

coworkers ignite creativity best in the workplace

iQudo ideation study, San Francisco, May 2015.

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Page: 14



Molly Fakoury



Video: Pre-Study, New York, 04/2015: >> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0VjNh8_24v8



abstract

The iQudo ideation survey findings show that lack of time has a relatively minor influence on some peoples' ability to be resourceful on the job. The number one reason for people having their best ideas on the job are inspiring co-workers. The survey revealed that creativity is not solely based on the individual, but most importantly on the culture. The findings may have major implications for companies and how they approach creativity, and may well signal the need for a paradigm shift. It is up to leaders to foster collaborative relationships, establish a creative atmosphere, demand creativity and provide limited time to ponder.

what's the true key to on-the-job creativity?

Today, companies of all kinds need to continually generate new ideas in order to stay at the cutting edge. However, many people hired specifically to be creative find that they simply don't have ideas while at work. Why is this? Many people think that mental blocks arise due to stress or time pressure. There is another commonly-held belief that people need the right physical surroundings to fuel their creative fires. But ,what if the true key to thriving creativity is something else entirely?

iQudo ideation survey, San Francisco 05/2015

To determine where, when and how creativity thrives we interviewed 502 people from a cross-section of professions in San Francisco's financial and entrepreneurial district South of Market. The survey's key findings:

418 (83.7%) of the 502 respondents said they have their best ideas away from the workplace, outside working hours. For these respondents, time seems to be a crucial factor in having their best ideas in the workplace. When asked, WHY DON'T YOU HAVE YOUR BEST IDEAS ON THE JOB? the “job-uninspired” cited the following reasons (Multiple answers possible):

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Too many distractions (47.1) | 5. No creative atmosphere (18.6) |
| 2. No time (28.2) | 6. Other* (11.7) |
| 3. Too focused (26.9) | 7. Not enough fun activities (7.0) |
| 4. Stress (24.3) | 8. Not required (5.1) |

* “Other” reasons of the job-uninspired included lack of stimulation, passion, freedom, collaboration, fun.¹

Three out of the top four reasons they gave are related to time constraints, such as too many distractions, no time and stress. This finding bears out studies by Harvard² and Adobe³ showing that time is seen as a barrier to creativity.

inspiring co-workers: #1 reason for on-the-job creativity

However, 16.3 percent respondents (one in six) said that they do in fact get their best ideas on the job. Surprisingly, for most of the 84 respondents, time plays a minor role; almost half of the “job inspired” (47.7) cite „inspiring co-workers“ as the number one reason for their on-the-job creativity. The second highest factor is „creative atmosphere“ (29.1) and then “creativity is required.” (27.9). Time to ponder came in fourth place (20.9). (Multiple answers possible):

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Inspiring co-workers (47.7) | 4. Time to ponder (20.9) |
| 2. Creative atmosphere (29.1) | 5. Other* (18.6) |
| 3. Creativity is required (27.9) | 6. Not an office worker (1.2) |

* "Other" reasons of the job-inspired included being passionate about the work and being able to focus.⁴

the office: a place to have the best ideas

The survey results show, above all, that some people do actually have their best ideas on the job, despite time pressure. Simone Lendzian, Corporate Communication Manager, from *Adidas* says that, right before the new collections are being presented, the designers have to create new designs under massive time pressure. According to Dörte Spengler-Ahrens, Executive Creative Director of Jung/vonMatt, Hamburg, Germany (No. 1; W&V creative ranking 2014) ideas arise on the job: "SIMPLY BECAUSE IT'S A PLACE WHERE YOU CAN CONCENTRATE AND ARE NOT AS EASILY DISTRACTED." Oliver Voss, Head of Creation of *OliverVoss*, Hamburg states that a lot of ideas and concepts arise between 9am and 6pm.

lack of time is overrated

The job-inspired are creative at the workplace despite all its distractions, and for them, time pressure is not a major deterrent. This suggests that time as a factor in itself may be overrated. Some experts have even concluded that, instead of impeding it, time pressure actually boosts creativity. For instance, Alexander Schill, Chief Creative Officer of *Serviceplan*, one of Germany's top 3 creative agencies (No. 2; W&V creative ranking 2014), believes that time pressure is beneficial to creativity, because it

helps people focus on the things that matter. Going further, Oliver Voss, one of the world's top leading creatives in advertising, says: "YOU ARE NOT CREATIVE DESPITE LACK OF TIME, BUT BECAUSE OF IT. TIME PRESSURE HELPS TO CONCENTRATE AND FOCUS ON WORK."

creativity happens in the gap

What matters most for the job-inspired is their ability to inspire and be inspired by their co-workers. Therefore, to get creative juices to flow, leaders are better off providing a culture where people can be inspired by each other, instead of focusing primarily on plush interiors. What drives creativity in startup garages is the mutual trust and shared passion among the people involved, plus the fact that creativity is required for the company's survival and growth.

