

### Managing Creative People

The story goes that a CEO called a manager in and told him to fire person X. "That person spends all his time staring out the window." The manager responded that person X was the one who had come up with a number of highly profitable products. Highly creative people do not fit into the normal ways of the modern corporation. Yet, creative people can be successfully managed by understanding the needs of creative people and the science of creativity.

The modern corporation is built upon the success of industrial factories. The whole industrial revolution is built on the concepts of everything fitting together and working like a machine – including people.

People are treated as interchangeable robots.

Yet, the nature of creative people is to not fit in. That is exactly why they benefit the corporation: they see things that are missed by the standard way of seeing things.

Creative people can be difficult. A Harvard Business Review article on managing the creative and difficult people mentioned how challenging it can be to have such people in the corporation. Few corporations are willing to do what it takes to keep such people around. Part of the problem is making sure that such people are actually benefiting the corporation while being difficult or are they simply causing issues.

Measuring the impact of a creative

person is more than just measuring their output. Often, a creative person has the most impact in how they influence others. Some mentor others or are consultants helping the rest of the department. The measuring has to consider all the impact of such people.

Successful creative people have dreams that can take the corporation far.

But they need others to help them on the way. Some may need others who can implement their dreams.

### Creative People Can Be Managed

Sometimes, they need to be protected from the rest of the corporation. An Inc. magazine story on a startup that was acquired by a major corporation mentioned how the acquiring corporation had someone whose job it was to protect the startup from the ways of the corporation

so that the startup could thrive with the new financial muscle their new owner brought.

In managing creative people, it helps to know the science of creativity. It is possible, through management, to build a creative environment where even people did not consider themselves creative, come up with good ideas. For example, the book "A Kick in the Seat of the Pants" lists the four stages of creativity and how people adjust their viewpoints as they go through each stage. Other places list other aspects of the science of creativity such as capturing your ideas, seek out tasks that are new, broaden your knowledge, and surround yourself with interesting people and objects.

In order to benefit from creative people, we do best to acknowledge both their minuses and their pluses. They can be difficult. But, without creativity, we will slowly fade into obscurity.

### Disasters and Managers

The Boeing crashes, the Challenger disaster, and the failure of many a startup company all have one thing in common: people who pushed the project forward believing that the risks were lower than they turned out to be. People are urged to "power through the day", making the world into what it "should be". That is a tactic that works when it is only human powered actions at stake.

Civilization is full of examples where societies grew more than their ability to cope with and manage the number of people and the technologies involved. Some early cities didn't have streets. People climbed over and through other people's living spaces to get in and out. Sanitation and waste removal have been constant challenges along with the attendant diseases. In more recent times, many corporations have outgrown the abilities of the managers to properly assess the risks they were taking (including many who participated in the 2008 mortgage derivative crisis).

Technology has given humans a tremendous leverage. We use that leverage to move mountains when building roads and digging mines. We are using that leverage today to process millions of bits of information per second. However, when we did not include in that leverage all the different risks that could come in, we face an equally leveraged backlash, crashes, and destruction of whole companies.

Managing for the 21st century has new challenges. Managing for the 21st century has new challenges. The risks today can be huge. Often, the challenges and risks are not even expressed until after the crash. Let us be humble enough to learn these new challenges.

A View from the Prairie is published by  
Prairie Trail Software, Inc.,

**Making Information  
from Streams of Data**

**1-972-618-4199**

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### Risky World

The price of special effects and photo and video "clean up" are now cheap enough that real estate agents are starting to use them to "clean up" photos and videos of listings. However, they can go too far and take out walls, change colors, remove problems, and hide issues that would need to be fixed. We can no longer trust online listings of homes.

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