. Divergent thinking tends to be much more fluid and flexible, and is associated with creativity.

At the beginning of this article I poked fun at some of the garden-variety creativity-boosting techniques currently on the market. Frequently, participants in these activities may be left feeling that the only divergence that took place was between them and their money. However, there is a certain value to some of the more serious of these techniques. Although they will not produce an Einstein or a Goethe, they may help change perceptions, opening up a world beyond black or white. At the very least, they help people to recognize creativity in others.

Some of the valid techniques for encouraging creativity include: brainstorming -- generating new ideas by asking a group of people to suspend critical judgement; attribute listing -- studying all the basic attributes, properties and specifications of a problem and searching for alternatives or modifications; synectics -- using analogy and fantasy to make the unfamiliar familiar and vice versa; and lateral thinking -- rearranging information into new patterns. To be honest, it is sometimes hard to differentiate precisely between these various techniques. What they seem to have in common, however, is a suspension of premature critical judgement to enable the free flow of associations.

Some people advocate using mind-expanding drugs as a way of stimulating creativity. At times doing so can lead to interesting results. Coleridge's report of his

opium-induced dream of Kubla Khan is a good case in point, as is Aldous Huxley's description of his experiments with LSD.

In trying to distill the essence of creativity, researchers have suggested that there is sequence of steps in the creative process. According to them, evolution from idea to eventual outcome involves a number of distinct phases. First, there is the preparation phase (gathering information about the problem), then the incubation phase (mulling over unrelated bits of information, getting the unconscious to work on the problem), followed by the illumination phase (think of Archimedes running through the streets of Syracuse screaming "Eureka" after figuring out how to weigh the golden crown of the king) and the last step is, of course, the verification process (testing the findings).

Some people describe the process even more succinctly as the three "Bs" of creativity. These "Bs" refer to situations that stimulate the creative flow. **Bed**, being in the twilight zone between falling asleep and waking up, or even dreaming. Here the mind is cut loose from preconceptions and really starts to float. Wasn't it the German scientist Kekule who, having dreamt about a snake, was able to figure out the composition of the benzene ring when he woke up? And we already know what happened to Archimedes in the **Bath**. The last B stands for **Bus** (and in fact includes cars), one of the few places where one can be alone or can at least ignore people (unless one has a car telephone or fax, of course). In these three situations an ambience is created that is almost hypnotic. It is the kind of setting where bisociative thinking -- making connections where none existed before -- is most likely to occur.

Delving further into the creative process, looking how a person became an "Eureka shrieker" or has an "AhHa" experience, it is interesting to note the frequency of "accidents." Discovery often requires an element of serendipity. Creative people see possibility in unusual occurrences, where others might let them slip by. Think of the consequences if Alexander Fleming hadn't paid attention to what was happening in his

petri dishes. No breakthrough in 20th-century medicine was more driven by chance than the discovery of penicillin. You may recall that the first detected penicillin spore was borne by a random London breeze through an open window into one of Fleming's dishes. Fleming was able to make sense out of the strange mold that resulted. He was ready for discovery in that he had been working almost exclusively on this type of experiment. As the saying goes, if your mind is a hammer, everything you see looks like a nail. Pasteur once said "chance favors the prepared mind."

The creative person is a paradox: he or she is a rebel against conformity, but at the same time very attuned to whatever happens in the environment. Creative individuals are extremely sensitive to the changing needs of their art or science. They are very aware of the fact that there is dissatisfaction with the status quo. They are often the first to recognize that there is a need for revision. Not only that, they do something about it. The truly creative person, to use some hyperbole, is like a Prometheus, whose name, after all, literally means "wise before the events." It is as if creative people have some form of prophetic power to look into the future.

### *Playing in a Transitional World*

How is it that some people acquire this "big C" of creativity? What singles them out? Is it a question of inheritance, determined by biological law? Or is it more a result of the kind of developmental experiences these people were exposed to? An interesting corollary question in this context is the connection between creativity and madness. Given a creative person's often unorthodox behavior, it is understandable that such associations come to mind. Where do we draw the line between genius and madness?

Without getting too deeply into the nature-nurture controversy, we can safely assume that genetic factors do play a role. There is a certain biological endowment we all start with. But superimposed on this biological matrix are our developmental experiences. Even with similar biological endowment, these early experiences lead to

differences between individuals. Of interest to us are the factors in a creative person's upbringing which contributed to their genius.

