# Inclusive Creativity

## How Leaders Foster Innovation Through Empowerment

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Johns Hopkins University Center for Leadership Education

# The Study: Creativity as a leadership framework

**Workplace Environment**
Culture, mental health, safe/trusted spaces

**Inclusive Creativity**
People-centric approach

**Performance**
Increased cash flow, idea generation

# Purpose

# Who am I?



Steven Simpson
Junior
Film & Media Studies

# Outline

# Hypothesis

Identifying a Need

# Research Question

*How can transformative leaders foster innovation and creativity through empowering others in the workplace?*

Considered factors: problem-solving, organizational culture, business strategy, healthier work environments, innovation, mindfulness, engagement, and sustainability
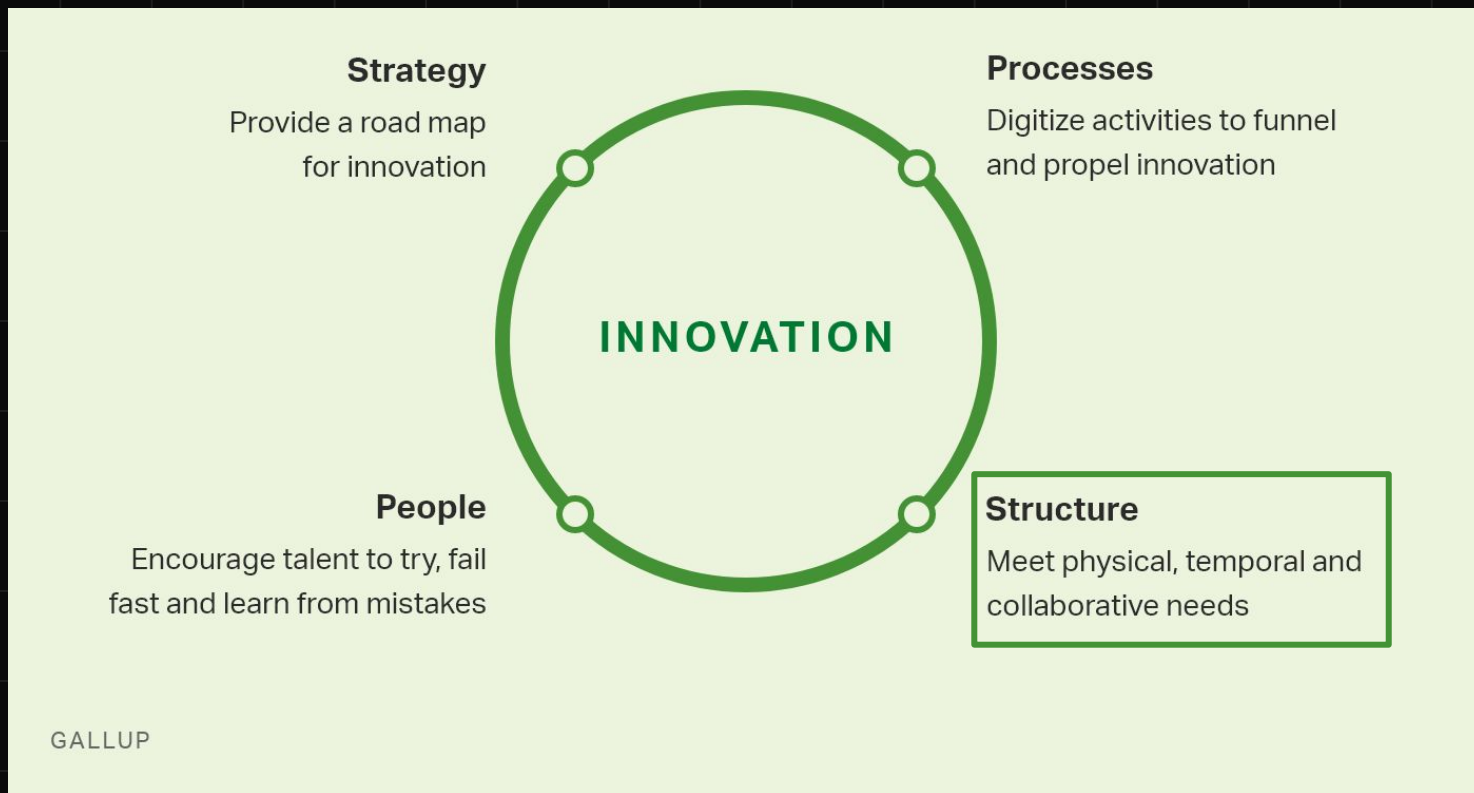
# Literature Review

