

ENHANCING CREATIVITY – FIRST STEP TO INNOVATION

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Abstract: *It is commonly accepted nowadays that to achieve performance companies strive to innovate in this constantly changing economic environment. Therefore, it is a necessity for each manager to know how to increase employees' creativity in order to have sufficient and brilliant ideas for solving problems in innovative ways.*

This paper underlines the positive and negative factors influencing creativity from an individual, group and organizational perspective. Enhancing creativity within each organization member involves understanding of what creativity is, how it relates to physical, psychological and social influences and to understand how creativity happens. Creativity has its stages and factors required to release the innovative idea.

As every innovation process starts with an idea, understanding what influences the mind and how the idea appears is crucial for individual and organizational performance.

Keywords: creativity, innovation, idea generation, workplace

JEL Classification: O15, L20, M12

1. Introduction

The current economic situation is challenging companies to look for new ways to performance, like using creativity for driving to significant changes realized by organization's members, those in search for more efficient ways to accomplish success (Mayfield, M., 2009). Today's goal of every company should be to enhance a creative environment (Sloane, P.,

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2006). Moving from one state to another through innovative changes is the key for success (Martnes, Y., 2011).

Literature often speaks about creativity when discussing entrepreneurial dimension, which is a key feature to identify opportunities. Divergent thinking, generating ideas, finding solutions in a creative manner are required to keep on being competitive. Adaptation to environmental changes, the use of opportunities, keeping market position, are possible through the creative contribution of each member dedicated to organization vision and customer satisfaction (Hansen, D.J., Lumpkin, G.T., Gerald, E., 2011).

A particularly useful activity for the economy proves to be the ability to turn creative ideas into an innovative product. Therefore ideas generation is essential and request special attention. Moreover maintenance of a creative environment is a task for managers in order to foster an innovative organization, this requires understanding of creativity determinants and creativity process (Klijn, M., Tomic, W., 2010).

2. Creativity role in innovation process

Innovation means creating value through problem solving, creativity process being indispensable, also knowledge is requested to make better choices, to hence the need for lifelong learning is a demand too (Sehested, C., Sonnenberg, H., 2011). There are different types of innovation process, but in a basic form, innovation process takes place in three stages: idea generation, idea promotion and idea implementation (Paulsen, N., Maldonado, D., Callan, V.J., Ayoko, O., 2009). Every step is important and is essential in order to gain innovation. Idea generation is the stage when each person expressing those creative ideas is building the basement of innovation. The innovation, design by creativity minds, sustained by learning, and this in turn to meditation, influences the organization performance (Ho, L., 2011).

Creativity is considered the idea generation process that will lead to innovative ideas for organization performance (Sousa, C.M.P., Coelho, F., 2011), it is a function of personal values, organization commitment and customer orientation (Hansen, D.J., Lumpkin, G.T., Gerald, E., 2011).

The organization in which the diverse creativity is manifested by each member, recognizing innovation as a way to meet the customers' demands,

applies innovation as a tool for performance. Creativity does not come out just in the high level of organization, but from every member practicing it. Looking for new ways of doing things will refresh the organization, but this is possible just where organization policies are not a barrier for creativity rewarding only the rules. Each person has a proper name, which identifies his uniqueness and in the working place that person will find the unique way to carry out activities (Mayfield, M., 2009).

3. The physical, social and psychological creativity determinants

In the light of personal values, people evaluate others and themselves. Analyzing the social value system the social psychologist Shalom Schwartz developed a model of social values. This model underlines nine values: stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, conformity tradition, security, power, achievement and hedonism. It is considered that stimulation, self-direction and hedonism point out openness to change, and the opposite are conservatism evidenced by conformity, tradition and security. Universalism and benevolence emphasize self-transcendence, concern for others, and the opposite values being self-enhancement capitalized by achievement, power and hedonism. Through their study Sousa and Coelho (2011) reveal the negative influence of conservatism and self-enhancement on creativity, on the other hand organizational commitment and customer orientation positively influence creativity even reducing the negative effect of conservatism and self-enhancement on creativity (Hansen, D.J., Lumpkin, G.T., Gerald, E., 2011; Sousa, C.M.P., Coelho, F., 2011).