Think back to when you were growing up. You may remember that as a child, you dealt with two worlds: there was the everyday world with all its demands, and an intrapsychic world, a world of inner reality, where drives, wishes and needs ruled. These outer and inner worlds would later become separate and distinguishable, but as a child, a third world existed for you: a space of fantasy and illusion, a place where connections were drawn between the two spheres.

Do you remember the way you played and created an imaginary world? It was an illusionary place between reality and fantasy. It was a world occupied by "transitional objects" such as strings, blankets, dolls, and other play things. To use the words of the psychoanalyst Winnicott, this world is "the intermediate area of experience between the thumb and the teddy bear." The capacity to explore and investigate, the development of an inner sense of cohesion and an external sense of reality, had its beginning in this illusionary space. Familiar objects help a child link their outer and inner realities.

This transitional space plays a major role in our development in a very basic way: it serves to help us establish a sense of self-esteem. For most of us, the transitional world is part of the process of resolving the developmental tasks of childhood to arrive at adulthood and maturity with a unique sense of self. For creative people, however, there is a difference. For most of them, the process never reaches closure, and so they do not give up their transitional world. Consequently, their involvement in the transitional space will continue to affect their behavior throughout their lives.

Parents play a substantial role in this "play area" of the mind. They can be encouraging and help the free flow of associations. They can also stifle it by not giving

the developing child enough psychic space. If they are not willing to join in the illusionary processes, they may damn up their child's free play of fantasy and illusion. If parents encourage a child's transitional world, it becomes an incubator for creative thought. This is where such processes as symbolization, make-believe, illusion, day dreaming, playfulness, curiosity, imagination, and wonder all begin. Every human being has these qualities to some extent, but truly creative people are able to re-enter this world as adults much more easily than the rest of us. Consequently, they are familiar with the irrational in themselves and are more in touch with their unconscious. And they never really out-grow this capacity for introspection. As adults, they are able to reach into this transitional world to find unorthodox ideas and solutions. In this context psychoanalysts have written about the notion of "regression in the service of the ego," meaning the ability to move back and forth between these different worlds, and making the most of the interface.

### *Two Roads to Creativity*

Broadly speaking, a creative person will follow one of two paths: either developing a constructive form of creativity, or, in case of the less fortunate, a more reactive form. In both instances, we are dealing with people who are unwilling to give up their transitional space, but there is an important difference between them.

In the case of constructive creativity, we see a situation where play was encouraged when the person was a child. Parents of this type of person probably played language games with their children. They took the child's transitional objects seriously, not treating them as something that needed to be cleaned or thrown away. Furthermore, the parents took part in the child's games and applauded curiosity and inquisitiveness. The creative child's parents accepted imaginative and irrational communication; they enjoyed their child's nonsense. They rewarded independent achievement and didn't ridicule their child's mistakes. They gave their child credit for

accomplishments. Frequently we find that these parents were also role models for their children in that they were autonomous and imaginative themselves.

Of course, parents can push a child too hard, and overemphasized creativity to the point that the child feels inadequate. This situation often occurs when a parent has grandiose ambitions for their child in an area in which they themselves have felt frustrated. They want their child to succeed in their place. But in general, gentle, supportive encouragement is appropriate.

For people who are reactively creative, however, the situation is quite different. For them, the transitional world is a refuge from the painful reality of the external world. John Milton's words in *Paradise Lost* are descriptive of this situation:

The Mind is its own place, and in itself  
Can make a Heaven of Hell, and a Hell of  
Heaven.

The transitional space becomes a safe haven from the painful experiences they had to live through while growing up. But the retreat to this "haven" is not always a panacea; a psychic equilibrium cannot always be maintained. At times, various psychological symptoms may result. For example, a number of researchers have shown that there is a higher degree of mood disorders among creative people than is the case for the general population. Interestingly enough, the linkage between mood disorders and creativity may explain some of the characteristics that contribute to extraordinary talent. Among other things, people who suffer from mood disorders have a higher degree of emotional reactivity, that is to say, they are highly sensitive to external and internal stimuli. Moreover, they have a greater capacity for absorption. This may give them superior concentration; they often have an unusual intensity of focus. In addition,

their thought patterns are less structured. This quality gives them free-flowing access to their own unconscious, and facilitates novel associations.

What is this reactive mode all about? Why is a transitional space so important to these people? What makes their psychological equilibrium so precarious? Typically, we find that they are trying to cope with various forms of traumatic experience. Their environment somehow causes them to be chronically anxious. Giving free rein to their creativity is often their only method for coping with their fears.

