

These are the Ways Leaders Stifle Innovation

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Innovation has become the focus for most organisations. More and more companies are encouraging creativeness and experimentation, with the aim of developing new products that may attract more business. Funds are being diverted to innovation programs in hopes of teaching the entrepreneurial mindset within employees. The reality on the ground however, is that many individuals are failing to bring on board new and original ideas. This could be a result of the employee's own shortcomings, however, there are aspects of your leadership styles that may be limiting the capacity of your employees and this article explores some of them.

The work environment has a great influence on innovation. When the conditions are right, creativity comes up naturally. The main aim is for employees to understand the organisation's goals and work towards coming up with ways to achieve them. This understanding offers a natural springboard for employees to launch their ideas into motion. In this regard, your workforce should feel a degree of freedom to explore the problems at hand, and come up with the solutions to solve them without feeling as though someone were breathing down their necks. When your employees are checked on at every interval of their creativity process, they end up losing the zeal for coming up with new ideas as they feel their ideas may be disregarded.

Shoving goals down employees' throats

This leadership style involves constantly reminding employees of the departmental goals on a daily basis. The manager does not take time to ask employees of ways to actually accomplish these goals but they expect them to be done. This resultantly downplays innovation as employees revert to old methods to achieve them.

Constraining Employees

In this leadership style, the manager downplays an employee's ideas by telling them to do things their way, or the way, 'things are done around here'. In the long term, employees neglect innovation as their ideas are never implemented or they are told off for being creative.

Pitting employees against each other

In many organisations employees are knowingly or unknowingly pit against each other. This may be in the form of targets that an individual is supposed to attain at the end of a certain period. This results in employees focusing more on individualism than working as a team. The focus becomes on beating the other instead of focusing on winning as a whole. This limits innovation within individuals as they have short term goals that will ensure their "win" at the time, instead of long term organisational goals.

Rewarding of achievement of numeric goals

Some reward schemes are based on achievement of numerical goals, without a focus on the bigger picture which is the work that goes into achieving those goals. An individual will be rewarded for meeting the financial goal, instead of a reward for the team effort. Some individuals who may have contributed to the attainment of this goal may end up feeling neglected in the organisation, preferring to keep their innovation to themselves.

Exclusion of employees from strategy conversations

The strategy maps the direction an organisation is supposed to take. A strategy map may be necessitated by a problem that the organisation has identified. This strategy will require implementation by the organisation as a whole. If other employees are excluded from these top priority conversations, how then will they come up with the brilliant solution to the problem? Employees must be included in the strategy process as they form vital parts of the organisation in form of the labour force.

Punishing employees who take risks

When a business plan does not work, the natural reaction is to look at where the mistake may have been made. This may also looking for someone to blame for something not working out. In some instances, the innovative and risk-taking employees may end up getting the blame for the failure of a project. This results in some of the other employees developing a fear of speaking out when they have a brilliant idea as they may be afraid of the consequences that may come when things do not work out.

A perfectionist mind-set

In this leadership style, nothing is supposed to go wrong. For these leaders, nothing at work is supposed to fail, there are supposed to be wins only, and no losses. With this style in place, innovation is stifled as people prefer to stick to the old ways of doing these that have become routine and ensure somewhat productivity. No new ideas will come forth with this method of leading as people will find comfort in doing what they know has always worked for them.

These various leadership styles are some of the ways your employees may not be bringing new ideas to the table. It is therefore imperative to continuously introspect and review how your leadership methods may be holding you back as an organisation.

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