A Survey of
Organisational Creativity

By Wayne Morris

Introduction

As part of a masters degree research project Wayne Morris surveyed a range of New Zealand organisations with the intention of identifying the factors that enable organisational creativity. This paper reports the results of that survey. And while the survey was limited to companies in New Zealand, the results reflect our experience with companies around the world. So we have every reason to believe that these results are broadly consistent with the state of organisational creativity in most medium to large businesses globally.

Wayne kindly contributed this paper to the jpb.com library. Full acknowledgement of the research and writing belongs exclusively with Wayne Morris.

-   Jeffrey Baumgartner
Managing Director
jpb.com

More than just a buzzword, creativity is becoming acknowledged as a critical factor in organisational success. Creativity in organisations might be defined as the process by which new ideas that make innovation possible, are developed. Talk to any organisational leader and sooner or later the words 'creativity' and 'innovation' will come up. But for many, these terms are simply buzz words. Few truly know how to foster creativity and innovation in their workplace. And even fewer actually do it.

- Wayne Morris

1. Findings

About the survey

50 surveys were sent electronically with a covering note, with an initial return of 14 within 3 days of receiving them. A follow up phone call elicited another 18 with another 9 being done face to face. In total 41 surveys were returned.

> **Question 1** asked each respondent give their definition of organisational creativity. Although innovation is a concept that most were familiar with the term organisational creativity was not as clearly understood nor easily defined. I have selected a sample of the responses received.

Responses included:

"This is a broad and indefinite term. I associate it more with 'capability'. It takes a mixture of energies and disciplines to be creative. Any organisation's people can become capable whether it is for innovative matters or simple process education matters or so on. The creativity links to core competence matters. If a firm has disciplines in place which test its core competencies, then it has the capability of being 'creative'."

<div align="right">Education and Training</div>

- Organisational creativity for us means;
- to have the smarts to foresee potential issues
- to shape the organisation to avoid problems that may be encountered
- to create innovative solutions to problems that do arise
- to devise products that fill identified market needs for the best return to the company
- to devise strategies to maximise the growth potential of every dollar of cash-flow.

<div align="right">Printing and Publishing</div>

"The ability of an organisation to intuitively undertake continuous improvement in achieving corporate objectives."

<div align="right">Oil and Gas Exploration</div>

"Having an inherent organisational capacity to be at the forefront of progress in the use of people, capital, and ideas."

<div align="right">Oil and Gas Exploration</div>

"Development and implementation of good ideas."

<div align="right">Accountancy</div>

"The ability to think beyond what is defined as "current practices", thus adding value to the organisation by making it safer / more effective and/or more competitive."

<div align="right">Oil and Gas Exploration</div>

"Creativity comes from the people in the organisation and their ideas or perspective on things. Organisational creativity is where having ideas are promoted, listened to and acted upon. All people have experiences and ideas from outside the work environment, and a way to capture these ideas is essential in allowing this creativity to grow. When boundaries are imposed, such as up-front budget constraints, this will limit the creative flow of ideas and you will lose the ability to harnessing the energy of staff to make break-through advances in the business."

<div align="right">Oil and Gas Exploration</div>

Question 2 asked whether organisational creativity was important to their organisation and if so why?

All but one of the respondents (see quote below) affirmed that organisational creativity was important to their organisation with a variety of reasons being given with almost all focussing on the need to get the 'competitive edge.' Even the respondents from local authorities focussed on the need for a competitive edge within their organisations. (see quote below).

"Not essential, but desirable to remain competitive, both in terms of value to stakeholders, and attracting/retaining staff"

<div align="right">Oil and Gas Exploration</div>

"Even though we are not in a competitive environment it is important that we remain competitive because our ratepayers expect us to be as effective, efficient and as innovative as one would expect in the private sector."

<div align="right">Local Authority</div>

"Yes, as it gives us a point of difference over our competitors. Being first to market can give our customers opportunities to grow the category and their own businesses."

<div align="right">Manufacturing</div>

"It is important in the sense that the problems we are facing today cannot be solved with the solutions and tools which have contributed to create them in the first place

Therefore, a new approach or new ideas are required to help us solve these problems or give us a competitive edge."

