Un-Managing

Unleashing the Creative Beast in your Team

by Tara Hunt, Citizen Agency
outline

• the beast
• the innovative beast
• the creative beast
• the unleashing
the beast
the starfish:
small pieces, loosely joined
starfish principles

- autonomous individuals & teams
- catalysts
- champions
- distributed responsibilities
- common ideology & goals
the innovative beast
now, how did I get stuck in this darned lightbulb again?!
on innovation

- myths of innovation (Berkun 2007)
- conditions for innovation
- ways to kill innovation
- ...onto a new direction: creativity
the myths of innovation

Scott Berkun, 2007
myth #1:
the ‘eureka’ moment
myth #2:
there is a clear path to innovation
myth #3: people dig new ideas
myth #4:
the lone inventor
myth #5: “I’m not really that creative”
myth #6:
you’ll know innovation when you see it
myth #7:
the best ideas win
myth #8:
inovation is always good
“don’t focus on ‘innovating’, focus on trying to solve a problem”

Scott Berkun, 2007
conditions for innovation
conditions for innovation:

“my terms are as follows...”
there has to be a mix of...

- A motivation or direction
- Creative thinking / experimenter mentality
- Ability to convert dead ends into new motivations / directions
- Desire to challenge (or sometimes ignorance of) the status quo
- Threshold for risk & comfort w/uncertainty
- Time + $$$ for work

Scott Berkun, 2007
three types of people needed for innovative teams
“more, but no less...”

creator

catalyst

champion
innovative teams include:

- **creator** - high-level thinker, extremely “wacky” ideas
- **catalyst** - a ‘connector’ who recognizes those ideas and connects them to solutions
- **champion** - paves through the nay-sayers to get the idea to market
case study:
Post-it™ Notes
how to kill innovation 101
innovation killers

- more management layers (hierarchies)
- paperwork, reports & reviews
- overplanning
- competition
- favoring the go-getters
- risk aversion
- skewing to high-level thinking
- valuing deadlines over doing it right
- demanding consensus
kathy sierra on consensus:

- No sharp edges
- No color
- Nobody hates it
instead of saying this:

“Sounds like an interesting idea, but it doesn’t fit into this year’s budget...”
say this:

“I have a budget set aside for employee initiatives. Put together a cost analysis and let’s see if we can make it work...”
instead of saying this:

“That project just doesn’t fit into our current priority list...”
say this:

“Tell me about how this will improve our customer’s experience...”
instead of saying this:

“It won’t work...”
say this:

“We tried something similar a couple of years back and it didn’t fly, explain how your idea/plan is different...”
instead of saying this:

“Senior management won’t ever go for it...”
say this:

“Let me arrange a meeting for you with [insert Sr. Manager name here]...”
or even better:

“You should contact [insert Sr. Manager name here]. This seems like an idea that is right up her alley...”
the creative beast
Thinking about solving the innovation question in the framework of encouraging every day creativity is more helpful. People are more happy when they are being creative (not innovative).

why creative & not innovative?
conditions for creativity

- a safe space (ability to say potentially ‘dumb’ things)
- start from simple, move to difficult – game flow
- moving from personal to communal
- introducing different perspectives
- experimentation

- celebration of risk-taking
- transparency + openness
- change of environment
- fun, laughter & enjoyment of activity
- clear understanding of rewards
- oodles of encouragement
creative work environments
open spaces
“great for collaboration”
room for personalization
“to feel at home”
close to parks, coffee shops, etc.
“don’t lock them in the office”

google hq
healthy snacks & drinks
“provide brain food”
citizen space
out in the open meeting spaces
“there are no secrets here!”
creation of personal connections
“do team stuff apart from work”
the unleashing
how to unleash

- don’t manage, motivate
- the myths of motivation
- how to motivate
- random ideas [throw ‘em at the wall, see if they stick]
the myths of motivation
myth #1: People aren’t intrinsically motivated
myth #2:
Rewards (employee of the week, free stuff, bonuses, etc.) will motivate people.
why not rewards?

1. **It’s not sustainable** – As soon as you withdraw the punishment or reward, the motivation disappears.

2. **You get diminishing returns** – If the punishment or rewards stay at the same levels, motivation slowly drops off. To get the same motivation next time requires a bigger reward.

3. **It hurts intrinsic motivation** – Punishing or rewarding people for doing something removes their own innate desire to do it on their own. From now on you must punish/reward every time to get them to do it.

[source: Alfie Kohn]
myth #3: The threat of severe consequences (job loss, demotion, etc.) will motivate people.
how to motivate 101
what motivates?
intrinsic motivation

[Malone and Lepper (1987)]
promoting intrinsic motivation

- challenge
- curiosity
- control
- fantasy
- self-imposed competition
- cooperation
- recognition

[http://education.calumet.purdue.edu/vockel/EdPsyBook/Edpsy5/Edpsy5_intrinsic.htm]
silly random ideas

- Use the rules of Improv games: “Yes, and...” “Make the other guy look good” “No apologizing”
- Celebrate the risk takers: fail gloriously
- Use an internal social network with awesome silly things like ‘sending virtual presents’
- The Open Door policy is dead: Use the Managing by Wandering Around method. Not to ‘watch’, but to engage.
- Trade jobs days: the Senior Management works with customers and vice versa. Discuss afterwards.
- Take the boardroom tables out of the boardrooms and replace them with moveable furniture.
- Have an internal BarCamp, where everyone presents whatever they would like to
licensing:
about those rockin’ images:

- Most are from iStockphoto.com (totally cool site)
- except for:
  - aeron chair [google image search p.14]
  - image from Kathy Sierra’s site Creating Passionate Users [diagram on consensus p.28]
  - images of cool workspaces thanks to Flickr CC-share alike licensing and Veerle Pieters awesome group: Inspiring Workspaces! (p.42-47)
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