



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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Playful Minds!

The best ideas come from playful minds - that is what employees at Play, a fast-growing marketing agency, believe. The organization delivers creative concepts, marketing and branding campaigns, promotional products and event strategies to organizations like American Express, Calvin Klein, Nationwide Insurance, Pricewaterhouse Coopers and Disney. The company's playful workplace reflects their approach to hard work and creativity.

They encourage employees to be themselves, have fun and take risks to fuel and unleash their creativity. Andy Stefanovich, co-founder of Play, says, "Creativity is not a solitary occurrence. It's very much a collaborative effort. Creativity just needs to be discovered within each person. What we are doing is building a creative community – not mystifying creativity as a special talent of a chosen few."

Play's employees are all part of a creative process. In a corner office called a 'playroom,' 20 or more staff members working for an important client with a tight deadline gather to invent their own superheroes, create costumes for them, figure out their superpowers, and invent a Clark Kent – like alter ego. They believe that generating creative ideas requires a creative environment and not boring meetings and conferences.

The anyone-can-do-it philosophy of the organization suggests that creativity can be learned. In one of the brainstorming sessions for a marketing campaign for a client (The Weather Channel), they generated more than 70 ideas. These sessions usually included several employees, including the accountants and sometimes even a visitor. 'Radical sabbaticals,' which are opportunities for employees to climb mountains, explore unfamiliar terrain and learn to surf, are meant to expose them to new ideas.

Geof Hammond, a creativity coach at Play, says, "We call what we do 'observational creativity.' We look at things, notice stuff about them, and turn those observations into new ideas." The dynamic personalities and the myriad interests of their employees allow them to constantly learn and grow.

Summary

Play is a perfect example of an organization that unleashes an individuals' creative genius. Organizations cannot come up with new ideas as long as they look at problems in the same old way.