<div align="right">Oil and Gas Exploration</div>

"Yes, as we are competing for resources with other divisions (funding and staff) to undertake developmental and growth activities to make this business stronger and prosper into the future. Creativity is imbedded in the project process by casting the net as wide as possible on all options to then distil them down to the preferred choices based on clear technical and commercial screening. There is also a string focus on hiring the right skilled people and training them is the accepted and tested global practices."

<div align="right">Oil and Gas Exploration</div>

"Yes. To maintain an edge over competitors and to continue to manage unit costs as production declines."

<div align="right">Oil and Gas Exploration</div>

The table that follows attempts to summarise the reasons given regarding the importance of organisational creativity.

Reasons for importance of organisational creativity	Number of responses
Competitive edge	38
Find niches in markets	5
Reduce internal costs	14
Promote efficiency and effectiveness	4
Motivates people	11
Attracting/ retaining staff	5
Problem solving	3
Improves morale	5

Fig. 1: Reasons given regarding the importance of organisational creativity.

> **Question 3** asked the respondents to identify the factors that enhance and/or facilitate organisational creativity. I have categorised and summarised the responses. 14 respondents also said that the factors that facilitate or enhance are the opposite of the factors that are barriers.

Factors that facilitate or enhance organisational creativity.	Number of responses
Creative / charismatic leadership	14
Creativity recognised	6
Skilled delegation	3
Allowance for mistakes	8
Removing uncreative people	2
Time	31
Competence and motivation of staff	15
Balance between risk and opportunity	7
Clear organisational goals understood by all	14
Individual empowerment	8
Appropriate reward	12
Open communication and full information sharing	22
Appropriate tools and technology	9
Necessity the mother of invention	3
Diversity	8
Some 'fat' in the system	3
Organisational 'life force'	1

Fig 2:   Factors that facilitate or enhance organisational creativity

The following quotes from respondents give a 'feel' for the overall nature of the responses.

"Organisational culture that supports and encourages new ways of thinking; looking at problems and creative solutions."

Manufacturing

"Organisations need to be nimble so they can respond quickly and offer new/improved products on fast turn-around."

Manufacturing

"The leadership has to be creative, and lead the organisation creatively."

Printing and Publishing

"Uncreative people in the organisation need to be gently placed out of the way of the creatives."

<div align="right">Printing and Publishing</div>

"The environment has to be safe enough to make mistakes in – not repeatedly – but it is difficult to learn without making some mistakes."

<div align="right">Dairy</div>

"Just having uninterrupted time would do it for me. It's so rare that I make space and time in my day just to think and be creative. I know that when I do it works really well for me and I enjoy my work. It remains a challenge for me."

<div align="right">Local Authority</div>

"Dead and boring leaders create dead and boring organisations."

<div align="right">Business Consultant</div>

Question 4 asked respondents to identify the barriers to organisational creativity. As mentioned previously a number simply said the opposites of the factors from question 3. From those that did respond with actual answers the table that follows identifies the main barriers.

Factors that are barriers to organisational creativity.	Number of responses
Unnecessary compliance	8
Work force skills	23
Lack of access to information	12
Micro-management	5
Time	34
Resistance to change	15
System constraints	8
No organisation desire to learn from previous mistakes	7
No personal authority to initiate change	14
Restrictive bureaucracy	20
No space/resources to pursue ideas	28
Risk aversion	9
Reluctance to invest (time/$)	18

Fig. 3: Factors that are barriers to organisational creativity.

> **Question 5** gave each respondent the opportunity to say what their organisation is doing to encourage / enhance organisational creativity. Of the 41 respondents 8 commented that their organisation was doing the opposite and in fact were doing more to put barriers up than they were to encourage organisational creativity.

"Seems to be more focus on not rocking the boat, not doing anything 'out there' than on innovation."

Of those who responded positively a number were general responses such as:

· "Encourage people to challenge the status quo"

· "Recruit the right people"

· "Create a challenging environment and never be at ease with the status quo. The only way to survive is to improve."

· "Some freedom to act – within some relatively tight and known constraints."

· "Remuneration that rewards creativity."

· "Culture that accepts the odd mistake – prepared to take calculated risks."

Others did offer some specific organisational initiatives that encouraged organisational creativity although creativity focussed initiatives were few and far between.

· "Regular workshops for the extended leadership team, team building and bonding sessions."

· "Give access to wealth of knowledge via the Shell group."