Understanding the question

# Where to look…


Harvard Business School


GALLUP®


LinkedIn


SHRM — BETTER WORKPLACES BETTER WORLD™

Forbes

# Four Guiding Principles of Innovation

**Strategy**
Provide a road map for innovation

**Processes**
Digitize activities to funnel and propel innovation

**INNOVATION**

**People**
Encourage talent to try, fail fast and learn from mistakes

**Structure**
Meet physical, temporal and collaborative needs

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# Industry Statistics

**70%** of employers say creative thinking is most in-demand skill in 2024 (Forbes)

**85%** of employees believe that their environment affects their productivity and mood (Zipdo)

**60%** rated themselves as "industry shapers or innovation leaders" with only one-third of their less creative peers identified in the same fashion (McKinsey)

# Top Quotes

"The instrument of leadership is the self, and mastery of the art of leadership comes from <u>mastery of the self</u>."

James M. Kouzes
The Leadership Challenge

"Major change is often said to be impossible unless the <u>head of the organization</u> is an active supporter."

John P. Kotter
Leading Change

"Problem resolution teams need a structure that <u>emphasis trust</u> so that all will be willing to and able to contribute."

Peter G. Northouse
Leadership: Theory and Practice

"Our work should not end on the page; it should <u>launch conversations</u>, incite further actions."
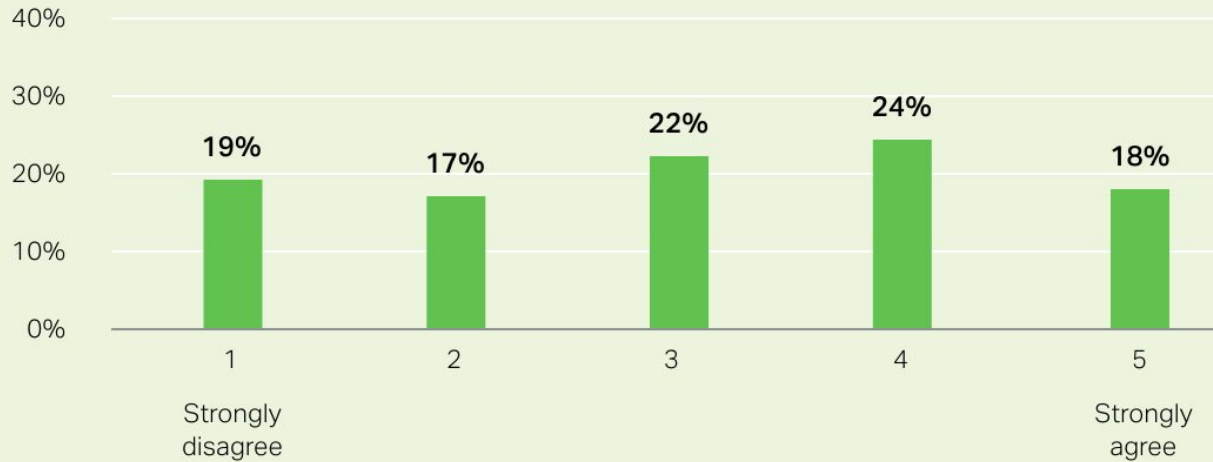
Chip Heath
Made to Stick

