Building the Creative Worker: Leadership, Agency, and Creative Self-Image

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What is creativity?

In organizations, it’s the production of novel and useful ideas or solutions.
Is creativity the same everywhere?

Judgments of creativity are “domain-specific”

Employee (faculty) governance is not a new idea in universities, but it would be for traditional auto-makers

Creativity in a domain is judged by “field” members

Consumers judge what is creative and what is not in product markets
To be creative, employees must have

**Resource** elements that enable employees to function in their task domain

**Technique** elements that provide employees opportunities to be creative and develop creativity-related skills

**Motivation** elements that elicit employees’ interest and desire to be creative in their work
Leadership and creative self-images as potent sources of creativity

Leading for creativity × Employee creativity self-concepts

[A] sense of identity is the root by which all honest creative effort is fed.

J. Saunders Redding, from his address at the First Conference of Negro Writers, 1959
The Pygmalion effect: Leader creativity expectations set off a chain reaction in followers

- Leader Expectations of Subordinate Creativity
- Leader Relations and Creativity-Supportive Behaviors
- Follower’s View of Creativity Expectations
- Follower Creative Identity and Self-Efficacies
- Follower Creative Performance
Leader creativity expectations lead to different relationships

*Leader-member exchange* (LMX) concerns how leaders divide followers into “in-groups” and “out-groups”

Leaders provide creativity-supportive behaviors toward in-group members, but not out-group members
High LMX leaders support creativity by

**Role Modeling:** demonstrating actions such as problem solving and positive risk-taking

**Autonomy Granting:** permitting employees operational control and flexibility in how to conduct their jobs

**Collaboration Encouragement:** promoting collaborative work efforts among employees and the sharing of information and ideas

**Creativity Direction:** encouraging employees to be creative and set creativity goals

**Task Support:** facilitating tasks and providing resource support to employees

**Confidence-Building:** providing praise, acknowledgement, interpersonal support, and demonstrating confidence in employees, especially in their creative problem-solving efforts
Creativity support: Employees respond differently to leader relations.

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**Employee Cognitive Style**

- **Adaptors**
- **Innovators**

**Level of Creativity**

- Low quality relationship
- High quality relationship

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**Creativity support**

- Employees respond differently to leader relations.
Both leaders and group members must provide creativity support.
How do follower’s views affect their creativity?

**Follower’s View of Creativity Expectations**
- How they see themselves
- How they think others see them
- Whether they think their jobs require creativity

**Follower Self-Concepts**
- Creative Identity
- Creative Self-Efficacy

**Follower Creative Performance**
Creativity expectations, self-concept, and creative performance

Perceived creativity expectations (coworkers)

Self-views of creative behavior (Have I been creative in the past?)

Does the organization’s leadership really want creativity?

Creative identity

Employee acts creatively
Does the job need someone creative? Do you think it’s me?

- Low
- High

Creative Self-Efficacy

Job Required Creativity

- Perceptions that leader and work group DON'T think I'm creative
- Perceptions that leader and work group DO think I'm creative
Leadership at all organizational levels has a strong impact on employee creativity

- Provide resources, tools, and generate abilities
- Provide jobs that allow and encourage creativity
- Empowers the group to support each other’s creativity
- Sending the message that “creativity is valued here”

Leadership’s impact is partly by changing how people see themselves and their environment

- Am I creative? Can I succeed if I try? Creativity is risky—if I try and fail to be creative, will I be punished?