· "Creating a creative friendly environment e.g. music, artwork on walls, design magazines etc, 'decorate your department' and other creative competitions."

· "Very carefully and clearly defining what it is we wish to do and want to do and what our particular goals and how we wish to be within that channel, then encouraging creativity within those bounds to run free."

· "We set clear outcomes and leave people to decide how to meet them. I have found that people are often more creative within a known box. It forces them to be so."

> **Question 6** focussed on the role of leadership in creating an environment that enhanced organisational creativity. All respondents replied positively citing leadership as highly important factor in enhancing organisational creativity.

The following quotes give a 'flavour' of the responses.

· "Provides the environment and encouragement that facilitates and rewards creativity."

· "Provides adequate resourcing to allow the time for creative thought."

· "Empowerment – encourage ownership and distribution of responsibility."

· "By not putting staff 'on the spot, rather taking learnings and/or enquiring into what staff are thinking."

· "Having leaders who lack a sense of humour, have limited emotional maturity, or discourage challenge and questioning work against a creative environment."

· "By supporting new ideas and creativity from the idea stage, feasibility study and implementation."

· "As leaders we can coach our people to think outside the square and encourage different ways of doing things."

· "Leaders can also allow teams to take time to brainstorm and come up with new ways of doing things or solutions to problems."

Respondents were then asked to give examples of **creativity that was successfully applied** in their organisations. The responses here were disappointing as less that a third of the respondents were able to give specific examples although those with whom I met face to face or talked with over the phone were able to give examples after some prompting. Most were focussed on the "big innovations" rather than the everyday creative acts that people do in their workplaces.

Examples included:

"When we started publishing and ran out of cash trying to print each new book, we hit on the idea of printing them with photocopiers, years before digital POD became the industry buzz-word."

"We set up a full IT backbone based on Bill gates' book Business at the Speed of Thought that tracks and traces product from receipt to market, minimising repeat data entry and capturing key information in an easily accessible central brain."

"Our Manufacturing Excellence programmes have made a real difference. People are focussing on creative ways of reducing waste, improving production – some of the projects have saved us hundreds of thousands of dollars."

"The projects that each person has to for their First Line Management training programme have made some huge differences in the workplace. Not all have worked but its better to identify the 'no-goers' early on through feasibility studies that invest lots of money and fail further down the track."

"New ways of working to continue to achieve objectives with fewer resources."

"Establishing alliances with other organisations to achieve an outcome that is mutually beneficial to both."

"To encourage our departments to talk to each other so they can draw on a greatly increased knowledge base."

"Social events continue to be a high [point in the organisational calendar, with a mixture of new interesting ideas and the old tried and true. Unfortunately not everyone participates."

"In-house development of fit for purpose tools for production planning, optimisation and reporting although the IT department wouldn't agree that this was a good thing."

"Can't think of any 'breakthrough' creativity but would argue use of things like process improvement, value assurance reviews, peer reviews do in fact work the creative process."

"Sharing of findings across a wider audience has helped understanding and allows others to challenge assumptions."

Respondents were then given the opportunity to make further comments / or detail **insights on any aspect of organisational creativity**. Less that third took this opportunity. The quotes that follow indicate the views.

"An organisation needs the correct mix of visionaries and doers in order to achieve creative success. Too many dreamers and it will get a lot of ideas that are not fulfilled (frustration), too many doers and there will be a tendency to continue to replicate how a task was done last time."

"I personally feel "congested", to the point where dreaming up something new and innovative is totally unappealing, because it will just add to an already overloaded schedule."

"I do recall feeling differently and have demonstrated an ability to innovate and make a silk purse out of a sours ear in the past. But I seem to have passed over the creative climax and am trying not to slip too far down the other side! I suspect this sentiment is not uncommon throughout (organisation name)."

"You cannot force creativity, only create a climate. It has to grow and develop within the individuals."

"We seem to make so much work for ourselves that not only do we not have space to take a step back and consider alternative, but we a less efficient doing the routine stuff. We all feel that it's someone else's problem to solve (viz "Management", whoever they are?!), rather than recognising that we all have a responsibility as individuals. I now understand how it feels to be a rat in a race!"

"Creativity is limited by personal motivation. Offering incentives to staff can enhance motivation. This is an imbedded process but not necessarily used to the fullest benefit by managers to reward staff. You need to acknowledge and reward staff at appropriate times, but there is a fine balance between not enough and too much. Also, praise must be perceived as being sincere and not just lip service."