# I am expected to be creative or think of new ways to do things at work
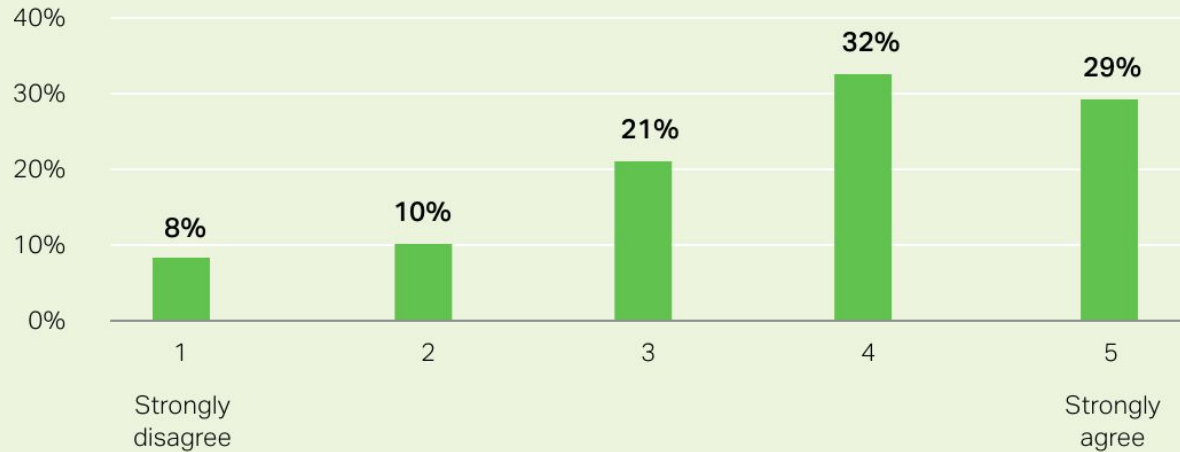


Gallup, 2017 American Workplace Survey

# I can take risks at work that could lead to important new products, services or solutions

# Employee comfortable expressing themselves

EMPLOYEES WHO STRONGLY AGREE THEIR
OPINIONS COUNT AT WORK

## 3 in 10

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Most managers haven't excelled at creating or sustaining an innovation culture.

| | Strongly agree % |
|---|---|
| **I feel encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things.** | |
| France | 27 |
| Germany | 34 |
| Spain | 26 |
| U.K. | 33 |
| Europe | 30 |
| U.S. | 30 |
| **In my company, we openly share information, knowledge and ideas with each other.** | |
| France | 36 |
| Germany | 35 |
| Spain | 30 |
| U.K. | 38 |
| Europe | 35 |
| U.S. | 30 |
| **I am satisfied with the cooperation between my department and other departments with which I work.** | |
| France | 21 |
| Germany | 24 |
| Spain | 21 |
| U.K. | 23 |
| Europe | 22 |
| U.S. | 19 |

Note: European data were collected in 2019; U.S. data were collected in 2018. "Europe" represents the average for data from France, Germany, Spain and the U.K.

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# Horizon's Model to Classify Innovations
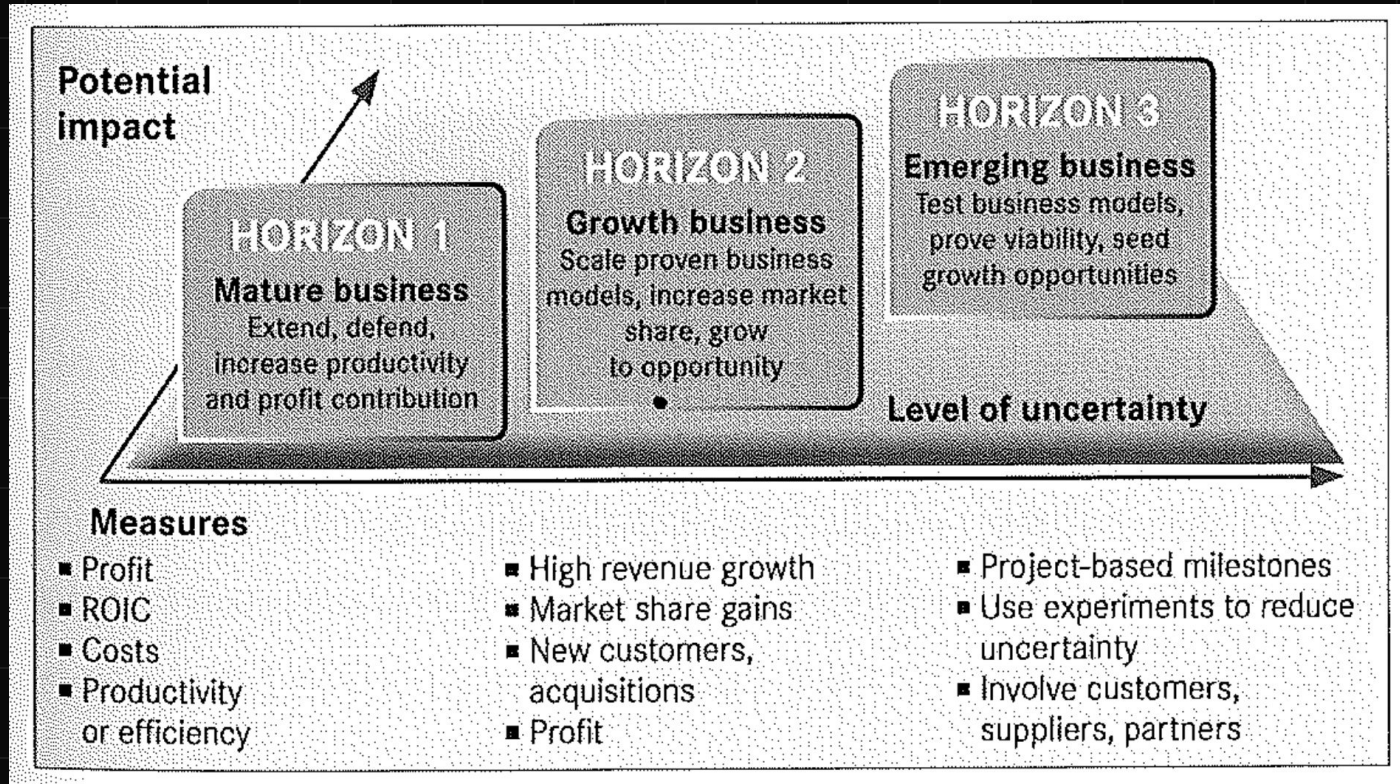
# Key takeaways:

