

## **An Innovative Organization**

An organization can foster and stimulate creativity and innovation in its employees or it can provide obstacles that prevent employees from working effectively and utilizing their creative talents. Often the stimulants and obstacles are unknown. While there is no single formula for fostering an effective work environment, there are specific actions that can be taken to improve the climate, increase employee skills, and establish processes and mechanisms that support innovative thinking.

Acorn Consulting provides a comprehensive service designed to assess an organization's support for creativity in the work environment, to identify the underlying causes for this support or lack of support, and to work with the organization to develop action plans to improve the work environment. This service uses the tool from the Center for Creative Leadership called "KEYS: Assessing the Climate for Creativity." The service has four major components:

1. KEYS survey to identify the strengths and opportunities for improvement
2. Interviews with members of the organization to identify the underlying causes of the KEYS results and to identify possible actions that can sustain and build upon the strengths while improving the areas that were identified as possible problems.
3. Results Workshop to present the results to the organization and develop recommendations for improvement.
4. Action Planning with the management team to develop a workable plan to act upon the findings.

The KEYS survey is designed specifically to assess the obstacles and stimulants to creativity in the work environment. It is a reliable, valid measure of the elements in the work environment that can impact creativity. KEYS is based on 12 years of research by Dr. Teresa Amabile of Harvard University in association with the Center for Creative Leadership.

# **Enhancing the Work Environment**

***"Keep doing what you're doing. Or, if you want to spark innovation, rethink how you motivate, reward, and assign work to people."***

**Dr. Teresa M. Amabile**



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## The KEYS Scales

Dr. Amabile's research identified six stimulants to creativity and two obstacles to creativity that are present in work environments. The stimulants and obstacles affect the two outcomes of creativity and productivity.

### Organizational Stimulants:

- ◇ **Organizational encouragement of creativity** - an organizational culture that encourages creativity through the fair, constructive judgment of ideas, reward and recognition for creative work, mechanisms for developing new ideas, and active flow of ideas, and a shared vision of what the organization is trying to do.
- ◇ **Supervisory encouragement of creativity** - A supervisor who serves as a good work model, sets goals appropriately, supports the work group, values individual contributions, and shows confidence in the work group.
- ◇ **Work Group Supports** - A diversely skilled work group in which people communicate well, are open to new ideas, constructively challenge each other's work, trust and help each other, and feel committed to the work they are doing.
- ◇ **Freedom** - Freedom in deciding what work to do or how to do it; a sense of control over one's work.
- ◇ **Sufficient Resources** - Access to appropriate resources, including funds, materials, facilities, and information.
- ◇ **Challenging Work** - A sense of having to work hard on challenging tasks and important projects.

### Organizational Obstacles:

- ◇ **Organizational Impediments** - An organizational culture that impedes creativity through internal political problems, harsh criticism of new ideas, destructive internal competition, an avoidance of risk, and an overemphasis on the status quo.
- ◇ **Workload Pressure** - Extreme time pressures, unrealistic expectations for productivity, and distractions from creative work.

### Outcomes:

- ◇ **Creativity** - A creative organization or unit, where a great deal of creativity is called for and where people believe they actually produce creative work.
- ◇ **Productivity** - An efficient, effective, and productive organization or unit.