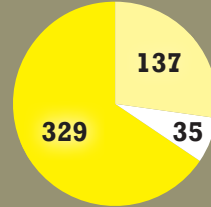
The garage example illustrates the point that, in relation to making creativity thrive, the quality of the human interaction by far outweighs other variables that may at first seem significant. Stefan Kolle, Head of Creation at *Kolle Rebbe*, a top communications agency based in Hamburg, Germany, says that, the culture in his agency is free from fear and is based on one thing above all else, which is collaboration. Kolle refers to a sentence he has heard once, that to him hits the nail on the head, 'We help each other to be great.' Kolle exclaims: "THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT. THUS, WHEN COLLEAGUES WHO HAVE A CORRESPONDING CREATIVE SPARK INTERACT, TOGETHER THEY FUEL THE CREATIVE FIRE. "



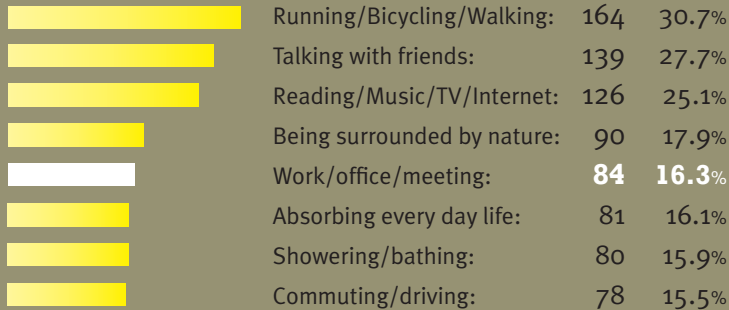
iQudo ideation survey, San Francisco 05/2015

DO YOU BELIEVE YOU ARE CREATIVE?

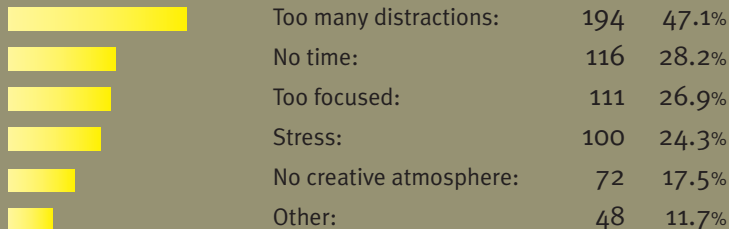
Yes:	329	65.5%
Sometimes:	137	27.3%
No:	35	7.0%
Don't know:	1	0.2%



WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR BEST IDEAS?¹ TOP 8




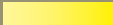



WHY DON'T YOU HAVE YOUR BEST IDEAS AT WORK?^{1,2}





Do not have their best ideas on the job:	418	83.7%
Do have their best ideas on the job: ¹	84	16.3%

WHY DO YOU HAVE YOUR BEST IDEAS AT WORK?^{1,3}

	Inspiring co-workers:	41	47.7%
	Creative atmosphere:	25	29.1%
	Creativity is required:	24	27.9%
	Time to ponder about ideas:	18	20.9%
	Other:	16	18.6%

WHAT DO YOU DO FOR A LIVING?

Marketing/sales:	89	17.7%
Finance/accounting:	70	13.9%
Technology:	51	10.2%
Creative worker:	50	10.0%
Entrepreneur/executive:	43	8.6%
Law	28	5.6%
Healthcare	27	5.4%
Retail	20	4.0%
Service/social worker:	15	3.0%
Student:	13	2.6%
Education:	12	2.4%
Unemployed:	8	1.6%
Other:	54	10.8%

RESPONDENTS: 502

San Francisco 05/2015



251



251

AGE

16-25:	97	19.3%
26-35:	171	34.1%
36-45:	114	22.7%
> 65:	13	2.6%

¹ Multiple answers possible.

² If people having their best ideas outside of work.

³ If people having their best ideas at work.

on-the-job creativity on the move

Executives and HR managers of innovative organizations like to ask themselves, “HOW DO WE FIND CREATIVE PEOPLE?” But, what if the very notion of the question is not right?

