

# How-To Boost Your Creativity



Every creative brain experiences occasional lulls. Losing creativity can be discouraging and can make solving some of your work problems more difficult. Before you give up, try the following tips to boost your creativity:

## Collaborate with Others

Two minds are better than one when you want to foster innovative thinking. This prevents you from circling through the same ideas.

Be open minded to another person's perspective. Teams often contribute valuable feedback.

## Go for a Walk

A short walking break could save you hours of brainstorming and increase the quality of your work.

According to a study co-authored by Marily Opezzo, a Stanford doctoral graduate in educational psychology, and Daniel Schwartz, a professor at Stanford Graduate School of Education, shows that creative thinking improves while a person is walking and shortly thereafter. Creative output increased by 60 percent.

## Meditate

To get creative, we need to reach our subconscious. Meditation is a powerful tool to quiet the logical mind. You can then awaken your subconscious which helps

you uncover new ideas.

## **Improve Your Mood**

An optimistic mind is more open to new experiences and situations. When you are negative, your brain becomes more analytical and narrowly focused.

### **How-To Improve Mood**

- Get some sun
- Force a smile
- Listen to music
- Write down the positive things in your life

## **Unplug**

Your best ideas probably do not come when you are sitting in front of a computer. More likely, you are hiking, skiing, journaling, baking, or doing another activity that you love.

In fact, excessive screen time can damage your brain. According to Psychology Today, “excessive screen time is associated with structural and functional changes in brain regions involving emotional processing, executive attention, decision making, and cognitive control.”

Step away from the screen to get inspired and document it on the computer later.

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## **How-To Get Your Boss To Support**

# Your Ideas



Business owners want their companies to grow and eager employees move the company forward. If you want to advance your career, it is important that you promote new ideas for business development.

If you have a new idea for your employer – great! However, any great idea can be dismissed if it's not presented well. Do your homework. Your boss will take your idea more seriously if you are prepared.

## Align the Values of the Company

The most imperative step is to ensure your idea aligns with the company's core values. For example, Patagonia clothing company is committed to using environmentally friendly methods to create their products. An accepted pitch probably aligns with sustainability. Before pursuing your project, make sure that it withholds the values of your company.

### Examples of Core Values

- A commitment to sustainability and acting in an environmentally friendly way
- A commitment to innovation and excellence
- A commitment to helping people less fortunate
- A commitment to building a strong community
- A commitment to immediate customer service

# Get the Support of Your Co-Workers

Enlist the support of your co-workers. This could be staff that would also work on the project and benefits from the results. To achieve your co-worker's support, try testing the concept on reliable team members.

Your boss could also be impressed with your ability to lead team members. Communication, management, and passion are necessary in leadership positions that could be a career goal.

# Have an Idea of Why the Project Will Benefit the Company

Every project requires company resources. The project might cost the company money, employee hours, or new software. You should be able to answer why your project is worth company resources. If you cannot answer this question, then it is almost certain that your idea will be dismissed.

Pursuing an efficiency solution or new source of revenue, could send you on the fast track to advancing your career.

## How the Project Will Benefit the Company

- Increase revenue
- Reduce expenses
- Improve efficiency
- Solution to problem that the manager has been trying to achieve
- Help your team become more successful

# Be Flexible with Feedback

Your boss will have questions and feedback to your idea. That is a good thing! If they did not like your idea than it would have been dismissed. Be prepared to make modifications to the project and take shared ownership.

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# What Not to Say in Emails



Email can be a lifesaver to communicate effectively in business. You are able to CC messages, attach important files, and keep record of communication.

However, it is important to know how to craft an appropriate email. Emails are best used to communicate facts, such as meeting times. Learn what to avoid in an email so your business can maintain effective communication.

## Blame

Nobody likes to hear that they did something wrong. Email does not allow you to have an effective conversation about the situation. Discuss the issue in person. You will be provided the opportunity to explain how to perform the task correctly.

## Disagreements

Everyone makes mistakes but it's difficult to own up to them at work. We may not want to ruin our professional reputation, hurt our relationship with our boss, or feel like we failed. We should always take responsibility when we are at fault. However, if we are not to blame, we should not be held responsible for a colleague's mistake.

