How to kill creativity?

Creativity refers to the way people think and how they approach to problems. It comprise of three parts:

1. Imaginatively thinking
2. Expertise
3. Motivation

Expertise encompasses everything that a person knows and can do in the broad domain of his or her work.

Creative thinking refers to how people approach problems and solutions-their capacity to put existing ideas together in new combinations. The skill itself depends quite a bit on personality as well as on how a person thinks and works.

In fact, it shows that there are two types of motivation - extrinsic and intrinsic.

Extrinsic motivation comes from outside a person. If the scientist’s boss promises to reward her financially should the blood-clotting project succeed, or if he threatens to fire her should it fail, she will certainly be motivated to find a solution. But this sort of motivation “makes” the scientist do her job in order to get something desirable or avoids something painful. Obviously, the most common extrinsic motivator managers’ use is money, which doesn’t necessarily stop people from being creative. But in many situations, it doesn’t help either, especially when it leads people to feel that they are being bribed or controlled. More important, money by itself doesn’t make employees passionate about their jobs. A cash reward can’t magically prompt people to find their work interesting if in their hearts they feel it is dull. But passion and interest-a person’s internal desire to do something-are what intrinsic motivation is all about.

When people are intrinsically motivated, they engage in their work for the challenge and enjoyment of it. The work itself is motivating. In fact, in our creativity research, my students, colleagues, and I have found so much evidence in favour of intrinsic motivation that we have articulated what we call the Intrinsic Motivation Principle of Creativity: people will be most creative when they feel motivated primarily by the interest, satisfaction, and challenge of the work itself-and not by external pressures.

Managing creativity:

1. **Challenge**: Managers can match people with jobs that play to their expertise and their skills in creative thinking, and ignite intrinsic motivation. Making a good match requires that managers possess rich and detailed information about their employees and the available assignments. Such information is often difficult and time consuming to gather.

2. **Freedom**: People will be more creative, if you give them freedom to decide how to climb a particular mountain. You needn't let them choose which mountain to climb. In fact, clearly specified strategic goals often enhance people’s creativity. I’m not making the case that managers should leave their subordinates entirely out of goal or agenda.

3. **Resources**: The two main resources that affect creativity are time and money. Managers need to allot these resources carefully. Like matching people with the right assignments, deciding how much time and money to give to a team or project is a sophisticated judgment call that can either support or kill creativity.

4. **Work-Group features**: If you want to build teams that come up with creative ideas, you must pay careful attention to the design of such teams. That is, you must create mutually supportive groups with a diversity of perspectives and backgrounds. Why? Because when teams comprise people with various intellectual foundations and approaches to work - that is, different expertise and
creative thinking styles—ideas often combine and combust in exciting and useful ways. Managers must also make sure that the teams they put together have three other features. First, the members must share excitement over the team’s goal. Second, members must display a willingness to help their teammates through difficult periods and setbacks. And third, every member must recognize the unique knowledge and perspective that other members bring to the table. These factors enhance not only intrinsic motivation but also expertise and creative-thinking skills. One common way managers kill creativity is by assembling homogeneous teams. The lure to do so is great. Homogeneous teams often reach “solutions” more quickly and with less friction along the way. Our teams do little to enhance expertise and creative thinking. Everyone comes to the table with a similar mind-set. They leave with the same.

5. **Supervisory Encouragement**: Most managers are extremely busy. They are under pressure for results. It is therefore easy for them to let praise for creative efforts—not just creative successes but unsuccessful efforts, too—fall by the way-side. One very simple step managers can take to foster creativity is to not let that happen. The connection to intrinsic motivation here is clear. Certainly, people can find their work interesting or exciting without a cheering section—for some period of time. But to sustain such passion, most people need to feel as if their work matters to the organization or to some important group of people.

6. **Organizational Support**: Encouragement from supervisors certainly fosters creativity; but creativity is truly enhanced when the entire organization supports it. Such support is the job of an organization’s leaders, who must put in place appropriate systems or procedures and emphasize values that make it clear that creative efforts are a top priority.

**Hints:**

- The important lesson of the National and Chemical Central stories is that fostering creativity is in the hands of managers as they think about, design, and establish the work environment. Creativity often requires that managers radically change the ways in which they build and interact with workgroups.
- The risks of not doing so may be even greater. When creativity is killed, an organization loses opponent competitive weapon: new ideas. It can also lose the energy and commitment of its people. In deed, in all my years of research into creativity, perhaps the most difficult part has been hearing people complain that they feel satisfied, frustrated, and shutdown by their organizations