

# BOOKS



Creativity, Inc.

## Building an Inventive Organization

By Jeff Maury and Richard Harriman

Reviewed by Jean Marrapodi

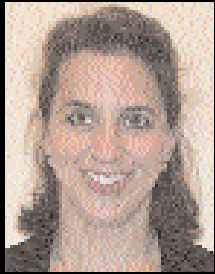
Finally! A book on creativity in the workplace that targets the people who can make a difference. *Creativity, Inc.* teaches the fundamentals of creativity and the impact of innovation in the workplace, but it's directed toward upper-level management. Featuring numerous case studies from creative companies such as 3M, Hallmark, and Motorola, the book addresses what happens when creativity is a deliberate activity. *Creativity, Inc.* is filled with quotes from real people in recognizable organizations where creativity has made a difference. It not only provides examples from large corporations, but also charts the successes of several

smaller companies, so it's applicable to every business level and arena.

The book is divided into three sections that define what creativity is, how to build a creative corporate culture, and the actions needed to promote and encourage a creative organization. Each addresses creativity on the individual, team, managerial, and systemic levels, focusing not only on the positive sides, but also on the potential pitfalls and obstacles to implementation. For example, the authors warn us to "be aware of the forces that work against creativity—imitation, conformity, the need to be right immediately, acceptance of fixed roles, and paralysis

# ON THE NIGHT STAND

By Sophie Oberstein



I fool myself into believing that I am not reading more than one book at a time by keeping work-related books in the top drawer of my nightstand.

Luckily, it's a large drawer. Right now, it's so crammed with books about famous leaders—Welsh, Guillian, Shackleton—that I'm considering a workshop that imparts lessons about leadership through storytelling.

The only one I've completed is Abrashoff's *It's Your Ship: Management Techniques From the Best Damn Ship in the Navy*. Though hardly a military enthusiast, I enjoy the short anecdotes that provide creative, common-sense, and often irreverent solutions to leadership challenges. I am also rereading *Running Training Like a Business: Delivering Unmistakable Value* by David van Adelsberg and Edward A. Trolley. This book keeps me focused on the core purpose of my employee development function. Right now, it's providing a framework for interviews I'm conducting with department heads so I can determine their perceptions of the development function and compare their priorities with how I spend my time.

On top of the nightstand, next to the clock radio, is *I Don't Know How She Does It: The Life of Kate Reddy, Working Mother*, a novel by Allison Pearson. It should be required reading for all HR professionals. It paints a picture of the heart-wrenching decisions that working parents, particularly mothers (like me), are making every day. It's very funny, yet its insights are real and sobering.

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from analysis." This balanced approach is what separates *Creativity, Inc.* from other books that don't take a realistic perspective; it looks at both sides while encouraging creative thinking and actions. The book includes some exercises for gauging and strengthening individual creativity. The authors measure these areas: motivation, curiosity, stress and fear management, and connection breaking.

The authors recommend diversity in upper-level leadership, with artistic mindsets to add new perspectives. They also recommend dividing creative responsibility among all employees, and they explain practices to achieve that.

Mauzy and Harriman go on to suggest methods for fostering a creative climate within your enterprise. Looking at expectations, providing autonomy and support, and eliminating the command-and-control model while maintaining visions and behaviors that support creativity are some of the ways leaders can manage and encourage purposeful creativity. One particular example that struck me was a story of a visit by William McKnight, before he was chairman of 3M, to Roger Appledorn, a young scientist working in 3M's lab. McKnight sat down and said, "Son, I hear you're doing something interesting. Tell me about it." Appledorn saw that interest as something affirming and valuable, and it kept him motivated for four decades. McKnight wasn't doing more than acknowledging the work of someone in the creative process, but his position of authority made a powerful impression. The book cites other numerous realistic examples to illustrate ways for leaders to model and encourage creativity.

The examples offer specific, tangible ways for a leader to react more creatively. Ideas can be implemented in small steps or globally to impact an entire organization. Even better, the book suggests the ideas rather than insists on them, letting the readers feel empowered by the decision-making process of implementation.

Many books on creativity target already creative individuals, such as *Six Thinking Hats* by Edward deBono and *Thinking Like Leonardo DaVinci* by Michael Gelb. But many CEOs wouldn't take those types of books seriously. Gelb's DaVincian principles of *sfumato* (allowing things to blow up) and *sensazione* (enjoying sensations) may be thought of as too esoteric for practical application, and deBono's thinking methodology requires readers to remember a lot. Such perspectives are typically useful for the already creative mind. Entrepreneurial thinkers might take a risk with books like those, but the typical businessperson is often too practical and linear. In my world of conservative managed health care, Gelb's and deBono's ideas wouldn't fly, no matter how cleverly the concepts were rolled out. On the other hand, *Creativity, Inc.* reads like a business book, looks like a business book. The information is for businesspeople, and the solid foundations of creativity and the creative process are presented in a strong, nonthreatening way.

Focus is on the benefits and the how-tos, and researchers' comments are backed up with proper data. But unlike a lot of business books, *Creativity, Inc.* is well written, readable, and motivating. The concepts are practical and can be implemented in any organization, as well as personally. I highly recommend this book to trainers and leaders needing vision and revitalization, and those already on the cutting-edge.

*Creativity, Inc.: Building an Inventive Organization* by Jeff Mauzy and Richard Harriman. Boston: Harvard Business School Press. 224 pp. US\$27.50

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