Do not alert your boss over email if this occurs. Schedule a meeting and explain the situation in person. You are more likely to be taken seriously.

# Lengthy Explanations

Emails are not novels. They should be condensed to explain factual points, scheduling, and status updates. Wait to tell your long story until you are in person. Your co-workers are likely to get lost in a long email.

# Emotional Reactions

Leave emotions out of emails - good and bad! An email diminishes the importance of emotional information. Emails are for facts.

“...if you’ve got great news that will get everyone stoked up, it will be more effective and create more positive energy if you deliver it in person. A group meeting to announce a big sales win, for example, is like an instant celebration. By contrast, an email announcing the same win seems a bit like an afterthought. Similarly, if you’ve got bad news or criticism, it will be better received, and more likely to be helpful, if it’s delivered in person. If you use email, it will seem like you don’t care or that you’re cowardly.” -Geoffrey James, INC.

# A Resignation

You should leave on a good note when you quit a job. If you don’t, your behavior could affect future job opportunities. Quitting a job may feel awkward. However, it pays off to quit professionally.

Do not quit your job over email. Eventually, you will have to meet your employer to sign paperwork anyway.

## Appropriate Method to Quit a Job

- Request a Meeting with Your Boss
- Explain Your Reasons for Leaving
- Provide a Letter of Resignation
- Allow Two Weeks Before Leaving the Position

# Informalities

Professional emails should be polished and formal. Use correct grammar, punctuation, and avoid the emoji's! Your emails should not read like a text. You are writing to another professional- not a friend.

## Professional Language Tips

- Start with a greeting: For example, **Dear Katie** or **Hi Katie** for more casual relationships.
  - State your purpose: For example, **I am writing in reference to....**
  - Add your closing remarks: Thank your reader. **Thank you for your patience and cooperation** or **Thank you for your consideration** and then follow up with, **If you have any questions or concerns, don't hesitate to let me know** and **I look forward to hearing from you.**
  - End with a closing: Include an appropriate closing with your name. For example, **Best Regards** or **Thank you.**
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# How-To Overcome Interview Fears



Does your heart pound when you walk into a job interview? Do your palms start sweating? If you suffer from interview related anxiety you are not alone!

According to a 2013 survey from Harris Interactive and Everest College, 92% of U.S. adults get anxiety when interviewing for jobs.

Your anxiety could be hurting your chances of landing the job. Employers are looking for confident candidates that will be able to communicate with clients and

colleagues. An impressive resume rarely overcomes a poor first impression.

As a recruiter, I see many well-qualified candidates lose the job due to a poor interview. Learn how to get your nerves under control with these interview preparation tips:

## **Know that the Interviewers Want You to Succeed**

Interviews are timely and expensive for employers. Hiring managers want to find a well-equipped employee quickly.

Instead of assuming that hiring managers are trying to find something wrong with you, focus on showcasing your accomplishments and goals. They want to know that you are a good fit for the company.

## **Recognize Why You Want the Job**

Most of us feel more passionate about a task when we have purpose. You need to feel the same passion to create a successful job interview. If you are searching for a new job, you probably are unhappy with your current position, need an increase in pay, or change in lifestyle. Keep the reason in mind.

**There are two questions that you should be prepared to answer:**

1. Why are you interested in the company?
2. Why are you interested in the job?

Research the company to answer those questions well.

## **Prepare Your Attire the Night Before**

You want to scramble as little as possible the morning of your interview. Lay out your outfit the night before to cut time and stress. This also ensures your clothes are professional, stain-free and pressed.



# Meditate Before Your Interview

A resume and job experience gets you in front of an interview team. Once you land the interview, you need to be calm and collected. Meditation is used to develop concentration, increase clarity, and decrease stress. For the best results, meditate for weeks approaching the interview and the morning the interview takes place.

## Meditation for Job Interviews

To meditate and relax, simply take deep breathes in and out at a rate of 2-3 seconds in, and 2-3 seconds out. As you exhale, repeat any or all of the following thoughts in your mind. Do this for even a couple of minutes and you will feel your stress and anxiety decrease.

