**Personal Influence – Encouraging New Ideas**

#### What to Know:

Employees who are closest to the work are often the ones who have the best ideas for changes, improvements and problem-solving. Asking employees for their input on a regular basis is empowering and sends the message that employee expertise is valued and leveraged.

#### Mythbusters:

Change is necessary, but reinventing the wheel isn’t. Before jumping into a big change or deciding to move forward with a new idea, challenge yourself and others to think through the pros and cons. Consider the anticipated and unanticipated impact. Identify who else the change may affect and invite them into the conversation. Welcome and encourage all new ideas and be thoughtful about taking action.

**Questions to Ask:**

* What gets in the way of working on new and better ways of doing things in relation to our business priority? What barriers do we face? After the team responds, ask “why” those things get in the way. Keep asking why until you get to the root of the issue.
* What types of things do we need to work on improving or innovating so we can better accomplish our goals?
* What happens when a new idea is expressed? Are people receptive? Do we take action? Why or why not?
* What happens when someone tries a new idea and fails? How could this be improved?
* How could your work be structured differently to allow more time for making improvements?
* What are formal and informal channels for sharing new ideas? How could we make it easier to share?
* What could the organization do to leverage the knowledge and experience of employees to make our organization more innovative?

**Best Practices:**

* It is important to create an environment where new ideas are welcome, personal risk taking is encouraged, and creativity is valued. Stress the importance of creativity and set aside time for brainstorming in meetings.
* When new ideas are being generated, practice giving the additive feedback of “yes, and…” in response to an idea rather than “no, but…” This can unleash positive energy that builds a collaborative climate.
* Having fun with colleagues and trying new activities together can help us to reshape our approaches to problems and look at things in a new way.
* Use social media as a way of posing questions and ask for solutions. Ask employees to vote on the best idea.
* Building a diverse team provides a variety of perspectives, experiences, and insights to accelerate problem solving.

#### What Managers Can Do:

Publicly recognize and reward new ideas, even if they are small incremental changes.

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Provide the resources needed to implement the ideas worth acting upon and recognize those responsible for generating the idea.

#### What Employees Can Do:

Sometimes we propose new ideas that are great but not aligned with the priorities of the organization. Other times, the team may not have the bandwidth to take on something new. Check with your manager or team to see where your efforts will be most appreciated – where do others see the greatest need for change? Are there initiatives on the backburner that you can take charge of and own?

You have great ideas and others do too. When you come up with a suggestion, run it by others to see if you can tweak and refine the idea before bringing it to your manager and/or other teams.

Confusion, slow processes, lack of information, or interpersonal conflict may be red flags that you can improve the workflow. When you feel frustrated or stuck, ask others for their ideas. See if you can put your heads together to come up with new or modified approaches.

#### What Leadership Can Do:

Set the tone for what employees should be innovating around. Is it the customer experience, products, process improvement?Share stories of not only successful innovations, but also situations where employees may have taken a risk that failed. Employees are more likely to try out new ideas when they feel comfortable that it is ok to try something and potentially fail.

Provide the resources needed to implement the ideas worth acting upon and recognize those responsible for generating the idea.

**Watch:**

* [Job Crafting - Amy Wrzesniewski on creating meaning in your own work](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_igfnctYjA)

**Read:**

* [*18 Ways to Actively Encourage Company Innovation*](https://smallbiztrends.com/2015/09/encourage-company-innovation.html)
* [*Groupthink: The Brainstorming Myth*](http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/01/30/groupthink)
* [Idea Diversity: Key to Building a Culture of Innovation](https://www.spigit.com/blog/building-culture-of-innovation/)
* *Coaching for Innovation: Tools and Techniques for Encouraging New Ideas in the Workplace by Cristina Bianchi and Maureen Steele*
* *Ideaship: How to Get Ideas Flowing into the Workplace by Jack Foster*