The iQudo findings may have major implications for companies of all kinds and how they approach creativity, and may well signal the need for a paradigm shift. Before now, creativity on the job has been thought to depend on the individual, on having enough time to ponder and to some extent on the corporate culture. Therefore, companies looked for creative people in order to achieve success in the race for fresh ideas. However, the survey results show that only 7 percent of respondents think of themselves as not creative. 65.5 percent of respondents regard themselves as creative and 27.3 percent consider themselves sometimes creative. Therefore, it seems obvious that the determining factor for job creativity is the culture. A better question therefore would be: “HOW CAN WE HELP EACH OTHER TO BE CREATIVE?” The survey findings shift some of the weight for producing ideas from employees to leaders. It is up to leaders to foster collaborative relationships, establish a creative atmosphere, demand creativity and provide limited time to ponder.

guidelines for on-the-job creativity

To facilitate optimal mutual inspiration among co-workers and enable a creative atmosphere to thrive, requires hiring the right mix of people, establishing an environment in which those people feel safe enough to voice

their wackiest notions, yet spontaneity and improvisation are treasured.

11 tips on how to best inspire each other

Here are 11 guidelines – extending right from recruitment through the ideation process itself. By applying the guidelines, companies can provide the context in which co-creation can take place and creativity can abound.

- ★ **Get out of the tunnel.** Under extreme time pressure, people are likely to hold on to a narrow point of view; take fast decisions and favor proven solutions. Colleagues, however, see problems from a bird's eye view, offer different perspectives and thereby open the horizon for unusual solutions. Executives should therefore provide time for informal conversations.
- ★ **Bring like-minded people to the table.** Surround yourself with people who share the same wavelength as you. People you would like to go for a sail trip together. Those are the people you are more likely to communicate with and build trust. Trust is a major building block for creativity, because if people trust each other, they are more likely to give honest feedback and come up with daring ideas.
- ★ **Get a genius on board.** Get the best creative thinker of your branch on board. A genius places high standards on himself and inspires others to deliver creative excellence. A genius quickly selects ideas based on his profound expertise, improves mediocre ones and sorts out the ones without future; thereby raising the change for an innovation to succeed.

- ★ **Provide diversity of perspectives.** People with different professional backgrounds facilitate out-of-the-box thinking. Steve Jobs once said: “PART OF WHAT MADE THE MACINTOSH GREAT WAS THAT THE PEOPLE WORKING ON IT WERE MUSICIANS, AND POETS, AND ARTISTS, AND ZOOLOGISTS, AND HISTORIANS WHO ALSO HAPPENED TO BE THE BEST COMPUTER SCIENTISTS IN THE WORLD.” Unusual perspectives can as well result from different cultural backgrounds.
- ★ **Provide a safe environment.** If people feel safe, they are more likely to voice their unusual or wacky ideas. If there is job uncertainty or angst in the air, people play safe and keep their lips sealed on their unconventional ideas. Management can foster a sense of security by establishing a positive failure culture. If mistakes are permitted, people will feel safe enough to share their thoughts openly.
- ★ **Give maximum freedom.** Allow people to do whatever they need to do in order to be creative. A sense of freedom in their behavior is essential for people to have the mental freedom creativity requires.
- ★ **Crealogue.** Maybe the fastest way to generate ideas is to crealogue [coined word from “creative” and “dialogue”]. Crealogueing is a process of volleying associations back and forth like playing ping pong. For leading a crealogue revealing your inner truth is essential. Truth spoken out is surprising. A conversation becomes meaningful the moment someone puts his cards on the table. A poker player would never lay his cards on the table. One wrong move, one blink too many and the money is gone. As in poker it might be a good idea to hide your cards in business too. But for having ideas, revealing the truth is like crossing the border into the unknown. Because you never know how the other one is going to take it. Truth spoken out is like fresh

water springing from deep within us. Because spring water is cold, it shocks us at first but then leaves a refreshing feeling on our skin. It leads us to new realizations about life. Truth spoken out is relieving too. There is no more hiding. Life is flowing without boundaries through our body.