"Wayne, when you find the holy grail lets 'talk turkey'(!)"

Summary

This chapter has detailed the main results obtained from the data collection described in Chapter 3. In the chapter that follows these results will be interpreted and analysed in terms of the purpose and objectives for the project as a basis for drawing conclusions.

2: Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter examines the outcomes of the research project as they relate to the purpose and objectives detailed in Chapter 1.

The purpose of this research project was to identify those factors that enhance organisational creativity – those behaviours, systems, processes – that lead to a workplace that is creative.

The literature suggested a number of factors that were regarded as important in achieving this. I will take the factors as identified in my research and attempt to match them with those from the literature.

It was interesting to note that in a substantial number of the responses the respondents seemed more easily able to identify barriers to organisational creativity than they were to identify those factors that facilitated it.

The pervading belief among respondents was that there exists in every organisation the potential for much greater levels of creativity and if certain barriers were removed then creativity would flourish.

The table that follows shows the priority order in which the respondents from the survey identified the factors that enhance organisational survey.

Factors that facilitate or enhance organisational creativity
Time
Competence of staff
Space/resources to pursue ideas
Open communication and full information sharing
Supportive organisational structure
Personal authority to initiate change / Individual empowerment
Creative leadership
Motivation of staff
Clear organisational goals
Appropriate reward
Appropriate investment ($, time, resources etc)
Appropriate tools and technology
Allowance for mistakes
Diversity
Organisational desire to learn from previous mistakes
Creativity recognised / taken seriously
Balance between risk and opportunity
Skilled delegation
Some 'fat' in the system
Removing uncreative people
Organisational 'life force'

Fig. 4: Factors that enhance organisational creativity in priority order (descending)

I propose to take the top ten factors and discuss them in more detail relating them, where possible, back to the literature and supporting them with comments from the surveys.

1. Time

More respondents raised the issue of time as the most important factor with regard to enhancing organisational creativity than any other with comments such as "Just having uninterrupted time would do it for me. It's so rare that I make space and time in my day just to think and be creative. I know that when I do it works really well for me and I enjoy my work. It remains a challenge for me."   Time pressure was also identified as a real barrier to creativity. This is supported by a study completed by Teresa Amabile in 1996 the results of which are recorded in Amabile's words in the December 2004 issue of Fast Company in which she says:

"In our diary study, people often thought they were most creative when they were working under severe deadline pressure. But the 12,000 aggregate days that we studied showed just the opposite: People were the least creative when they were fighting the clock. In fact, we found a kind of time-pressure hangover -- when people were working under great pressure, their creativity went down not only on that day but the next two days as well. Time pressure stifles creativity because people can't deeply engage with the problem. Creativity requires an incubation period; people need time to soak in a problem and let the ideas bubble up.

In fact, it's not so much the deadline that's the problem; it's the distractions that rob people of the time to make that creative breakthrough. People can certainly be creative when they're under the gun, but only when they're able to focus on the work. They must be protected from distractions, and they must know that the work is important and that everyone is committed to it. In too many organizations, people don't understand the reason for the urgency, other than the fact that somebody somewhere needs it done today."

Guilford (1967) also makes the point that distractions and time pressures can inhibit the creative process. In addition, creative problem solving takes time. A person or group may stop short of achieving a creative solution if there are strong external time pressures; under these circumstances, the first solution that appears to be good enough is likely to be selected

Organisational creativity requires time!

2. Competence of Staff

Competence of staff was highlighted as the second most important factor in enhancing organisational creativity. When questioned further about this respondents talked about a range of issues. Some mentioned having the 'creativity tools' at their disposal and the traing required to use them well e.g brainstorming, deBono's Six hats etc but the majority took a much more general perspective of competence perhaps best summarised by the comment:

"If I know that I can rely on my staff, that they are technically competent, then I am able to rely on them to push the boundaries of there technical competence into the areas of the unknown or the new – to come up with creative and innovative ideas."

<div align="right">Manufacturing</div>

Although a second view was offered by some.

"Just because someone is technically competent doesn't mean that are are capable of producing new and creative ideas. Some people are simply not competent of confident to do so. It is beyond their capability."

