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# Career Insider: Tips to boost your creative thinking



There are ways to inspire yourself—and your team—to think outside the cubicle. Try these tricks to stir things up.

By Kate Ashford, Monster contributor Mar 18, 2019



Creativity and innovation are the corner-stones of many successful companies. Think about Apple, Etsy, Spotify, Peloton, Pinterest—they all brought something new and different to the table. Creative thinking results in some pretty awesome stuff. For some people, creativity is innate, while others must work harder to tap into their creative sides—but that doesn't mean it isn't possible. With the right tools, environment and encouragement, you can flex your creativity muscles every day—and help your employees do so, too.



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## Access your own creativity

### Use your downtime

When you're in the office, you're often focused on meetings and to-do lists and keeping the wheels in motion. It may be your time out of the office that will stimulate the other side of your brain.

“During downtime, I'm always been inspired by reading and listening to professionals in other industries via podcasts and videos,” says Ron Rudzin, CEO of mattress company Saatva. “For example, when I need to get my creative juices flowing, I watch a video from Scott Galloway, a professor of marketing at the NYU Stern School of Business. Additionally, every morning before work, I like to make notes based on ideas and thoughts that occur to me the night before and when I wake up.”

### Try a change of scenery

“One of my biggest hurdles when I was working at a big agency was that they wanted us to be in the office from 9 to 6 every day,” says Lindsay Anvik, a business coach and international speaker at [SeeEndless.com](#). “We'd be working on these big campaigns and we needed big ideas.”

When you're stuck for inspiration, a new environment can jog your creative thinking. “If you're stuck, it's good to take a walk, go to an art museum, get in a new space,” Anvik says. “Those are often when creativity flows. It's not on demand—it's something the brain has to work on in the background.”

### Rethink your workspace

Working within gray cubicles or surrounded by beige walls and fluorescent lighting isn't the most direct path to creative ideas.



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“To truly foster this spirit, the environment itself must be creative,” says Carrie Anton, author of “Me, Myself & Ideas: The Ultimate Guide to Brainstorming Solo.” “Small steps, such as adding color, plants, artwork and natural light can go a long way. And for a real boom in inspiration, rely on input from employees to design not just a workspace but also a culture that more naturally cultivates creativity.”

## Bring out your team's creativity

### Give ideas time to steep

Very few people are creative on command. If you need proposals, concepts or pitches about something, let your employees know and give them time to ponder it.

“I give my team a problem for their mind to solve, and then I walk away,” says Dave Munson, founder and CEO of Saddleback Leather Co. in Fort Worth, Texas. “I don’t need an answer right now. I just want to present this problem so their minds could be working on it subconsciously while they sleep and eat and go on about their day.”

The same goes for meetings that are supposed to help your team “brainstorm” ideas. Send out your agenda a few days in advance so your employees can actually put their thinking caps on and prepare creative ideas. Otherwise, get ready for crickets. “We’re just sitting there looking at each other and saying, ‘Okay, everybody be creative right now,’” says Anvik. “The best thing managers can do is say, ‘I want three great ideas on Tuesday; everyone is going to pitch.’”

### Invite new people to the table

Have regular speakers, seminars and workshops so your employees (and you) can hear a different perspective.

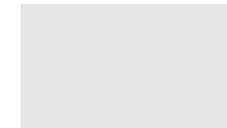
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“It’s good to have people come in for a lunch-and-learn, or get people out of the office to be inspired, whether it’s industry related or not,” Anvik says. “Maybe it’s something about how to be more productive in your day, or maybe it’s someone who’s been through an experience. All those things lead to people being inspired and thinking about things in a different way.”

And of course, a new person in the mix adds a different element to the group. “Those kinds of things get employees excited and it breaks up the workday,” Anvik says. “They’re taking their minds away from things, and it can breathe new life into their creative space.”

### **Reduce the fear of flopping**

Some of the most creative ideas are often unconventional, and employees may fear suggesting them if they’re afraid they’ll get laughed down for trying.

“Be supportive and appreciate your employees while their creative work is in progress,” says Hamna Amjad, community manager at ride share company Ridester. “Always give positive feedback to motivate them, and never reject an idea straight away. Your criticism should always be constructive, which can help them do better in the future.”

In other words, you must show your staff that it’s okay to fail. “Don’t implement any harsh punishments for unsuccessful campaigns or failing to meet a target, especially when it was an unconventional, eccentric idea,” says Grant van der Harst, managing director of UK road marking company AngloLinners. “Reward them for taking the gamble and encourage this alternative way of thinking.”

### **Be someone who inspires**

It’s not all that easy to think unconventionally, whether it’s for upcoming pitches or budgets or employee feedback. Yet, the rewards for creative

ideas are proven. The more you can challenge your old ways of doing things, the more likely you'll be to uncover your creative side.



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