Given the psychological side of the personality, it is underlined the idea of a decision that an individual takes considering the act of creation. A person with a well-developed self-esteem will be responsible, self-control, these enhancing self-motivation and self-leadership. At work, people with a higher degree of self-management show a higher creativity level, but there must not be forgotten their need of support (Klijn, M., Tomic, W., 2010). The work of a person is not done only to meet some material needs through consume, but also to satisfy the spiritual needs for manifesting creative ideas and socializing. The person is considered predominantly as divine nature, for human spirit the essential needs are peace and the sense of self-value. Spiritual nature seeks for answers for 'to be' and is superior to

material nature that satisfies with 'to have'. The creative capacity of a person continues to be visible through his activities, extrapolating continually new possibilities, being a person in continuous change and improve. Human needs, are covered by consume, work and leisure, keeping a balance between them is expected (Sailer, K., 2011).

Of a person's ability, those generating creativity are motivation, skills and knowledge. Some other dimensions that may influence creativity are: gender, age, position in company, social status, experience, education and temperament (O'Boyle, E.J., 2011). Other determinants of creativity are: thinking style, flexibility, independence, emotions and attention. In terms of neurological appear to be related to creativity: the level of testosterone, DNA and the front of the right hemisphere of the brain (Klijn, M., Tomic, W., 2010).

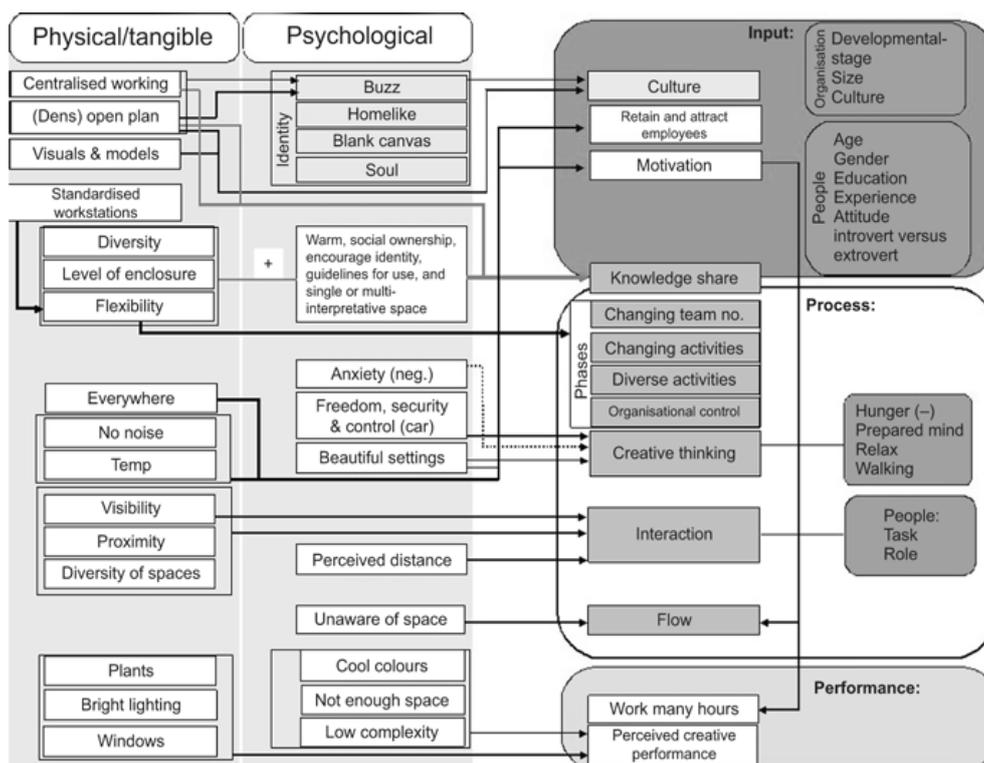


Figure no.1. Relations between creativity and the physical workplace

Source: Martens, Y., 2011, p.76

Furthermore the environment of each company has its influence on creativity. Some underline that creative thinking occurs in a stable place (Hansen, D.J., Lumpkin, G.T., Gerald, E., 2011). Within organization creativity at work is visible where there are spaces for concentration and communication, common spaces and private spaces. Frequently people are gathered to generate creative ideas using different exercises but the way people interact will influence the desired results (Sousa, C.M.P., Coelho, F., 2011).