The catalyst for their creative preoccupation is frequently something that happened early in their life, at a time when they were most susceptible. For example, the death of a caretaker or another child in the family, serious illness, deformity, excessive sibling rivalry, and external events such as war or being uprooted can be extremely traumatic for a child. Later life experiences, often of a similar nature, may preoccupy the creative adult. Outbursts of creativity seem to help this type of person manage free-floating anxiety and depression, and overcome their schizoid state. What stands central is their need for reparation, to find a creative solution to their internal struggle.

Examples of creative attempts at reparation are not hard to find in the arts. A common manifestation of this struggle is found in reproductions of internalized body image. Painters' self-portraits, for example, are usually a good "projective indicator" of their state of mind. Just look at the paintings of Munch, de Chirico, Schiele, or Frieda Kahlo. Munch once said, "disease and insanity were the black angels at my cradle." He had witnessed the death struggle of his mother when he was young, and it had a devastating effect on him. This experience may explain his brooding and cataclysmic style of painting. Schiele depicts himself in his paintings in castrated, deformed and mutilated states. A probable explanation is his troubled childhood, punctuated by the deaths of his father and four of his siblings, and a difficult relationship with his mother.

Kahlo, bedridden and incapacitated for long periods of her life (due to the after-effects of an accident, and to polio which she caught at a very young age), focused her work on distorted representations of the body. Depression and depersonalization were major elements in the personality of de Chirico. His estrangement from himself can be found reflected in his paintings, where themes of departure, melancholia, strangeness, eerie emptiness and stillness predominate. His work was probably influenced by his sister's death and his mother's strong rejection. Not much commentary is needed to explain the tragedy of self-fragmentation as reflected in the work of Van Gogh. In this case, emotional deprivation by a mourning mother, for whom he was supposed to be the replacement child to fill the emptiness left by the stillborn first Vincent, had a devastating psychological after-effect. Goya's illness, experienced later in life, had a dramatic impact on his style of painting. You don't have to be an expert to see the difference between his early and later period. A gruesome reminder of the change in style is reflected in his painting of Cronus eating his own children.

Painters are not the only ones affected by their life history. Many writers and composers try, in their creative productions, to master their internal struggle. Gogol was troubled by body image. It was undoubtedly his enormous nose that prompted him to write the story *The Nose*. Kafka's story *Metamorphosis* is very indicative of the kind of self-image he had. His description of his own transformation into a disgusting, monstrous insect doesn't need further analysis. It was certainly not the outcome of empathic parenting. Those who have read Kafka's *Letter to his Father*, explaining the kinds of terrors he suffered during childhood, know what I am talking about. In the case of Edgar Allan Poe we have a situation where his father deserted the family when he was two and his mother died of tuberculosis when he was three years old. The father and mother of the composer Johann Sebastian Bach died when he was only nine years old. What aggravated this dramatic situation was that not many of his seven siblings survived childhood. No wonder that we find so often in his music the themes of death and resurrection. Then we have Mahler and his *Kindertoten Lieder*. These

were composed for a reason. And we should not forget Ingmar Bergman, a man struggling with his antagonists from within, as represented by his stiflingly restrictive parents. This struggle led to highly neurotic but also extremely creative behavior. These are only a few examples; I could go on and on.

### *Creative Management*

Creativity, be it reactive or constructive, is not limited to the fine arts, however. The natural and social sciences also come to mind when talking about creativity. The construction of the first automobile, the discovery of quantum physics, and the design of the Eiffel Tower undeniably involved an element of genius. Business has its share of creative characters, but major contributions to the corporate world do not often create the same kind of excitement. Creativity in organizational design tends to be of a much more subtle nature. Does anyone remember the inventor of double bookkeeping? Who was the person who introduced time and motion studies? And what about the first designer of the divisionalized organizational structure or the matrix organization? All of these were creative steps.

There is also another catch to creativity in business. Artists and scientists often work in splendid isolation. This is rarely practical in a business setting. After all, organizations are composed of groups. And with groups come group dynamics. The highly touted ideal of team-spirit in organizations can create certain problems, particularly for the more creative types. As I mentioned earlier, they do not easily conform. A kind of Gresham's Law of Creativity might apply: in this case it is not bad money that drives out good money, but conformists who drive out the creative people. As I indicated in the opening sentences of this article, in many organizations creative people are seen as trouble makers. As a result, they do get into trouble and they leave.