- Leadership theories are <u>flexible</u>, so should creative frameworks
- Creativity is needed and found in <u>all types of industries</u>
- In failure-averse culture, people <u>unconsciously avoid risk</u>
- Leadership is not fixed and is not considered a natural talent, <u>anyone can lead</u>

# Methodology

Finding accurate techniques and procedures

## Approach

**Goal:** Define what is considered a "common" work environment and examine what factors are heightened when creativity is used as a strategy

**Research methods:** In-depth interviews, comprehensive surveys, and experiments

15

Interviews

3

Surveys

1

Experiments

220+

Research Engagements

# Comprehensive Surveys

**Breakdown:**
- Students (spring professionals)
- Professionals
- Those not interacting in work (retired, etc.)

## In Depth Interviews

Objective: Hear from those leading creative initiatives and those who might have barriers in their organization

- 15-20 min interview
- Based on same question set
- Balance of leaders and followers

# Question Set

- Categories
  - Past experiences
    - Leadership training? Workplace environment?
    - Felt empowered by a leader?
  - Current situation
    - Current strategies in innovation?
    - Recent projects?
  - Future expectations
    - Business sustainability?
    - Need for creativity?

## Collaboration Experiment

- "Come up with as many uses you can use for a brick"
  - Completed individually
  - With a partner
  - With a group of six
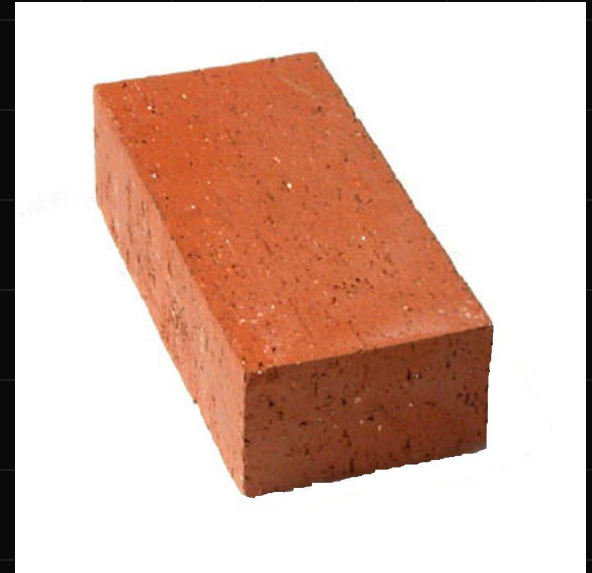
# Data

Gathering Possible Answers

# Interview Job Titles



photographer
musician
entrepreneur
film director
director
analyst
graphic designer
vice president
journalist
assistant

# Impactful Phrases

"It's hard to find <u>time</u> to think creatively"

"I don't know who to <u>trust</u> at times"

"When <u>freedom</u> is provided, responsibility increases"

"Don't let the job <u>stay with you</u> after 5"

"Too much <u>management</u> and tasks at hand"

"<u>Trainings</u> prepare us to make a mistake, rather than training us to avoid making them in first place"

"<u>Team meetings</u> are not open forums by any means"

# **Business Impact**

- Core business functions reflection on where creativity is used the most
  - **Highest:** Product Development
  - **Lowest:** Customer Service



