

## **9 Ways to Create a Business Culture of Innovation and Creativity**

As the old saying goes, “The only things in life that are certain are death, taxes and change.” Sometimes change is thrust upon us and sometimes we must be the ones to initiate change. To succeed in today’s business environment, you must take a critical look at your business and decide what you need to do to keep it healthy and growing.

For a business to stay ahead of the curve in the development of new products and methods of differentiating itself from the competition, it must constantly innovate and create. You can be certain that your competition is doing just that. If you don’t, then you will be left behind.

Just consider how you market your business. A few short years ago, direct mail, telemarketing and cold calling were probably the main marketing methods available. Today, if you are not actively using the Web to market your business you are being left behind. Now that internet marketing has become so common, it is becoming much more difficult to cut through the clutter and get your message out to your intended audience.

Every day there are new programs and ideas that are being used. New products are created and new methods of targeting ideal clients are being created. The speed of business continues to accelerate. In order to keep up with it, you must create a culture of innovation and creativity in your business.

Here are 9 ways to create a business culture that promotes innovation and creativity.

1. *Always question what you do and why you do it.* All too often tasks and projects creep into our activities that aren't in keeping with our mission and purpose. Make sure everything you do is in alignment and produces the results intended.
2. *Check out every possible angle.* Know that every problem has many possible solutions. Never waiver in your belief that you and your team can find a better way to do anything you put your minds to.
3. *Challenge long-held beliefs.* Just because something's always been done a certain way doesn't mean that it's still the best way.
4. *Don't accept the first solution right away.* There are many possible solutions to every problem. Most people go with the first plausible one that comes up and they miss the value of thinking longer and finding more effective answers.
5. *Put yourself in the position to meet people in different industries.* By stepping out of your familiar territory, you open the door to new and different viewpoints you can use to create new advantages.

6. *Read.* You can't learn less. The more you know about something, the more you find that you DON'T know. By adding to your knowledge base, you open up new ideas and possibilities. New thoughts can open your mind to seemingly magical things.
7. *Have fun.* Coming up with ideas on how to do things faster, easier, and with fewer resources can be really fun. Things that are fun to do tend to get done more often. Schedule regular brainstorming sessions and welcome all ideas. Have lunch delivered and focus on a problem or process that needs attention and brainstorm as many ideas as possible
8. *Make sure you have adequate down time—time to do nothing.* When you are constantly engaged in 'doing' things, you don't give your mind the opportunity to absorb new ideas and a fertile ground for them to take root.
9. *Challenge your team to keep digging deeper.* Determine that something will be done and keep digging until you find a way to get it done. Keep asking questions until you get what you need. Eventually, you will get the answer and success will follow.

Those businesses that create a culture of creativity and continually foster new ideas and ways of supporting the business will have the brightest futures. This culture does not tend to happen naturally and will require your attention and leadership to thrive. Whether you are a business of one or thousands does not matter. You must make the conscious effort to make this happen. You will be rewarded for your efforts.

To Your Success,  
Dennis