- ★ **Let your people pitch for the best idea.** Several small teams are more efficient in generating ideas compared to a large brainstorming group. Following the principle of “coopetition” (coined word from “cooperation” and “competition”) several teams of two to four people “coopete” for the best solution. Coopetition challenges and encourages ingenuity. Coopetition follows four human qualities: Identifying with the same goal, comparing its own performance with the other, inspiring and helping each other to get better, winning over each other. Finally, everyone shares their ideas in a group meeting.
- ★ **Offer bubble time.** Like a hen needs time to hatch an egg, people need undistracted time to hatch an idea. Get the distractions out of your people for some time. Create bubble spaces where your staff can escape daily business and focus on ideas. An ideal bubble time varies between 90 and 180 min.
- ★ **Tolerate out-of-the-box behavior.** If companies call for out-of-the-box thinking and fresh perspectives, they should expect and tolerate unusual behavior. For instance, it’s ok to behave childish. In your bubble you can behave and do whatever you want. Just think of Pippi Longstocking. Sing out loud, jump around, pop your teeth out, stretch your face, release the weight, be weird — who cares?! Be yourself and celebrate your silliness!

- ★ **Appreciate ideas.** A brilliant idea is a money-maker. It secures growth, wins clients, solves problems, makes life easier. Unfortunately, ideas are intangibles goods. They can easily be taken away. Creatives, whose ideas have been robbed or downgraded into second-best solutions either fight for their rights, quit emotionally or move on. If a brilliant idea is solving all the problems, but the one who had the idea is being left out, he (she) naturally feels betrayed or frustrated. It's like celebrating a win in sports and not inviting the striker who scored the goal and made the win possible. Without the creative, there would be no party, nothing to celebrate, no money in the cash register, no growth, no smiling faces. Therefore, the person (group) who scores the idea should be appreciated and remain control over the final outcome.

footnotes

- 1 **Other reasons why people do not have their best ideas on the job:** Too many meetings. I don't know why. Not enough creative collaborators. From experiences. Don't work. Putting ideas into practice. Who cares / it's not worth it. Intense environment. I'm retired. I have already formulated them before I go to work. Change of career. Retired. I work for a start-up and there is a lot of distractions. Work is too structured. I'm not free to think beyond. My work is not related to my hobbies. I'm retired. Because everything is very gray in there. No collaboration. I'm just not passionate about my job. Student. Don't know. Because I work with kids. Executing. I don't like the office. I work in a prison. (Note: She worked in a real prison.) I can not turn my creativity on a certain time. I don't know. I don't have any head space. Support from upper level management missing. Lack of planning. Unemployed. Nothing changes. Too structured. Not working. Constricting. I need autopilot to work. No fun. Too sedentary. It's not a creative job I do. My job is not very stimulating. It's a hell hall. I don't work. I only execute what my boss tells to do. Sad, I don't consider my job creative. Too many meetings. I don't have a creative job.
- 2 **Time Pressure and Creativity in Organizations:** A Longitudinal Field Study, Amabile et al., 2002: "Although time pressure likely has negative effects on creative processing even at moderate levels, this study suggests that its effects may be disproportionately worse at extreme levels. Quite simply, extremely high time pressure may engender cognitive strategies that allow no time to think creatively. Rather than jolting people into producing a creative insight, it may instead make that insight all the

more elusive.”

- 3 **Study Reveals Global Creativity Gap.** Adobe®, April 23, 2012: The study reveals a workplace creativity gap, where 75% of respondents said they are under growing pressure to be productive rather than creative, despite the fact that they are increasingly expected to think creatively on the job. Across all of the countries surveyed, people said they spend only 25% of their time at work creating. Lack of time is seen as the biggest barrier to creativity (47% globally: United Kingdom, Germany, France and Japan, 52% in United States).
- 4 **Other reasons why people do have their best ideas at work:** I enjoy my job. Being able to talk things through. I'm in a working mode. It's demanding. Cause my mind is on work. Because I'm doing something I don't wanna do, so I'm using my time to be creative. I'm my own boss. No limit. I get competitive at work. It's were I can focus the most. It's very collaborative. Because I make mistakes and learn from it. My work is art. It's were I can focus the most. Cause it's my passion. I love what I do. Others stimulate to think out of the box. My right brain is thinking while my left brain is working.

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“WHY AM I CREATIVE IN ONE ORGANIZATION AND NOT IN ANOTHER?” This question has been a constant in Robert’s head since his creative start at the New York advertising agency *kbs+*. Since then, he has gained over 15 years of experience in advertising agencies in Paris and Hamburg as well as the fashion industry in Barcelona to understand what drives creativity. His passion for creativity and the belief that everyone has the potential to be creative inspired him to establish iQudo - sport of ideas in 2006. Since starting iQudo, Robert has invented new methodologies for facilitating creative knowledge to professionals. Corporations such as *BASF*, *Microsoft*, *Samsung*, and *SAP* have profited from the unique iQudo approach.



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