Chapter 2
What Is Creativity?

ABSTRACT

The mystique of creativity has many facets. There are conflicting ideas about what creativity means and often there seems to be a lot of misunderstanding about the nature of creative people. The authors believe that creativity has many layers and can be applied across multiple domains to support the workplace and the potential of the workforce. In this chapter, the authors will discuss the definitions of creativity and connections to innovation, identify how the many facets of creativity might impact the workplace and workforce, and some common myths/misconceptions about creativity and innovation that might influence the general perceptions about creative people and their place in traditional work environments. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the perceptions about and meaning of creativity.

INTRODUCTION: THE NATURE OF CREATIVITY

A well know Indian folktale, *Six Blind Men and an Elephant*, (n.d.) tells the story of six blind men who have the opportunity to feel an elephant for the first time. Every one of them touched the elephant but a different part.

"Hey, the elephant is a pillar," said the first man who touched his leg.
"Oh, no! it is like a rope," said the second man who touched the tail.
"Oh, no! it is like a thick branch of a tree," said the third man who touched the trunk of the elephant.

"It is like a big hand fan" said the fourth man who touched the ear of the
  elephant.
"It is like a huge wall," said the fifth man who touched the belly of the elephant.
"It is like a solid pipe," Said the sixth man who touched the tusk of the elephant.

They began to argue about the elephant and every one of them insisted
that he was right. A wise man was passing by and he saw this. He stopped
and asked them, "What is the matter?" They said, "We cannot agree to what
the elephant is like." Each one of them told what he thought the elephant
was like. The wise man calmly explained to them, "All of you are right. The
reason every one of you is telling it differently is because each one of you
touched the different part of the elephant. So, actually the elephant has all
those features that you all said" (Six Blind Men, n. d.)

Creativity is much like the way the men viewed the elephant in this folktale,
as there are many ideas about what the nature and definition of creativity are,
and each has some element of accuracy. The research about creativity has a
long and seemingly conflicting history. It is probable that various researchers
emphasize certain facets of creativity in their definitions because of the
context of their work. In this chapter the authors will discuss the definitions
of creativity and connections to innovation, identify how the many facets of
creativity might impact the workplace and workforce, and some common
myths/misconceptions about creativity and innovation that might influence
the successful development and support for these important attributes.

Objectives

After reading this chapter one should develop an understanding of the
complexity of creativity. The reader should see there are multiple definitions of
creativity and gain a better understanding of how these influence the perceptions
of and interactions with creative employees. In addition, the reader should gain
perspectives about the misconceptions and myths surrounding creativity that
may influence the development and sustainability of a productive workplace.

BACKGROUND: A GEM WITH MANY FACETS

*Creativity is just connecting things. When you ask creative people how they
did something, they feel a little guilty because they didn't really do it, the just
saw something. It seemed obvious to them after a while. That's because they*

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