I am prepared and confident

The right job will find me

I am humble but confident in front of others

I belong where I am appreciated

# Research the Company and Interview Team

Perform thorough research so you have few surprises during the interview. Research the LinkedIn profile of the people you will interview with. This will help you get more familiar with their backgrounds and may help you find some common ground to talk about in the interview to help reduce the stress.

Know the products and services that the company provides. Do a quick Google search of the company's background, news, and recent events. The more you know, the better. Surprises can spark anxiety, but knowledge can spark confidence

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# How To Achieve a Healthy Work Environment



A healthy work environment is important to your team and can be achieved fairly easily. It boosts productivity and happiness and increases employee retention. If you have not created a healthy workplace, then it is time to make that effort, especially in this tight market for talent. Learn what creates a healthy workplace and start making improvements for the future of your company.

## Offer Rewards and Incentives for Superior Performance

Rewarding employee performance is strategic. You must offer desirable incentives that fit the company's budget. If strategized correctly, rewards can lead to a more motivated and positive team.

There are many types of benefits that you can offer employees. This includes bonuses, gift cards, and event tickets. You may choose to reward an entire team or specific team member for achieving a goal.

See *20 Techniques for Acknowledging Your Employee's Good Work* for more ideas on rewards and incentives.

## Choose Stimulating Paint Colors

The workplace can have a big impact on attitude, and colors can profoundly affect productivity. Angela Wright is a world-renowned color psychologist. She

developed the scientifically tested color-affect system. According to Wright's research, the intensity of a color determines whether it is stimulating or soothing. More saturated colors are best for the office place.

Wright's theory states that blue is connected to the mind, green to balance, yellow to emotion, and red to body.

The most obvious answer to a productive work place would be blue. However, you might want to incorporate green trim to create balance.

## **Offer Stand-Up Desks**

Stand up desks have become part of many company's employee wellness programs. For example, Google provides standup desks for all employees. Facebook also has more than 250 employees using standup desks. Even I use a flexible desk to allow sitting or standing.

Research by Texas A&M Health Science Service Center concludes that employees in a call center are 46% more productive when using a standup desk.

### **Benefits of Standup Desk**

- Improves Focus
- Increases Energy
- Reduces Back Pain

## **Be Flexible on Timing**

Different people are more productive during various parts of the day. Some people perform better with a morning workout. Others get in early but need a 1.5 lunch break to renew their day. If your company's processes allow flexibility with timing, give it to your employees. It also helps attract people that may have a longer commute when hiring.

Allow a 2-hour window for morning arrival. You can also allow extended lunch breaks. Figure out what is right for the company and be as flexible as possible to your employee's lifestyles.

# Communication Skills

The ability to communicate effectively within a company is essential. The skill prevents misunderstandings, which leads to errors and missed deadlines.

In our digital age, companies often communicate over email, text, and phone. Do not underestimate the significance of meetings to prevent confusion.

## Tips to Communicate Well

- Practice Active Listening
- Use Strong Eye Contact
- Explain Tasks and Provide Detailed Handout or meeting agenda with time targets
- Speak in a Friendly Tone
- Be Open-Minded to Other Opinions
- Accept and Encourage Feedback

# Improve the Lighting

Studies show that office lighting can play a role in employee productivity.

“Effectively lit and attractive environments enhance your image, help you recruit and retain high-value employees, and increase the total value of your facility.”  
Philips Systems

To effectively light your office, incorporate natural light. If your workspace does not have windows then use broad spectrum lightbulbs. Broad spectrum produces the most similar affect as natural light.

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# How-To Receive a Raise at Work



At some point, you are going to want a raise a work. Maybe you have been contacted by recruiters for jobs that pay more, but you would like to stay if your current employer would give you a raise. It is important to know the appropriate procedures to asking for a raise. This could determine whether you receive the compensation you deserve.

The following tips can help you maximize your raise when it is time to ask:

## Show Your Value

The most essential part of receiving a pay raise is showing your added value to the company. Prepare a list of goals that you have accomplished before entering the meeting. Your employer wants to know why they should give you a raise. Demonstrate your value through performance evidence.

