

Chapter 3

Mind Training for Innovation: Building Foundations for Creativity in the Workplace

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ABSTRACT

This chapter fills a gap in the innovation literature by exploring why creativity and innovation are important in the workplace and how the process of creativity can be supported through the practice of mindfulness. At the group and organisational levels, the chapter examines what is required of an organisation through an HR perspective in order to facilitate the optimum context for supporting creativity and innovation through knowledge sharing and transfer. There is a key emphasis on an organisation's culture, structure, and ethos, utilising a knowledge-sharing framework, in addition to a focus on the physical workspaces that can support innovative and creative processes. Finally, proposals for managers and human resource personnel interested in building foundations for creativity in the workplace include: mindfulness training and support for mindfulness practice, the reduction of stress to allow creativity to emerge, and group/team support and training. Suggestions for future research are also offered at the end of the chapter.

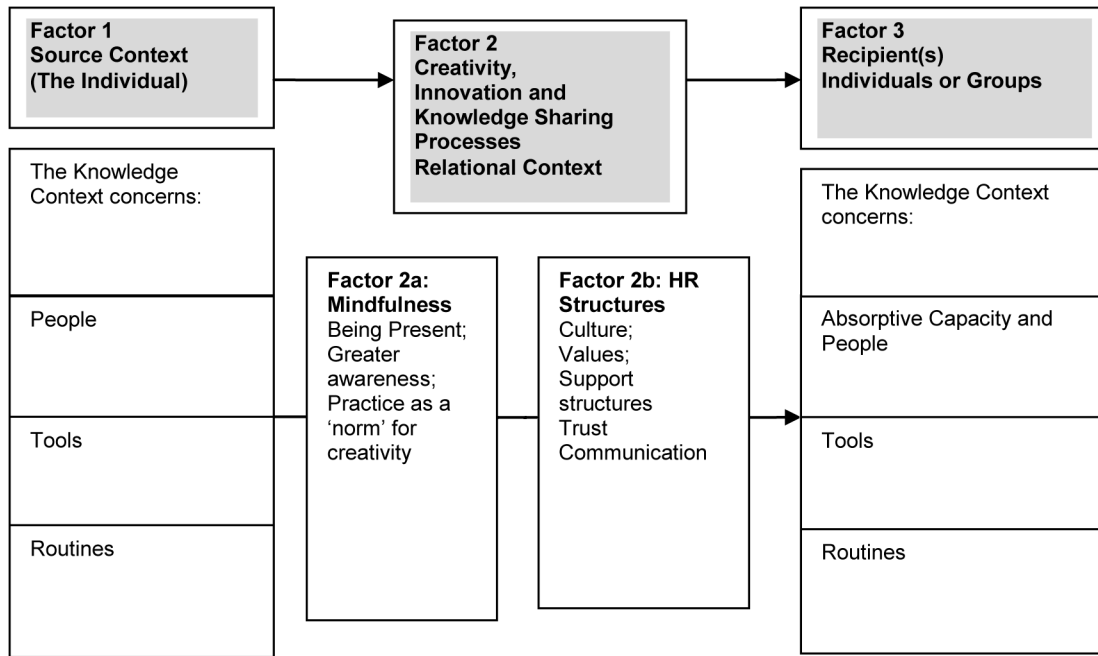
INTRODUCTION

Recent changes in the global and domestic external environment, along with changing role expectations, have led to different and challenging demands from human resource specialists and employees (BCG, 2008). Within this milieu, organisations have moved towards the recognition that it is the development of human capital within

knowledge based firms that will deliver competitive advantage. Thus knowledge sharing, defined as the means by which “organisations obtain and access its own and other organisations' knowledge” (Cummings, 2003: 1) has moved to the forefront of many managers mind-sets. Knowledge sharing emerged as a key research area from the study of technology transfer, innovation and strategic management. Aligned with knowledge sharing,

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Figure 1. Four contexts of knowledge sharing (Source: Adapted from Cummings, 2003)



knowledge transfer is arguably more complex as knowledge resides within organizational members, tools, tasks, and their networks (Argote and Ingram, 2000). Moreover, much knowledge in organizations is tacit or difficult to articulate (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). Creativity is an essential resource for corporate competitive advantage (McShane, Olekalns and Travaglione, 2013). Creativity and innovation concern the process of creating and applying new knowledge and, as such, they are at the very heart of knowledge management. However, creativity is often “blocked” in a variety of ways, including deep-seated beliefs about the world (Gurteen, 1998).

Consequently, this chapter will explore why creativity and innovation are important and how they can be unblocked through a process of mindfulness, ultimately leading to the maximisation of human potential. At the group and organisational levels the chapter will examine what is required of an organisation through an HR perspective in order to facilitate the optimum context for creativity. This

section will focus on an organisation’s culture, structure and ethos in addition to the physical workspaces that support innovative and creative processes. These factors are incorporated within Cummings (2003) ‘contexts of knowledge sharing’ framework that has been especially adapted for this chapter (see Figure 1).

A number of research streams - organizational learning and the learning organization from the management domain - and core competencies and dynamic capabilities from the strategy literature have contributed to research on the topic of knowledge management (Cummings, 2003). However, to date there has been a dearth of literature which has focused on the study of mindfulness at work (Gulik, 2010) and even less on how mindfulness can contribute to the creative process within organisational frameworks. Consequently, this chapter intends to bridge that particular gap by exploring how the creative process works and what is considered to provide the most fertile ground for creativity within the individual. Mindfulness is

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