It is crucial to realize the relation between workplace and creativity. The workplace has social-psychological dimensions as people perceive different the same workplace. Understanding the physical aspects and their meaning and relation with people perceptions is essentially to lean creative thinking. Figure no. 1 represents the relations between creativity and the physical workplace. This model was developed on the hypothesis that workplace influences organization, people, processes and performance, all these being in relation with creativity (Martnes, Y., 2011).

To measure organizational creativity is a difficult pressure burden, but the studies reveal the positive influence of physical space, the ambience, the moments spent in solitude, the silence, organizational behavior; and a negative influence as noise, inappropriate heat, anxiety, hunger, health problems, interruptions, insufficient space, too many people around; all identified by surveys and environment analysis (O'Boyle, E.J., 2011; Sousa, C.M.P., Coelho, F., 2011). Deadlines not infrequently kill creativity (Mayfield, M., 2009). It is considered that people could be encouraged to be creative using time pressure but studies do not back this idea (Sloane, P., 2006).

Given the creativity of a group, there are some specific influences such as climate group, feature of open group and interaction between members, collaboration and members' skills. There are emphasizes four necessary factors for group creativity: vision, participation in decision-making, comfortable climate in which irony and mockery do not meet, and support of new ideas. Various studies emphasize the need for reducing criticism and conflicts between group members. Having negative effects on creativity are considered also social factors, such as anxiety, comparing with others (Klijn, M., Tomic, W., 2010).

At the organization level creativity is influenced by organization culture, structure and strategy, available resources and degree of hierarchy,

these all can have a positive or negative effect on creativity. Organization culture should maintain the employees creativity, but sometimes just by rules, processes, systems, structures, can be an obstacle through their rigidity. But a dynamic, funny and confident environment increases the idea generation process (Klijn, M., Tomic, W., 2010; Sailer, K., 2011).

To determine the employees to act as entrepreneurs they need to be empowered, accountable and had given the freedom to succeed in the expected direction, but such authorization will occur successfully only where all the time is offered and gained confidence (Sloane, P., 2006). Rewarding and encouraging innovation carriers, also offering autonomy, seen as empowerment, are basic factors in strengthening creativity (Mayfield, M., 2009).

4. Creativity process

Creativity process involves various activities, such as finding information, organizing activities, correspondence, communication, identifying and solving problems, but in literature, it is mostly described as a process with four stages: preparation, incubation, illumination and validation (O'Boyle, E.J., 2011).

In 1891 Helmholtz's creativity model was following the steps: preparation, incubation and illumination; but later in 1926 Wallas added the verification step, and in 1996 Csikszentmihalyi had redefined the illumination step like insight, and the verification step to divide in evaluation and elaboration (Figure no. 2). Preparation stage involves identifying knowledge and necessary skills to determine and solve problems, followed by incubation step considered more of a subconscious state of knowledge associations, of peace of mind, a state in which light can occur at any time. After all these is expected that "aha" moment in which the idea is realized, aware the new idea, but for its most clear shaping it's necessary to go back in the peace of mind state. The new idea will be evaluated to certify its value and then follows the elaboration state, asking for a lot of attention to details and states of spirit (Martnes, Y., 2011). A specific feature of creative process is self-forgetfulness, flow, unaware of space, that state when the person is fully involved and time no longer has its place (O'Boyle, E.J., 2011).

