

## ***Cultivating Creativity***

Some companies generate creative ideas one after the other and reap the rewards. Others companies struggle, always one step behind. Justin Brady, an entrepreneur and frequent speaker on creativity, in a recent Wall Street Journal article, wrote that creative ideas don't come from gimmicks. Rather, they come from a culture that already exists and that type of environment comes from only one thing: leadership.

Most leaders talk about creativity or innovation without understanding what it is and how it happens. The creative process is messy and reeks of failure and disorganization. Because of this, many leaders don't actually want creativity, they just want the results. From Brady's observations of numerous companies from Ma and Pa shops to Fortune 500, he believes creative environments aren't planned, but rather they are cultivated by leaders who:

**Listen.** Listening is very different from hearing. When someone is truly listening, they maintain eye contact and they strain to find meaning. When you are listening, you discover insights that weren't obvious before. In addition, your demeanor noticeably changes, making the person who is talking feel valued and thus more likely to be helpful – and creative.

**Empathize.** This is a giant problem today, not only in companies, but in politics and even relationships. Empathizing takes work. People who truly empathize not only try to put themselves in the other person's shoes, but they also make it a priority to find truth in their words. This shift of focus is dynamic and unlocks explosive creativity.

**Trust.** Listening and empathizing are useless if you can't trust another individual. Some ideas or concepts won't make sense to anyone but the innovator. That's what makes them innovators; they were capable of seeing a solution or connection no one else could. Any groundbreaking innovation is always poked and prodded when it comes out. Trusting is the final step of the creative process.

Brady calls these three facets the LET principle. Only when a leader exhibits all of them will a team truly be creative and successful. Teams guided this way will adapt quickly and accomplish much. While creative teams will certainly have their share of failures, in a creative culture, these failures are normal and viewed as learning opportunities. If you don't want that type of culture, you don't want creativity.