### Examples of Added Value

- Cost Saving Report
- Staff Development
- Important Projects Achieved
- Productivity Improvement
- Customer Service Reviews

# **Read Your Employee Handbook**

The employee handbook outlines when pay raises are granted. If your handbook states that pay raises are granted annually then you should not expect a meeting until the appropriate date. Some pay raises can vary based on performance. In that case, prepare a value report.

## **Talk About the Future**

Your employer will probably ask you about your plan for the future within the company. Have a plan of other projects and improvements that you would like to achieve. And if you've been contacted by recruiters about other jobs that pay more, tell your employer about the calls and ask them if you might be able to get a salary adjustment. But again, make sure you can show how you've added value.

## **Be Prepared to Hear “No”**

There is always the chance that you will hear “no” in response to a salary increase. A “no” does not mean that you will not receive the raise at some point. Usually your employer will respond with improvement that they would like to see before providing the raise. Listen to their constructive criticism so you can receive the raise in the future. And if you have been getting calls from recruiters for other higher paying opportunities, getting a “No” on your request for a raise may indicate you may want to talk with these recruiters to see what your options are.

## **Timing is Everything**

Use common sense when you are asking for a raise. If you know the company is struggling financially, it is not time to ask for a raise. Instead, you should start searching for a job in a higher paying company.

You should also schedule the meeting at your employer's convenience. Send them an email requesting a meeting and be patient. You are more likely to receive the raise if your employer does not feel rushed.

# Dress the Part

Your first impression will set the tone for the meeting. There is a saying from career coaches that you should dress for the role you seek. In this case, if you want to be considered for a raise or promotion you should try to start dressing appropriately for that next level.

Take how you dress seriously, but since you are approaching your current employer you probably don't need to dress as you would for a formal interview. But make sure you look professional and be confident.

# Don't Compare Your Salary to Colleagues

It can be disappointing to find out that someone in the same job position has a higher salary. However, a number of items factor into their pay scale.

*Has your colleague been with the company longer than you?*

*Did your colleague have more job experience upon entering the position?*

*Does your colleague have more education than you?*

Do not tell your employer that you are being treated unfairly. Focus on why you deserve the raise to be taken seriously. In fact, letting your employer know you know how much your colleagues are making can create more problems for you than it can solve. Best to stay away from bringing this up.

Asking for a raise can be awkward. Go into the meeting prepared and confident for your best opportunity of receiving a raise. As a Specialty Quality and Regulatory Recruiter, I help job candidates negotiate and maximize their pay rate upon entering the position. A well planned conversation with your employer about your salary can help you determine if you have a future with the company, or if it's time to consider a change.

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# How-To Reset a Bad Work Day



We all have bad days at work. Sometimes, our bad days initiate from a missed deadline, late arrival, or office politics. You could also have just woken up cranky.

Before you get too discouraged, know that you can reset any bad day. The following five tips can help you reset your day.

## Communicate with Person that You Have Had Problems

Poor communication is a frequent reason for stress. Miscommunication can lead to confusion and anxiety. If your stress is related to another coworker, start by confronting them with your issue. The issue might not be as bad as you think and by getting some resolution or understanding to the problem you decrease the stress.

Emails work if your stress is regarding clarifying a project. For greater problems, you should consider a one-on-one meeting where you use polite language and encourage feedback. A group meeting could be necessary for more serious conflicts.

## Finish Your Priority Tasks

When we have stacks of work, we often forget to prioritize. Unfortunately, when we do not prioritize, we can miss deadlines and turn in insufficient work. Prioritizing is essential to decrease work related stress and improve focus.



To reset a stressful work day, make a list of all the tasks that you need to complete. Figure out what needs to be completed immediately. To avoid this problem again, prioritize your tasks at the beginning of the week. You can keep track on Google Calendar or iCal.

## **Get Some Vitamin D**

Vitamin D, or the “happy vitamin”, is essential to improving mood. The essential vitamin can be obtained from the sun. An estimated one billion people in the United States are Vitamin D deficient. If you work in a cloudy climate or have long office hours, you probably do not receive the vitamin D that your body needs.