How can one manage these mavericks and avoid the loss of potentially valuable people? What can organizational leaders do to attract, develop and keep creative

people in the organization? Perhaps it would be a good idea to think in terms of creative *management*.

The challenge to organizational leadership is to translate mavericks' spontaneous and impulsive behavior into constructive organizational action. Just as parents should encourage their children's imaginative play, senior executives have to develop conditions that stimulate innovation and unorthodox methods in their organization.

Richard Branson is good example of an extremely creative executive with an creative management style. Branson is the charismatic chairman of Virgin, an empire now best known (after having sold the record business) for its highly profitable airline and megastore retail chain. His way of running his empire has been extraordinary successful. He is not only one of the richest people in the world but also an international celebrity. In the U.K. Branson has reached folk hero status, and has been hailed in surveys as a role model not only for teenagers but also their parents. He has been nominated for awards for enterprise and been voted the most popular business man of the year. As an organizational designer he is highly unusual. He has no corporate headquarters (it used to be a houseboat on the Thames), something you would not expect from someone who employs 6000 people in more than 15 countries. Status and the perks of power are not for him. To Branson, decentralization is a religion. He strongly believes that when there are more than 75 people in a building they should be split into new entities, or they risk losing their identity. The company's operating style is characterized by informality, casual dress, a lack of hierarchy, a comfortable environment, and an absence of conformity. As a matter of fact, Branson makes it a point to attract mavericks to his company, a role he very much plays himself as his madder exploits, such as his balloon and speedboat adventures, illustrate. In the company lateral communication is the norm. Branson likes the idea of the boundaryless organization. He encourages people to move around; he doesn't want them to be stuck into narrowly defined jobs. He believes in organic growth, not in raiding other

businesses to get market share. Furthermore, when someone has a creative idea, he feels there should always be resources available to him or her. In that respect he serves as a super project champion, nurturing others to develop ideas and brings these to fruition. He likes people to take risks, but he also likes to manage the risks. And the reward systems for people who do so are designed accordingly: individuals who have creative ideas for new businesses will get a piece of the action. It is his way of holding on to his executives; he wants them to become millionaires under the Virgin umbrella. Basically, he is trying to create in his company a community of people where everyone collaborates and helps each other and at the same time has fun and excitement. Having fun is a central value of the corporate culture. And as a well-known prankster he often sets the example. In emphasizing the importance of fun, he is following the simple school of thought that happy people are more productive people. Moreover, whatever Virgin is involved in, he wants the company to be the best, not necessarily the biggest. By setting high performance expectations, he encourages his people to rise to the challenge. His airline, Virgin Atlantic, is a good example of this philosophy.

So what can we learn from the Virgin case as far creative management is concerned? It demonstrates that to manage creatively, a number of organizational, cultural, and leadership steps have to be taken. First, looking at the **organizational** variables that make for a creative work place, it may be worthwhile to take a hard look at the structure. Is it rather bureaucratic or more organic? Obviously, a fluid, less rigid, boundaryless structure is to be recommended. A highly formalized environment tends to have a stifling effect on creativity. It also helps to decentralize the organization. Decentralization tends to be linked with accountability, responsibility and having a direct feedback link, and a result is a feeling of control. Having a sense of control over one's environment, as stress research has indicated, creates a buffer against stress, and makes one feel better. Feeling good will have a positive effect workwise.

There tends to be little room for creativity in strictly hierarchical organizations with many layers of management. To get the best out of creative people, a high degree of freedom is key. These people, in particular, need to feel that they are in charge of their work and ideas. Excessive reporting and standardized procedures will prove to be counterproductive.

On the other hand, the company should have performance evaluation and compensation systems that reward innovation. Is there an appropriate reward system in which the creative people behind a successful project are singled out for recognition? Do they share in the perks and bonuses in appreciation for their contribution? Potential rewards, however, are not the main motivator for creative people. It is much more important to them to see their ideas realized. But giving these successful contributors a piece of the action can do wonders for their sense of equity.

There should also be frequent and easy lateral communication in the organization. "Bypassing" should not be a dirty word. People who work in the organization should not be forced to go through specific channels. Jobs should not be narrowly defined. Task interdependency and job rotation can also be useful; knowing the details of other jobs leads to a broader point of view. The existence of multi-disciplinary teams are also a plus. These are all good ways to stimulate learning and new ideas.

Human resource management is another critical area. Efforts should be made to accept diversity. There should be an openness to non-conformists in the organization. Their ideas make for intellectual ferment. They are most likely the ones who ask the unusual questions. They may also be the ones who come up with more effective ways of organizing and they may identify new product niches. There should be a place for them.