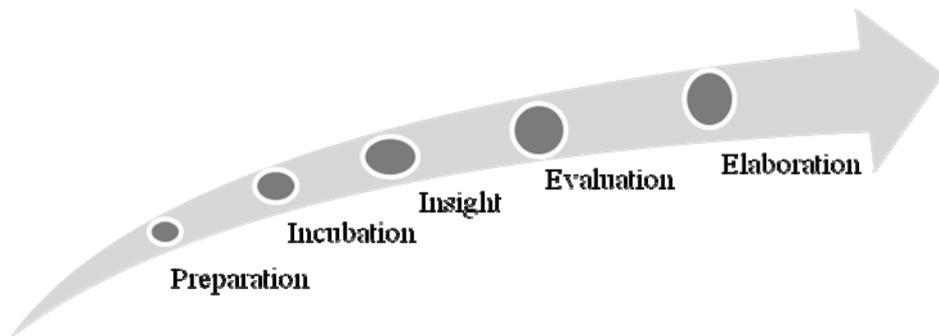


Figure no.2. Csikszentmihalyi's creativity process steps

From organizational perspective, Mayfield (2009) developed a creativity model. The model includes a set of elements influencing each other in a cyclic mode, these elements are the organization's commitment to creativity, barriers (deadlines, restrictive policies, lack of policies), foster creativity, promote creativity (necessary sources, autonomy, empowerment), development of creative environment (flexibility, personal development) and celebrating new achievements (Mayfield, M., 2009).

To generate new creative ideas, studies present various methods, like: brainstorming, verbal and nonverbal exercises, exchange of ideas, writing ideas. The idea generation seems to be more effective after an incubation period taken place after an exchange of ideas moment (Klijn, M., Tomic, W., 2010). It should not be forgotten the wide range of exercises, available in previous studies, that could be used in generating creative ideas and the power of examples of actions that have solved problems in innovative ways, all these furthering organization excellence (Sloane, P., 2006).

5. Conclusions

This study attempts to contribute to the growing knowledge in the individual and organizational creativity aspects. Innovation is widely recognized as a tool for organization to be competitive.

As every innovation process starts with an idea, understanding what influences the mind and how the idea appears is crucial for individual and organizational purposes. An abundance of innovative ideas is a willingness of innovation management, therefore entertaining a creative environment in

each organization is an issue (Sloane, P., 2006). Creative ideas are like the basement on which the innovation will be built.

Resuming the determinants of creativity, a creative environment could be sustained through: learning, knowledge, meditation, stimulation, universalism, benevolence, self-control, motivation, skills, position in company, social status, experience, education, temperament, confidence, empowerment, freedom, collaboration, learning, meditation, support, level of testosterone, spaces for concentration and communication, organizational commitment, customer orientation, common spaces and private spaces, climate group, feature of open group, informal interaction between members, a dynamic, funny and confident environment. A dynamic, funny and confident environment influences positively creativity. There are underline some factors having a destructive influence on creativity: deadlines, conservatism, tradition, achievement, power, anxiety, comparing with others, irony, mockery, criticism and conflicts.

The relation between workplace and creativity is crucial for every organization. The workplace has social-psychological dimensions as people perceive different the same workplace. Understanding the physical aspects and their meaning and relation with people perceptions is essentially to lean creative thinking (Martnes, Y., 2011).

Organization culture should entertain the employees' creativity, but sometimes just by rules, processes, systems, structures, strategies and polices can be an obstacle through its rigidity (Klijn, M., Tomic, W., 2010).

Creativity process is defined as a sum of steps described in various ways by diverse creativity models, but a specific feature of creative process is self-forgetfulness, flow, unaware of space, the state when the person is fully involved and time no longer has its place (Klijn, M., Tomic, W., 2010). The creative process is crowned by the appearance of that "aha" moment in which the idea is realized.

This research emphasizes the importance of creativity determinants related to physical, social and psychological influences, and creativity process. All these features are necessary in order to cultivate a creative environment in each organization. Enhancing creativity through self-efficacy of each member of an organization welcomes innovation to develop.

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