To reset a bad work day, go on a walk outside during your lunch break. “Approximately five-to-30 minutes of sun exposure between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. at least twice a week to the face, arms, legs, or back without sunscreen” is sufficient, according to the National Institutes of Health’s vitamin D fact sheet. You should always wear sunscreen if you are in the sun for a prolonged period of time.

A vitamin D supplement can also help severe deficiencies.

## **Listen to Music**

Next time you are in a bad mood at work, put on headphones and listen to your favorite song. Music arouses emotions and stimulates your mind.

Valerie N. Stratton, PhD, and Annette H. Zalanowski, of Penn State University, Altoona, studied college student’s responses to music when studying. The students kept a two-week music listening diary that included their moods.

The findings of the study concluded that students were more optimistic, joyful, friendly, and calm after listening to music. Every positive mood, except mood, was elevated according to their study.

## **Smile**

“Fake it until you make it!” We hear that phrase in business often. However, faking a smile can also improve your mood, reduce stress, and lower heart rate.

When you are stressed at work, force a smile on your face. You may feel strange at first but smiling activates areas of the brain associated with reward and triggers release of neurotransmitter dopamine, which is released when happy.

Everyone has bad work days. However, you can make small changes to improve your mood and boost productivity. Try these tips to reset your bad work day.

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## **How-To Not Land the Job**



You have revamped your resume, applied for hundreds of positions, and you still do not have a job. What gives?

The problem could be your interview skills. There are a variety of nonverbal and verbal cues that can immediately turn off potential employers. As a recruiter, I have seen highly experienced candidates ruin their chance of getting a job with inappropriate social cues. It's important to know what these traits are because they can be very easy to avoid.

## **Answering Phone Calls or Texts**

Most of us are hooked onto our smartphones. We rarely leave the house without them. While this is appropriate during our personal time, it is not acceptable to text or answer a call during an interview. The employer could feel as though the interview is not a priority. Therefore, the job is not important to you. Turn your cell phone on silent before entering the interview.

# Timeliness

We are all late occasionally. However, do not be late for an interview! If you are late for an interview then chances are that you could be seen as being late to meetings or on projects.

Tardiness can be recoverable. Call as soon as you realize that you are going to be late. Take an extra minute to compose yourself and apologize when you get to the interview.

# Confidence

The feeling of sitting across from a hiring manager can make your heart race. Nevertheless, to get the job, we need to collect ourselves and act confidently. If you panic during an interview then you will probably never land the position.

Confidence is an essential quality that many candidates fail to exude. Even if you do not feel cool, calm, and collected, there are a few ways to make you appear that way.

- Take Deep Breathes
- Sit Still
- Make Eye Contact
- Slow Your Speech and don't ramble
- Think Positively
- Don't speak negatively of current or former employers/bosses

# Interview Attire

Leave the jeans behind when you are dressing for an interview. The first impression you make will be by your attire. Dress in a way that is professionally appropriate.

## Attire for Interview

- For men: A suit- matching jacket and pants, dress shirt, tie and formal

shoes (shined)

- For women: A pant suit or mid-length skirt, or dress and formal shoes
- Avoid loud colors and strong perfumes or colognes
- Clothes should be clean and wrinkle-free
- Hair should be neat, clean, and conservative

This is the proper attire for the first interview. Your second interview should still be professional but may be more relaxed depending on the company and position.

## Cursing

Cursing is risky move during an interview. Some people do not mind the occasional curse word but for others, cursing is a deal breaker. Be safe and do not curse during your interview.

As you prepare for interviews, keep in mind that you are showcasing how you will act with co-workers in the office. Present yourself professionally for the best chance to get the job.

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# Risks Great Business Leaders Must Take in Order to Succeed



Good leaders are often reliable and hard workers. However, what makes a good leader become great is their ability to take risks.

Risks can be a scary word to many of us. When we take a risk, we could lose something valuable. Great leaders see opportunity in failure and potential from the learning experience. If you want to be a great business leader, you will have to take risks at some point.

