Creativity and innovation are considered to be key factors for achieving the sustained organizational competitive advantage in the new economy. Therefore, organizations need to continuously adapt, develop, create and innovate.

Since it is argued that employees' creativity makes an important contribution to organizational innovation, effectiveness and survival, there is a need for organizations to create the organizational contexts that are most supportive to idea generation and creative thinking. In other words, for employees to be creative there must be a work environment that supports the process of creativity.

Determinants of the work environment for creativity

All innovations begin with creative ideas. In this context, the term “creativity” is defined as the generation of ideas, and innovation is the implementation of these ideas. Thus, employee’s creativity is considered to be the production of ideas, products or procedures that are novel or original, and potentially useful to the organization. Much of the research on creativity often ends in the description of personal characteristics of the creative person, such as openness to new experiences, less conventional and conscientious, more self-confident, self-accepting, ambitious, dominant, hostile and impulsive.

Others emphasize motivational and social factors as the driving forces behind creativity. People who love their tasks can also become creative if they possess knowledge and skills in the domain and a certain degree of openness in thinking. Research in social psychology suggests that supportive behaviour on the part of others in the work place enhances employees’ creativity. In addition, the supportive behaviour of others outside the organization also has an impact on employees’ creativity.

Many suggest that employees will be creative when they are given adequate resources to conduct their work; when their work is intellectually challenging; and when they are given a high level of autonomy and control over their own work. In addition, organizational support and evaluation of new ideas are necessary in encouraging employees’ creativity.

On the other hand, it has been suggested that there are factors, like internal political problems, conservatism and rigid formal structures, that could impede creativity amongst individuals.

It is important to realize that the story of creativity has many paths with no real conclusions. With so many different antecedents of creativity, where should organizations begin? What environmental dimensions are most conducive to employees’ creativity? What are the environmental variables that might influence employees’ creativity in organizations? How can organizations assess the work environment dimensions which play a role in organizational creativity? An instrument, which assesses the dimensions of the work environment, and is deemed as essential for organizational creativity, is referred to as KEYS.

Determinants

Eight determinants (dimensions) for creativity in the work environment are measured by KEYS. Of the eight, six are referred to as “stimulant” dimensions and have a positive (+) influence on the creative work environment, while the remaining two are referred to as “obstacle” dimensions and have a negative (-) effect. The eight dimensions are:

1. Organizational encouragement (+)
2. Supervisory encouragement (+)
3. Work group supports (+)
4. Freedom (+)
5. Sufficient resources (+)
6. Challenging work (+)
7. Workload pressure (-)
8. Organizational impediments (-)
These dimensions do not emerge spontaneously or in a vacuum. They evolve out of the context, the social and work conditions of the organization and their impact is conditioned by the subjective perceptions of creative individuals whose experience is ruled by the history of their work environment.

“*There must be a dynamic interaction between leadership and creativity in supporting, encouraging and energizing the perceptions and the behaviours of employees that influence the creative work environment.*”

This draws attention to the roles played by leadership in developing and linking these perceptions for creativity. A leadership role of a facilitative kind fosters the generation of new (creative) outputs. Thus, there must be a dynamic interaction between leadership and creativity in supporting, encouraging and energizing the perceptions and the behaviours of employees that influence the creative work environment.

**Leading for creativity**

There are certain behaviours, which managers can exhibit to promote employees’ vigilance, independence, work autonomy and creativity, and it would be beneficial for managers to encourage employees’ self-observation, self-reinforcement, self-expectation and rehearsal. In other words, it is the self-management style that supports and encourages the reciprocal relationships among employees that are most important for creativity and the creative culture.

The art of leading creative organizations is the art of handling people and the task of leadership in such organizations is to provide the people with the work – environmental – conditions under which they can exercise their creativity. The role of the creative leader in an organization is to be the provider of resources, context and situation for enhancing employees’ creativity. Creative leaders should develop a specific behaviour and character of a supportive, facilitative kind that provides employees with goal clarity, autonomy, freedom, intellectual stimulation and fair evaluation as these are found to be conducive to creativity and productivity.

Moreover, the leadership style that recognizes and reinforces employees’ performance, such as encouraging self-reinforcement, can have a positive influence on workload pressure. It is possible that if a manager encourages employees to praise themselves for a job well done (positive self-reinforcement) and the job is urgent, then the employees’ perception of urgency in the work would enhance their motivation and creativity. On the other hand, the leadership style that criticizes and discourages employees’ poor performance (encouraging self-criticism) can have a negative influence on workload pressure. Self-criticism can affect people psychologically by leading them to believe that they cannot perform challenging and excessive or urgent work if the time in which to accomplish the task is perceived to be unrealistically short.

Leadership in a creative organization is largely a matter of giving employees resources, creative freedom, enthusiasm, support, a sense of ownership and encouragement. Thus, the role of the leader is to be the provider of a context and situation for creativity and productivity. The art lies in creating an organizational culture that reinforces reciprocally warm relationships and facilitates dialogue, a creative climate and innovativeness.

With so many different approaches to work performance, pinning down what is important to measure in an organization is a rather difficult task.

**Work outcomes**

Work outcomes, or organizational performance, are of considerable importance for quality of life, for national economies and for increasing organizational competitiveness in the rapidly changing global economy. Owing to its importance, the concept of measuring performance has received a great deal of attention in the last 20 years. Over those years, the concept of organizational performance has been used to evaluate and compare:

- different leadership styles;
- different types of organizational structures;
- different types of manufacturing practices;
- the different training and modelling techniques; and
- the different theories of motivation, the contributions of individual or organizational groups and a myriad other social phenomena.

This is a shortened version of “*Dispersed leadership predictor of the work environment for creativity and productivity*, which originally

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