<div align="right">Education and Training</div>

Several of the researchers quoted in the litertaure review identify characteristices of creative people but these are more attitudinal and cannot really be defined as competencies. Amabile in Fast Company again:

"The fact is, almost all of the research in this field shows that anyone with normal intelligence is capable of doing some degree of creative work. Creativity depends on a number of things: experience, including knowledge and technical skills; talent; an ability to think in new ways; and the capacity to push through uncreative dry spells. Intrinsic motivation -- people who are turned on by their work often work creatively -- is especially critical. Over the past five years, organizations have paid more attention to creativity and innovation than at any other time in my career. But I believe most people aren't anywhere near to realizing their creative potential, in part because they're laboring in environments that impede intrinsic motivation. The anecdotal evidence suggests many companies still have a long way to go to remove the barriers to creativity."

Amabile (1988) identified the factors that promoted problem solving or personal creativity by studying a group of 120 innovators working in research and development. One of the qualities that she identified as inhibiting creativity unskilled (24%) (p.128) She also indicates that individual creativity was enhanced by domain relevant skills, creativity-relevant skills and intrinsic task motivation.

From the survey responses and from the literature there seems to be differences in the opinions of people as to the competencies required to enhance organisational creativity. It seems a better defintion of competence is needed to discuss the relavance of this aspect of enhancing organsisational creativity. Perhaps this is an area for further research

3. Space/resources to pursue ideas

This priority was closely linked to time but also included the physical space required to 'trial' new ideas and the finance required to fund such a pursuit. A number of respondents from the manufacturing sector talked of Lockheed's 'Skunkworks', 3M's commitment to giving flexible time to staff to try new ideas and the concept of the innovation incubator. One of the respondents had visited the business incubator in Christchurch, New Zealand, and talked about applying the concept within a business.

Another aspect raised here was the organisation of internal space within a business – open plan versus separate offices. Responses were mixed with people giving views as to the positives and negatives of both open and closed space. There was, however, agreement that access to both types of space was necessary to enhance creativity.

"I am at my creative best when I can balance the need for access to people and resources with time for me. I do my best thinking when I am jogging in the morning but then I need people to test my ideas against – and sometimes that is hard."

<div align="right">Local Authority</div>

The need for space and resources is well supported by the literature.

Mumford et al (1997) found that resources are important not only for functional support, but also because having an adequate level of resources for the task/project influences workers' perceptions that the project is valuable and worthy of organisational support. Resources include financial support as well as time and physical space.

"We have got several hundred thousands dollars of good ideas rusting away because the person involved with them didn't have the time to plan properly nor the resource to trial before implementation. They failed. He got fired and it wasn't all his fault. This is not an uncommon situation in my experience."

- Manufacturing

The physical environment or setting can influence the degree to which divergent thought processes are used. Divergent thinking has a broad, relaxed focus of attention that requires a sense of psychological safety and peacefulness (Isaksen 1983).

"Allowed space and funding to explore options, in an environment where making mistakes (within reason) is seen as a learning event, not a crime."

- Oil and Gas

An environment that was conducive to creativity was also mentioned by some respondents with one commenting, "that having appropriate music, art work and 'creative stuff' around gets my creative juices going but I don't think that my tastes would appeal to all. I'm not sure how you get agreement on that sort of thing."

- Education and Training

Appropriate space and resources enhances organisational creativity.

4. Open communication and full information sharing

More than half of the respondents mentioned a lack of open communication and information as a major blocker to organisational creativity.

"For me one of the major barriers is an environment where people undermine each other, information is not shared and there is no credit given to creativity." Hospitality

Almost all respondents talked of the need for open communication and full information sharing. Some spoke of information on a 'need to know' basis but the general consensus was that people will select what they need to know and it is best to let them make that decision rather than keep information from them.

"It is essential to have access to information – creativity is often spurred by hitch-hiking on new ideas that flow past the alert mind – often converting them to a new situation or means of application." Information Technology

Trust was regarded by many as the cornerstone of effective communication and information sharing.

"When I know that I am being trusted with all the information I need it makes me feel like I am valued and I can make decisions based on the whole picture not just on bits of it."

- Dairy Industry

Open communication and information sharing is certainly supported by the literature. Amabile, Kanter, Ford, McMaster and others all comment on this as being necessary to facilitate organisational creativity.

