

## Twenty-Five Ways to Keep Ideas Flowing in Your Workplace

1. Ask for ideas. Make sure everyone on your team knows that, yes, they ARE paid to think!
2. Ask the new employees immediately for their ideas. Don't let them walk around thinking to themselves, "There must be a reason they do it this way" and not telling anyone!
3. Create an idea or inspiration room specifically designed to encourage people to brainstorm and debate ideas in a fun, relaxed atmosphere.
4. Put up a "What if..." board in your workplace where employees can pose outrageous "what if" kind of questions.
5. Have a "What if..." section in every meeting.
6. Have an "Idea Challenge of the Month" that encourages employees and customers to generate ideas on a specific problem or in a specific area.
7. Design your workplace to encourage spontaneous, random encounters between employees.
8. Create job swap days where people experience each other's jobs and become more aware of each other's challenges and perspectives. Creativity thrives on connections, changed perspectives and synchronicity.
9. Create contests around idea challenges and include not only all the employees, but the families of employees.
10. Create mentorship programs that encourage newer employees to develop their critical and creative thinking skills.
11. Create "mastermind" brainstorming teams that meet regularly to brainstorm key issues and opportunities.
12. As some organizations do, give employees 10 – 20% of their work time to work on their own pet projects and initiatives.
13. Start a book club that meets once a month to discuss current, hot books.
14. Create sabbatical programs that allow employees to take an extended leave every five years.
15. Take your team on an inspiration hunt. Walk around your downtown; go to a museum or a zoo to look for ideas and inspiration related to a specific challenge.
16. Facilitate employees taking colleagues to lunch with whom they normally wouldn't interact.
17. Create more space for thinking: a dedicated quiet, tech-free room or lounge area with relaxing chairs.
18. Create more time for thinking, incubating, and more face-to face conversations by creating a technology-free day once a week or twice a month.
19. Meet in unusual places. Hold the occasional meeting off site: at a park, at the zoo, over breakfast, at a picnic site, on someone's patio.
20. Reward smart failure. If you're truly valuing creative ideas, then people need to be given room to make smart mistakes without fear. Creating a reward program that actually recognizes people's blunders in the face of trying something new sends a powerful message.
21. Create a straightforward and transparent system for assessing ideas. Ensure that anyone can submit an idea and have it properly heard by whoever needs to hear it, and a system for acknowledging and getting back in a timely manner to the person who submitted the idea.



# INSPIRING WORKPLACES

THE WAY WORK OUGHT TO BE

- 22. Listen to ideas and immediately, when possible, put them into practice. One of the most motivating things you can do at work is to show people that their ideas can actually shape their business or workplace.
- 23. Offer training on creative thinking, creative leadership, and brainstorming skills.
- 24. Create an idea repository on your internal website.

**25.** Inject more fun and humor into your meetings, hiring practices, and workplace culture. Humor is one of the biggest catalysts for creative thinking! (Ha + Ha = AHA!)

## What Blocks Creativity?

- ✗ Micromanaging projects and people
- ✗ A lack of open and honest communication
- ✗ A stuffy, stifling work environment
- ✗ A stuffy, stifling meeting room
- ✗ Too much red tape
- ✗ A risk-adverse attitude and culture
- ✗ Buzzword jargon
- ✗ Inaccessible leaders
- ✗ Teams working in isolation
- ✗ Small, unexciting goals and targets
- ✗ Idea-killing language ("We tried it in 1957")
- ✗ A lack of trust
- ✗ Leaders who take credit for others' ideas
- ✗ "Blame-storming"

## What Helps Creativity Flow?

- ✓ Giving people more autonomy
- ✓ Open and honest communication
- ✓ A fun, relaxed workplace
- ✓ A fun, inspiring meeting room
- ✓ Simplified rules and processes
- ✓ "The riskiest thing is to NOT try anything new"
- ✓ Simple, plain, everyday language
- ✓ Accessible leaders
- ✓ Teams inter-connecting with each other
- ✓ Bold, audacious goals and targets
- ✓ Idea-championing language ("Yes, and...")
- ✓ Trust!
- ✓ Leaders recognizing innovators
- ✓ Brainstorming