There are some other organizational issues worth considering. For example, what are the physical facilities like? Is the work done in the kind of environment that stimulates the creative juices? Or is the work place such that it reminds you of one of these Stalinist structures so often encountered in Eastern Europe?

Last, but certainly not least of the organizational variables, it is very important that the company has the necessary resources, meaning financial, material, and human. Are facilities or funds available for work that initially appears unprofitable or unrelated to the company's vision? Are these resources relatively easy to come by? A person who must continually fight for resources and time to commit to a project is being mentally boxed in and is unlikely to produce much.

The corporate culture introduces another set of variables. What are the value and belief systems like? Does a risk-taking ethos exist in the company? Can people make mistakes? Remember, if people are not allowed to make mistakes, they will not make any decisions or take any risks. Creative people won't last long in this situation.

Access to information is another important point. A company culture that generates secrecy may be good for building paranoia but will not make for a cooperative and collaborative atmosphere. It does not allow the kind of ambience which encourages people to help each other. On the contrary, it is more likely to lead to turf wars.

Actually, many of these dimensions can be summarized under the word trust. If there is not a sense of trust in the organization, if people are preoccupied with protecting their back, the psychological contract between individual and organization will break down, and creativity will be one of the first casualties.

In making all these suggestions, we should not forget (again, remember Virgin) about the fun factor. Normally, having fun rarely comes to mind when we think about organizations. A light-hearted attitude toward work helps avoid a build-up of stress and tension. And in the long run, people who have fun are more creative and usually work harder.

Finally, I should mention that a key value of corporate culture should be openness to change. Executives have to create a Protean organization, one that has the capacity to learn and change. Where there is no change, there can be no creativity.

The third variable which can stimulate creativity in organizations is the role of **leaders**. What is the leadership style like in an organization? Is it democratic and participative or is it rather autocratic? Naturally, creative people feel much more at ease with the former. Autocratic leadership will kill creativity. People will not question the way things are done; they will conform. It is important that people have the feeling that they can disagree.

What about shared vision? Do people have a good idea of what the organization is trying to accomplish? Are goals clear enough? Of course, I am not saying that these goals should be very detailed. Some form of general direction is needed, however, and can often be provided by role models, mentors or idea champions. Whatever name they may be given, an organization needs such people around to set an example.

Training and dedication play important roles in the generation of new ideas. A creative outcome may look accidental, but usually it is the result of a lot of preparation and hard work. Of course, there is an element of luck involved, but as I have discovered personally, the harder you work, the luckier you get. Not only must a person be well prepared, but also willing to try and try again, in spite of the set-backs.

Creative people should be challenged and made to feel essential to the organization. Top management must empower their people by expressing their expectation that people will do creative work. And leaders should be prepared to nurture the crazy ideas people may come up with. If you set high expectations and provide the necessary resources, people try to oblige.

### *Watching the Danger Signs*

Creativity in organizations is a very delicate flower. Not much is needed to kill it. If you are not careful, the creative people will leave, or even worse, will never have been attracted to the organization in the first place. Here the attitude of the organizational leadership is critical. Leaders should be quite aware of the attitude they disseminate in their organization. They should not forget that they are the ones who set the tone. For example, a belief system that says that there is only one way of doing things, that there is only one right answer to a problem, precludes creativity by definition. Leaders who cultivate the "not-invented-here" syndrome can have a very negative effect. A related problem is a kind of parochialism where people say that something is not their area. Venturing out on uncharted ground is seen as too risky. These attitudes should be interpreted as danger signs. And finally, some leaders I have met feel that play is frivolous; one should not be foolish. I advise them to keep in mind the creative person's need for a transitional space. If that is blocked how can one really be creative? To stimulate creativity, organizational leaders must be willing to accept underdeveloped ideas and bend the rules. They should tolerate ambiguity and show empathy. And they should be willing to make quick decisions, not proposing elaborate committees to study ideas. Last but certainly not least, as I have said before, they should allow mistakes (and not dwell on them.) Remember, chaos breeds life, while order breeds habit. Whereas your habits are very easy for your competition to copy, creative talent in your organization is a unique asset.

"When Alexander the Great visited Diogenes and asked whether he could do anything for the famed teacher, Diogenes replied, 'Only stand out of my light.' Perhaps someday we shall find the key to heightened creativity. Until then, one of the best things we can do for creative men and women is to stand out of their light." -- John W. Gardner