Several respondents commented on how communication is delivered and information is shared as being important.

"If the boss takes the time to speak to staff in person it makes them feel more important. It's often not what they say but the fact that they have made the effort especially if I am able to respond and know I am going to be heard. I know that if I am feeling good about my boss and the information I am getting then I am likely to want to contribute more and the business certainly gets more from me."   IT Industry

One respondent took the view that "In the past, lack of information was a bottleneck in business. But today with electronic mail, electronic newsfeeds and intranets we have 'information overload'. Information is no longer a bottleneck it can be a liability and it can get in the way. We tend to think that to do anything we need to track down and analyse all the information and knowledge available. But the real bottleneck today is 'creative thought'.
Dairy

Open communication of organisational changes, decisions, and policies and opportunity to voice concerns, understandings and ideas and 'being heard' enhances organisational creativity.

5.   Supportive organisational structure

This factor and its priority in the list of enhancers came from combining a number of factors from the list of enhancers and barriers. This factor was described by one respondent as, "a supportive environment where problems are fixed without blaming or scape-goating." Most responses related barriers. The term 'restrictive bureaucracy' was used by several people. There was agreement that is supported by the literature that organisational structure can inhibit or foster creativity and innovation. The problem with organizational structure though, is that it is the result of many factors, including history, organic growth, strategy, operational design, product diversity, logistics, marketing, client base, supplier base and so forth. Therefore, I suggest that what managers need, are not recipes for complete structural change, but insights into the properties of fostering structures that can be adapted into the existing structure. To start, it would be useful to analyse the preferred structures against the not so preferred. Given that there are many definitions of types of organisational structure, I have selected a model that a number of the respondents could relate to – the mechanistic versus the organic organisation. Mechanistic structures have centralised control and authority, clearly defined tasks, vertical communication links, obedience to supervisors, rigidity and inflexibility. Respondents agreed that this type of organisation would be unlikely to enhance organisational creativity. Organic structures – those which have decentralisation of authority, tasks loosely defined, horizontal communications, greater individual authority, flexibility and adaptability – were seen to be more likely to enhance organisational creativity. King and Anderson (1990) assert that one of the conditions for organisational creativity was group structure that was organic rather than mechanistic.

However, all bar four of the respondents interviewed said that their organisation fell into the

mechanistic category. My professional experience shows that the above can be misleading. For example, flat organisations are generally preferred and hierarchical ones not, however, even flat organisations are in reality hierarchical. Importantly, if we have a mechanistic structure, what factors might allow us to move in the right direction without wholesale change? Some answers given by various respondents include having a structure that allows and encourages direct communication links to decision makers, communication and information flow between departments, tangible progression of ideas from problem to solution to product development to commercialisation, and creative teams working outside but linked into the organisation, whose culture, processes etc permeate through the existing structure.

A supportive organisational structure will enhance organisational creativity.

6.   Personal authority to initiate change / individual empowerment

Respondents talked about the need to know that had the personal authority to initiate change. When asked how they knew whether they had it the responses fell into two categories – those who empowered themselves and gave themselves the authority required and those who waited for others to give them the authority or empower them.

People in both categories talked about the anxiety and stress that at times accompanies empowerment. An interesting perspective arose in conversation with two of the respondents. It was suggested that rather than use the term empowerment it is helpful to look at perceived individual employee discretion -- how much freedom the individual feels he or she has. For instance, a member of a so-called compliant organisation may in fact have high levels of personal responsibility or a role involving the management of significant risk. The more complex the task, the more discretion - freedom to choose how things are done - will be given to employees. This contrasts with the adaptive organisation where individuals may have significant creative discretion - freedom to choose what is done. Basadur (1997) and Amabile (1998) both talk of the importance of adaptability in enhancing organisational creativity. Ideally, then, empowerment of employees results in increased initiative, involvement, enthusiasm, innovation and speed, all in support of the organisation's mission.

Personal authority and employee discretion enhance organisational creativity.

7. Creative leadership

Although coming in at 7 on the respondents priority list all respondents acknowledged that leadership is a critical factor in enhancing organisational creativity. In fact, without supportive leadership very few of the other creativity success factors could be sustained.