In which area of our business do you think creativity has the most impact?
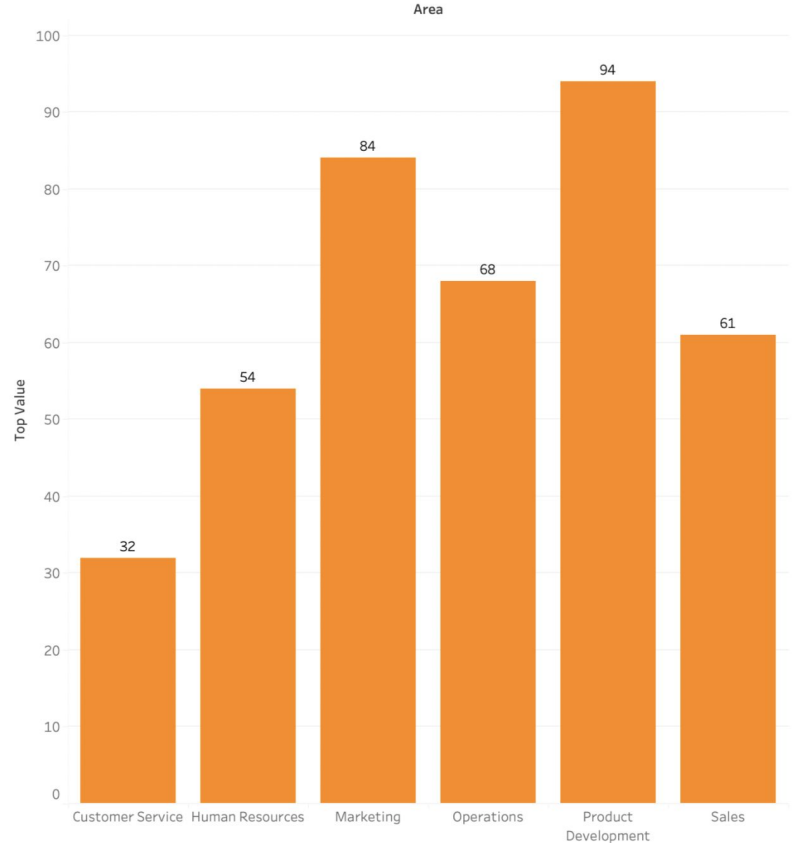
# By the numbers (mentions):

| | |
|---|---|
| 24 | Onboarding |
| 43 | Support |
| 65 | Strategy |
| 78 | Time |
| 102 | Engagement |

# Collaboration Experiment

# Collaboration Experiment

12 ideas          48 ideas          71 ideas

Average Individual Efforts      Average Partner (2) Efforts      Average Group (6) Efforts

# Results

Making informed decisions

# Themes

- Support creativity from all levels of management
- Greater collaboration/communication heightens innovation
- Organizational culture around promoting creativity drives employee engagement in the workplace

# Themes

- The current knowledge base around the benefits of creativity growth in the workplace is limited.
- As data moves up organizational structures, more creativity is needed within business strategy, but often the lack of time and advert leadership styles become challenges.

# Conclusion

## Recommendations

# 10 Strategies for Inclusive Creativity

1. "Transformative leadership: an accelerator for innovation"
2. "Building physiological safe environments for all"
3. "Preventing bad habits and errors is more cost-effective than fixing errors"
4. "Communication should be open to allow all levels of management to innovate together"
5. "Leaders should take part in the creative process with their followers"
6. "Introduce mindfulness strategies into the workday"
7. "Begin teaching about the importance of ethical innovation among different size companies and business school programs"
8. "Learn through curiosity and exploratory risk taking"
9. "Allyship: Creating more equitable work environments"
10. "Protect leadership voices from below"

# 10 Strategies for Inclusive Creativity

1. "<u>Transformative leadership</u>: an accelerator for innovation"
2. "Building <u>psychological safe environments</u> for all"
3. "<u>Preventing</u> bad habits and errors is more cost-effective than fixing errors"
4. "<u>Communication</u> should be open to allow all levels of management to innovate together"
5. "Leaders should take part in the <u>creative process</u> with their followers"
6. "Introduce <u>mindfulness</u> strategies into the workday"
7. "Begin <u>teaching</u> about the importance of ethical innovation among different size companies and business school programs"
8. "<u>Learn through curiosity</u> and exploratory risk taking"
9. "<u>Allyship</u>: Creating more equitable work environments"
10. "Protect <u>leadership voices</u> from below"

# Transformative leadership: an accelerator for innovation

Focus on positive improvements

Increased organizational commitment

Motivation and influence

# Building psychological safe environments for all

Actively solicit questions

Promotes self-awareness

Safe to challenge ideas to improve

# Preventing bad habits and errors is more cost-effective than fixing errors

Turnover is costly

Positive energy and engagement

Role clarity and job satisfaction

# Further Application

## Reflection

## What I Learned

- How to be comfortable being uncomfortable
- Resources available to learn a new topic
- Why we need to have more conversations regarding better leadership practices
- How to be a better leader and empower other leaders to rise to new challenges

# Further Exploration

1. Direct creative frameworks based on business size
2. Global perspective
3. Technology impact on creativity

# Thank You

## Questions?

**Presenter Information**
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