Learn some of the most common risks every great business leader faces:

## **Risk Failing**

We all risk failing when we try something new, but failing is not always a bad thing. Your efforts are the key to success. Successful business leaders can view failure as learning process.

**Failure accomplishes two very important objectives:**

1. We are willing to embrace risking failure by doing something risky. You can't be successful unless you try!
2. We discover the proper expectation mentally. Plan for the best but prepare for the worst. This allows the opportunity for recovery and another attempt.

## **Risk Admitting that You Don't Know**

We are conditioned to have quick and confident answers. Unfortunately, if we are always providing an answer, we will never have the opportunity to learn from other perspectives.

For business leaders, the risk of saying "I don't know" can be the opportunity to engage a team. Use the opportunity to gather new ideas with group discussions and brain storming sessions.

## **Risk Losing Everything**

Whether you have been in business for forty years or one, every company makes financial risks to get ahead. Sometimes, the choice can be a plunge. However, a successful business leader continues to take smart risks from the knowledge of

previous learning experiences.

## **Risk of Stepping into Unfamiliar Territory**

Stepping into unfamiliar territory starts from day one of opening a business. You will continue to expand your boundaries as your business expands.

Stepping into unfamiliar territory could include providing a new product or service, opening a branch office, or hiring a team. We must make changes or our company will remain stagnant.

## **Risking Being Misunderstood**

Thinking outside of the box can cause people to question your sanity! As a business leader, your character will be questioned at some point. After all, your decisions are possibly affecting the future of the company. Nevertheless, stick to what you think is right. You did not become a leader by being just like everyone else.

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## **How-To Keep Employees Engaged With Their Work**



Every empowered team has one thing in common - they are engaged with their work. Achieving engaged employees may seem simple. Unfortunately, only 32

percent of workers are engaged in their jobs. As a business owner, this is a frightening statistic! We want employees that are passionate about their careers.

As a recruiter, I seek candidates that enjoy their career field. However, after I find the employee, it's up to the business leader to keep them happy. Learn six tricks to keeping your employees happy at work.

## **Be Transparent**

Transparency should be core in a company's values. It develops trust and productivity within the organization.

To be transparent, make important information available. This does not mean that you should broadcast your company's finances. Instead, create charts on the progress of meeting company goals.

You can also trust employees to make decisions. This may seem scary at first. After all, you are loosening the reins when an employee starts making decisions. However, they will become more invested in company operations and will learn to take ownership of their projects.

## **Take Responsibility for Mistakes**

Nobody wants to take blame for something that was not their fault. It will be very difficult for you to maintain the respect of others if you do not take responsibility for your actions.

Apologize when you know that your decision was not best for the company. Your employees will appreciate your honesty and you will gain their respect.

## **Make Training Available**

Employees who are enthusiastic to learn are some of the best additions to your team. Make sure training is available to help their skills develop. This could be webinars, online courses, mentoring, or job shadowing. These passionate employees can potentially be your managers and directors. By providing training and learning options you increase the chance they will want to stay on your team.

## **Allow Individuality in Dress Code**

Suit and tie attire are a thing of the past for most jobs. Allow your employees individuality in their clothing -within reason. You can provide guidelines for what is appropriate such as no t-shirts, jeans or sandals. However, small changes that allow self-expression can make employees feel more engaged in their job position.

## **Thank Employees for Good Work**

Everyone likes to know that they are appreciated. Acknowledge your employees hard work. For large projects, you may choose to reward an employee with a gift certificate, bonus, or extra vacation time.

See [20 Techniques for Acknowledging Your Employee's Good Work](#) for ideas on thanking employees for their good work.

## **Provide Flexibility on Hours**

Different employees are more productive different hours of the day. If your office allows the flexibility, provide your employees with a two-hour window for coming to work. For example, your employees must start work between 7:00 AM - 9:00 AM. They can leave from 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM. This flexibility works for employees that workout in the morning or drop their kids off at school. It can also attract potential employees that have a long commute or have to deal with a lot of traffic that might not otherwise consider your company for employment.

Take the time to build a company with engaged employees. You may find that you have a decreased turnover rate, increased productivity, and you have a team that is easier to manage. Not to mention, you will build a healthier, happier working environment.