Teresa Amabile in Fast Company:

"Taken together, these operating principles for fostering creativity in the workplace might lead you to think that I'm advocating a soft management style. Not true. I'm pushing for a smart management style. My 30 years of research and these 12,000 journal entries suggest that when people are doing work that they love and they're allowed to deeply engage in it -- and when the work itself is valued and recognized -- then creativity will flourish. Even in tough times."

This is supported by the respondents.

"Leaders have a big part to play in enhancing organisational creativity. While individuals should take responsibility for their own areas, a leader has a big impact on the organisatioon dynamics and environbment that individuals operate in and it can become increasingly frustrating for someone to be inspired and creative when their leader isn't supportive."

- Education and Training

"While the truly inspired abnd creative may break through barriers to success, an environment that enhances organisational creativity may reap the benefits from many surprising sources – the quiet, the timid, the plodders – not just the Einstiens. The leader's role is to remove the barriers."

- Education and Training

"Our belief is that today, New Zealand's prime opportunity going forward, is to be an international ideas mine and our business is increasingly gearing towards that role. We have a very clever, well educated populace (in general) with a diversity, creativity and quite unique cultural mix that generates new views on things, and a distance from the rest of the world that gives us a view of the forest, not a single tree and that throws up unique access problems which, in demanding solutions, create opportunities for new international products and services.

It is the critical role of our leaders to understand and embrace this notion, share that which is necessary and then lead their department in the pursuit of opportunities within that."

- Printing and Publishing

"As MD, leadership is the key to success in regards to creativity in the workplace. The MD sets the vision, goals and culture that all must live and breathe. Creation of a culture that allows and enhances innovation is the key to re-invention."

- Education and Training

When asked if a leader needs to be creative themselves the responses were mixed.

"The leadership has to be creative, and lead the organisation creatively." summarises one point of view. The other point of view took the stance that the leader did not have to be creative but needed to recognise and reward creativity and remove the barriers to it happening.

"Provides the environment and encouragement that facilitates and rewards creativity."

"Allows mistakes in a safe environment."

"Provides adequate resourcing to allow the time for creative thought."

"Don't let issues fester, or you get a cold environment where people are demotivated, even blatantly hostile sometimes. Not a good space for free speech, imagination, sharing and "comfortable" risk taking."

Researchers such as Meyers (1982), Nonoka (1991), Roberts (1977) and Amabile (1996) make comment on the importance of leadership in enhancing organisational creativity.

"... usually determines the organisational characteristics, sets the tone for the corporate climate, and determines whether or not the organisation is interested in innovation. It also controls whether there are competent project management, evaluation, sufficient resources, and an emphasis on the status quo, constraint and competition. (Amabile, 1996)

Leadership, though not necessarily creative leadership, enhances organisational creativity.

8. Motivation of staff

Amabile in Fast Company:

"There's this widespread notion that fear and sadness somehow spur creativity. There's even some psychological literature suggesting that the incidence of depression is higher in creative writers and artists -- the de-pressed geniuses who are incredibly original in their thinking. But we don't see it in the population that we studied.

We coded all 12,000 journal entries for the degree of fear, anxiety, sadness, anger, joy, and love that people were experiencing on a given day. And we found that creativity is positively associated with joy and love and negatively associated with anger, fear, and anxiety. The entries show that people are happiest when they come up with a creative idea, but they're more likely to have a breakthrough if they were happy the day before. There's a kind of virtuous cycle. When people are excited about their work, there's a better chance that they'll make a cognitive association that incubates overnight and shows up as a creative idea the next day. One day's happiness often predicts the next day's creativity."

Motivated staff are essential to having a creative organsaition. Although rated highly very respondents made comments about motivation. Most took it as given – no motivation – no creativity. One dsescribed it as a cycle.

"If I am motivated I will be more creative but the reverse is also true. I have seen people get into upward and downward spirals and it can be catching."

Positive motiavation enhances organisational creativity.

9. Clear organisational goals

It needs to be noted that while respondents talked about testing out new ideas, occasionally failing and having fun this needs to be considered against the background of having to meet organisational goals. A creative environment for them is not a soft one but it can be a frustrating one. Several raised the issue around lack of clarity regarding goals and outcomes and the waste of creative energy that goes into simply defining the goals let alone working to achieve them. Where goals are clearly defined most respondents were more than able, in fact, expected to be left alone to achieve them. In fact, comments were made that creative people are more likely to take the initiative when goals were clearly defined.

