

Edison, Franklin, Gandhi, Mozart, Gates, Mead, Woolfe, and Curie. Each of them identified different problems, and found original ways to solve the problem. Problems are usually resolved by combining research (searching the problem space) with expertise. Experts become natural problem-solvers. Their expertise allows for keen insight into novel and difficult challenges. An expert may reformulate a problem and a possible solution many times. The best leaders promote collaboration among employees in solving problems. The outcome is employee ownership of a problem and solution.

- **Assertive.** Every organization has values, purpose, or vision, and leaders are responsible to fulfill it. Effective leaders are motivating as well as sympathetic, yet assertive people who gain trust by being trustworthy. The time-honored values of the U.S. Army are relevant to the workplace: "I will always place the mission first. I will never accept defeat. I will never quit. I will never leave a fallen comrade." Such values are inspiring.

- **Risk.** Leaders understand the nature and role of risk and uncertainty. Events can reach a point of crisis that has huge consequences. A leader must be prepared with strategies to adapt the organization and their behavior in periods of crisis and uncertainty. Calm under pressure is the true measure of a leader. Survival could well be at stake.

- **Environment.** Over a career, we take on various jobs in different settings and situations. The best leaders understand the different contexts in which they work and lead—the traditions, rituals, social structures, reward systems, and diversity of the workplace. Only then can they emerge to influence behavior, values, and change.

- **Driven to success.** Leaders are high achievers. In *Good to Great*, Jim Collins finds that the greatest leaders are "fanatically driven" and resolved to produce results. These "Level 5 leaders" have an "incurable need" to succeed. Leaders set high standards, are driven to achieve by intrinsic need, and strive to become masters in their field.

The drive to succeed is realized through preparation. A leader's success, as measured by commitment, performance, and outcomes, depends on preparation. LE

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ACTION: Prepare yourself in the eight dimensions.

Creativizers

Find and use them.



by Jeff DeGraff

INNOVATION HAS become the clearest pathway for growth, and yet innovation poses a challenge for leaders. It is perceived as high-risk, expensive, and tough to attain. A new product or disruptive technology is often seen as the only way to be innovative. But in reality, innovation comes in a range of sizes and scope, and significant growth can come from small incremental innovations.

Who do you need to hire to make innovation happen? In many cases, the most innovative people (creativizers) with the most innovative ideas are already employed by you. They just need to be found and utilized.

For example, at Zingerman's in Ann Arbor, Michigan, hailed by *Inc.* magazine as the "Coolest Small Company," a front-line employee, a dishwasher, contributed to a major innovative change. Aware that food costs

were high, he noted the excessive waste in uneaten French fries. The solution was to cut the serving size in half and offer free refills. This cut costs and raised customers' perception of value.

Zingerman's innovation is an exercise in learning and sharing knowledge to support common goals. Companies such as General Electric have institutionalized a practice and a system of learning that yields innovation on a big scale.

GE's motto, Imagination at Work, describes their "Imagination Breakthrough" culture. Aggressive growth targets (annual double-digit growth) means growing the company by an amount equal to the size of an average Fortune 500 company every year. To do this, GE enlists its best and brightest people to work on 'Imagination Breakthrough' teams. Once a strategic-growth opportunity is identified, sponsors are engaged, teams formed, and projects jumpstarted in weeks and funded depending upon their potential for bottom-line impact. These projects allow GE to learn and



share insights. GE is using its creativizers to grow the business, and develop winning teams and innovation practices.

Four Quadrants

Many types of people create unique forms of value. The Competing Values Framework (CVF) shows how natural tensions create growth when recognized and used to advantage. Using the CVF, leaders can evaluate which C-level employees should be facilitating innovation—the C-level titles refer to people with strengths in four quadrants: *Collaborate, Create, Compete, and Control.*

- In the *Collaborate* quadrant, people are customer-service focused, team-focused, and concerned with the welfare of the company. An innovation here might be a training program that boosts employee morale, reduces turnover, and makes the company a better place to work. These creativizers might be your best customer service reps.

- In the *Create* quadrant, creative people think big and think long term. This

is where breakthrough innovation occurs because the people are focused on building the best and most creative of something, no matter how long it takes. These creativizers are inquisitive-by-nature tinkers. They might be your creative geniuses.

- In the *Compete* quadrant, people are tough, fast moving, and focused on the next quarter's Street estimates.

Creativizers are looking for new things now that make money immediately. An innovation might be a tax savings that someone in accounting uncovers.

- In the *Control* quadrant, people are detail-oriented, concerned with processes and the ways in which things work. They want things to be done right, every time. An innovation might be a better manufacturing technique that reduces product error and customer recalls, while saving millions of dollars annually.

Most companies show evidence of each of the four quadrants within their ranks, although one quadrant usually stands out. The challenge for you, as a leader, is to determine what you have to work with to achieve the growth desired. Innovation has many different forms and people who can make it happen. LE

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ACTION: Identify your creativizers.