



Excel Leader Advisory Letter

ISSUED BY THE EXCEL LEADERSHIP GROUP

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Excel's Mission Statement

Help business leaders exceed their goals by creating a culture that unleashes the talents and creativity of all associates.

Thought for January

"He who finds a new path is a pathfinder, even if the trail has to be found again by others, and he who walks far in advance of his contemporaries is a leader, even though centuries may pass before he is recognized as such and intelligently followed."

-Ibn Khaldun



In today's competitive global economy, finding new approaches to existing problems and designing new products and services requires what has been termed "thinking outside the box". In other words, succeeding or even surviving in business dictates that we employ innovation and creativity at every opportunity. This is easier said than done for sure. What are some of the obstacles that stand in our way of being more creative? Mihaly Csikszentmihalely, professor and former chairman of the Department of Psychology at the University of Chicago suggests these four barriers to reaching our creative potential:

1. Some of us are simply exhausted by too many demands, and so have trouble activating our creative energy.
2. Some are too easily distracted and have trouble learning how to protect and channel creative energy.
3. Quite frankly, some of us are lazy or lack discipline for controlling the flow of creative energy.
4. The last obstacle is not knowing what to do with the energy we have.

To help you overcome these obstacles and improve creativity with your team, here are a few coaching tips:

1. Employ "brainstorming". Take every opportunity to work with your team to generate new ideas and possibilities. Ask "what if" questions to spur their creative energy. Also, during this process, avoid editing or censoring ideas ... no matter how farfetched they may seem at the time. Just let the ideas and energy flow!
2. Be adaptable and flexible. Adapting to changing circumstances is an important asset. Don't allow yourself to become emotionally upset when priorities change or something does not go according to plan. This stress can block creative thinking. Cultivate the habit of creating contingencies in case your "Plan A" falls through.
3. Remove the clutter. Clear your calendar and your workspace to allow time for creative thoughts. An overloaded agenda or a desk that is stacked with paper can make you feel overwhelmed and rob you of create energy.
4. Explore your "polarity". Explore the opposite. If you are an introvert, try acting like an

extrovert for a day. If you tend to be more on the analytical side, try to trust your intuition or “gut feelings” once.

5. Take time off. When we encounter barrier #1 above ... exhaustion that robs us of creative energy as a result of too many demands, we need to step back and take some time for ourselves. During this “time off”, engage in activities that you genuinely enjoy. This will help rejuvenate your energy and give you a renewed perspective.

As always, I encourage you to contact me anytime at mike@excelleadership.net with your comments and questions. Also, if I can be of assistance with your leadership needs, please contact me. We'll talk to you again in February. Best wishes for a happy, healthy and prosperous 2011!

Join our Web-based “community” devoted to open and honest discussions on topics related to leadership challenges and solutions. To join, simply visit TheExcelLeadershipGroup.net and click on “Community.”



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*Experience what coaching can do for you and others
on your company's leadership team.*