The importance of aligning organisational goals with personal goals was also raised.

Several authors have claimed intention (Nonaka), alignment (Robinson & Stern, 1998), or shared vision (Senge, 1990) to be of vital importance for organisational creativity. If the intention (organisational goal) is not conceptualised and collectively communicated to the employees as a vision, the authors claim the individuals would not be able to evaluate or justify the result of a creative act.

However, what Senge (1990) suggests is that in order to be creative a person needs to have a vision. However, if a vision at all is needed, it does not have to be a company provided vision. It is suggested and supported by some respondents, that what people become "excited" about is the opportunity to work with things in which they are interested no matter what the organisational goal is.

"My department has done all the visioning stuff – and we have goals for everything – but the reality is that if I get excited about something I will do the work I have to do as quick as I can so I can get onto the exciting stuff. I still try to meet my goals but if I wasn't able to do some of this other stuff it would probably drive me nuts. Isn't most work boring?"

- Manufacturing

It seems that being able to act rapidly, to seize new business opportunities as they emerge, and to create new knowledge for a previously unanticipated need are now far more important than to stay focused and march in the same direction. Having clear organisational goals may not be an enabling factor for enhancing organisational creativity.

10. Appropriate reward

When asked to define 'appropriate reward' anly a small number of respondents raised the issue of monet citing the fact that "it's money that brings me to work but it certainly isn't money that gets the beat work from me".

Amabile in Fast Company:

"The experimental research that has been done on creativity suggests that money isn't everything. In the diary study, we asked people, "To what extent were you motivated by rewards today?" Quite often they'd say that the question isn't relevant -- that they don't think about pay on a day-to-day basis. And the handful of people who were spending a lot of time wondering about their bonuses were doing very little creative thinking.

Bonuses and pay-for-performance plans can even be problematic when people believe that every move they make is going to affect their compensation. In those situations, people tend to get risk averse. Of course, people need to feel that they're being compensated fairly. But our research shows that people put far more value on a work environment where creativity is supported, valued, and recognized. People want the opportunity to deeply engage in their work and make real progress. So it's critical for leaders to match people to projects not only on the basis of their experience but also in terms of where their interests lie. People are most creative when they care about their work and they're stretching their skills. If the challenge is far beyond their skill level, they tend to get frustrated; if it's far below their skill level, they tend to get bored. Leaders need to strike the right balance"

And so agreed the majority of the respondents.

Rewards do matter to enhancing organisational creativity but they must be appropriate and each person will decide what appropriate is for us – if given the opportunity.

Conclusion

The fundamental purpose of my research project was to identify those factors that enhance organisational creativity.

The project began with an assumption that organisational creativity is important to the future sustained success of organisations. Creativity and inovation are two responses to a market that are likely to give organisations a competitive edge. This was agreed by the majority of the respondents.

Based on the literature reviewed in this paper, and the responses from across a range of industry sectors one would conclude that it is possible to enhance creativity and innovation by implementing a range of behavioural, structural and cultural initiatives. Although these may vary from organisation to organisation there seems consensus between the literature and my research that certain factors must be in place if organisational creativity is to be enhanced. In this study those factors, identified in priority order, as indicated by survey respondents, as being:

Time
Competence of staff
Space/resources to pursue ideas
Open communication and full information sharing
Supportive organisational structure
Personal authority to initiate change / Individual empowerment
Creative leadership
Motivation of staff
Clear organisational goals
Appropriate reward
Appropriate investment ($, time, resources etc)
Appropriate tools and technology
Allowance for mistakes
Diversity
Organisational desire to learn from previous mistakes
Creativity recognised / taken seriously
Balance between risk and opportunity
Skilled delegation
Some 'fat' in the system
Removing uncreative people
Organisational 'life force'

Although all respondents identified the importance of the need to enhance organisational creativity as a prerequisite for future success very few agreed that their organisation exhibited them. In fact, when talking with respondents about organisational creativity the conversations were largely around the barriers – both people and process barriers - that prevent organisations from reaping the benefits of a creative working environment. The limitations of this study were identified - the major one being the limited number of responses from a small cross section of industry sectors thus putting into question the applicability of my findings across other types of organisations.

This study has raised for me more questions than it has answered, the major one being: If there is so much agreement that organisational creativity is so important what is preventing it from happening? A question for future research!