When faced with new circumstances it is the leader’s ability to create an environment in which possible solutions can be generated and applied effectively which is key.

Divergent thinking, in which many possibilities are generated, can be helpful in this quest. The ability to be creative on a daily basis, to overcome setbacks and achieve the strategic priorities of the University, may be one of the most powerful assets a leader can develop.

This guide explores the nature of creativity from a leaders and managers perspective and suggest ideas which may be helpful and asks...

“What can leaders and managers do to bring creativity into their work?”
1. Ask don’t tell

*Linda Naiman* suggests that leaders should help people learn through Socratic enquiry.

“In other words, lead by asking questions, not providing answers. Give people clear Objectives and let them figure out how to achieve them. Give them time to think through situations, look at the big picture, bounce ideas off peers and experiment with possibilities.”

For the full article go to:


Effective questions are wonderful at opening up debate or just shedding greater clarity on situations. Being creative requires a person to view things from a new perspective and questions can help spark that process... consider the following questions:

- If you could change one thing about the way you ran the project, what is it?
- What will we need to know in a year’s time that we don’t know now?
- Which of these ideas is most valuable and why?
- Where do you need to go with this now?
- Who will help you the most in delivering this objective?
2. Create thinking spaces

Amy Fries suggests leaders and managers should:

“provide a forum for idea sharing and give feedback.”

Allowing people the space to breathe life into new ideas and generate possible solutions can have beneficial effects.

This could be a regular forum or a virtual forum. Developing your staff’s ability to interact with one another on the key issues they all face.

For the full article go to:

http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-power-daydreaming/201002/sparking-creativity-in-the-workplace
Help your staff to develop the skills to be creative

Creativity is a state of mind. Very often workplace cultures militate against original thinking. The instructions may not be overt but the subliminal, tacit message in many work situations is: “stick to the rules, don’t overturn the applecart.”

Towing the line is important, of course, and to ensure quality, organisations require staff to follow protocol, processes and procedures. However, if all you require from staff is that they ‘follow’ then this is what they will do... and being original and creating fabulous new ideas will not be part of their day to day expectations.

However, taking the initiative is very much a necessity in today’s fast moving times. So...

give your staff the tools to be creative, think creatively, invent new ways of doing old things. The results may surprise you, save time and money and motivate staff into the bargain. For ideas on maintaining a spirit of team innovation and creativity see:

Try and understand what PREVENTS creativity in the workplace... and avoid it...

Have a look at the following leader traits; do you do any of them?

- Don’t trust ideas that aren’t your own
- Interrupt staff when they are making suggestions
- Take the credit for successful ideas even if they weren’t yours
- Discourage anyone from suggesting radically different ideas
- Squash enthusiasm if the approach doesn’t fit with yours
- Laugh at someone trying to apply some originality into their work

Leaders can inadvertently prevent creativity at work by their actions.

Be aware of the impression your actions might have on the creative energies of others.
5. Allow people to work in ways that suit them

Staff have different times of the day and work methods which suit them better. Leaders who ‘lighten up’ and allow staff to freedom to work in ways they find most productive are likely to find that creativity increases.
6. Understand the nature of creativity

It is very difficult for creativity to flow on-demand. Be aware that by its very nature creativity is something best captured when it appears.

Allow staff who are in the ‘flow’ some latitude.
7. **Change focus to outputs rather than inputs**

Being obsessed with ‘inputs’ can be a manager’s downfall.

Changing emphasis to ‘outputs’ – i.e. the actual results, as opposed to the method by which they were achieved - can allow staff the freedom to implement their own creative solutions to the problems they have been set.
8. **Use all the Senses**

Sight

Hearing

Touch

Taste

Smell

How many of these are used at work?

Using our senses at work can create originality and creative ideas.

**Colours**

Sounds

Sights

For example: leaders who ask...

- What does that **feel** like?
- What would we be **hearing** if...?
- What will success **look** like?

... allow staff creativity to flow.
Try not to move into solutions mode too quickly

Many creative ideas are squashed at conception by work processes sounding like this: “We’ve got a problem with workflow... what are we going to do about it?”

In an effort to be seen to be *doing something about the problem*, managers are often guilty of missing out an important step. Whether you would like to refer to it as *reflection* ([Kolb’s learning cycle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kolb%27s_learning_cycle)) or as ‘thinking time’, it is important to fully understand the issues before being able to generate the best possible solution.

Appoint one of your team the “reflection police” and ask them to point out times when the team is neglecting to think a problem through fully before moving into solutions mode.

A few minutes spent exploring the nature of the problem or issue can give a fuller understanding, which generate more appropriate and creative solutions later on.
If you keep on doing what you’ve always done...
then you’ll get what you’ve always got...

New ways of working are sometimes needed to bring about creative changes in a work environment. Often the organisation discourages people from suggesting root and branch changes to processes or systems as they seem too big a step to take.

However, by auditing the very processes upon which the organisation is built, it is possible to identify weaknesses, bottlenecks or inefficiencies. Changing processes can have a highly creative effect on our effectiveness.
11. Make sure that great ideas are acted upon...

“Everything you see and touch was once an invisible idea until someone chose to bring it into being. Any powerful idea is absolutely fascinating and absolutely useless until we choose to use it.”

Richard Bach

Once you have encouraged your staff to be creative, make sure that you implement the brilliant ideas generated, otherwise staff may revert to waiting to be told what to do (‘why should we invent ideas, they never listens to them!’)