

Administrative Solutions

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Stuck for an idea? Tap your creativity

Truly creative ideas often seem very simple – once somebody has thought of them. But how do you get a truly creative idea? Here are some ways to generate your creativity:

- ☑ **Put the problem into words.** Clearly defining a problem is probably nine-tenths of its solution. Putting the problem into work is a discipline that clearly engages and focuses your left brain to find a creative solution. What are the problems? What are the conflicting demands? What, exactly, is the barrier that is keeping you from doing what you want to do?
- ☑ **Write it down, and tell someone important to you.** Don't keep the problem floating around in your own brain. When you write, or when you tell the problem to another person, the words are encoded in your left brain in a logical, linear fashion.
- ☑ **Approach the problem from all angles.**

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Recognize and Address Hiring Mistakes

The objective of a selection process is to increase your odds of selecting the best candidate. No matter how good a selection system may be, occasionally it will result in the selection of an applicant that is not the right fit for the job.

The final decision is always made by humans that may divert from the

selection process in favor of intuition, appearance, familiarity, school, past employer association, or the pressure of time. So, poor fits are bound to happen despite a well developed selection process.

If you hire someone that ends up being a poor fit for the job, do not make the second big mistake; holding on to the future poor performer for far too long.

Suppose an applicant is hired because he or she makes a good impression, reminds you of someone else, or happens to interview at just the right time. Shortly after the orientation process, the new employee begins to show signs of not being the right fit. It could be something as basic as frequent absenteeism or as critical as not having the talent or level of experience expressed during the interview.

Your big mistake occurs when you attempt to convert the poor fit into the “good employee.” The result is often low morale of other workers who recognize the new employee’s inability to perform at the expected level, and they resent the “special” treatment.

To identify and remove a poor fit:

- ▶ Closely monitor the new employee’s performance.

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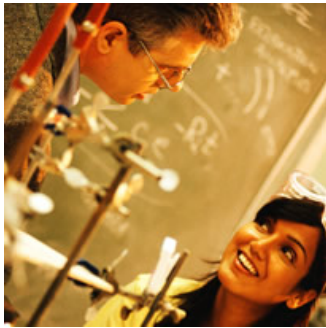
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Try many different approaches to describing the problem and describing the solution needed. Think about it from reasonable, logical, straightforward points of view. Think about it from unreasonable, backward, low probability points of view.

✔ **Describe the solution.** You may not know what the solution is, but you know what it's supposed to do. What does it look like? How does it work? Who will use it? How will it operate?

✔ **What would do if there wasn't a problem.** What would your ideal solution be if barriers didn't exist? If you could do anything you wanted to about a particular problem, what would you do?



✔ **Come at it repeatedly.** Work on it for awhile, then put it aside and work on something else. Come back to it the next day. For particularly complex and involved problems, purchase a notebook and write down your thoughts. Review it often.

These points help your left brain to fully set up the problem and understand its dynamics. These are tasks the left brain does well. Your left brain can't come up with creative insight, one that is not logical and linear. Until you fully engage your left brain and push it to work on solutions, your right brain can't work on a problem very well

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If a window of opportunity appears, don't pull down the shade.

— Thomas J. Peters

Though no one can go back and make a brand new start, anyone can start from now and make a brand new ending.

— Carl Bard

- ▶ Conduct a comprehensive performance assessment 30 days after hire.
- ▶ Classify performance shortcomings into two categories: can do and will do. “Can do” refers to the ability the employee has to do the job. If the employee does not have the ability, determine the cause. If you are providing the resources to facilitate success, but the employee lacks the ability due to misrepresentation or lack of skills or talent, then you must determine whether you should terminate the employee or try to build a better employee.

“Will do” refers to employees that have the skills or talents wanted but possess bad work habits that prevent them from being a success. In this instance, you should clearly outline the performance expectations and hold the employee to them. Should the employee fail to adhere to these expectations, then you should cut your losses and terminate the employee.



The first 90 to 120 days represent your greatest cost in developing a new employee. It is also the time when employees exhibit the strongest desire to showcase their talents, learn about the job, and stay out of trouble. If these qualities are not clearly evident in the early stages of employment, then recognize that it is best to remove the poor fit from the organization before additional harm can be done.

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The golden opportunity you are seeking is in yourself. It is not in your environment; it is not in luck or chance, or the help of others; it is in yourself alone.

— Orison Swett Marden

The Magic Key To HAPPINESS AND SUCCESS



There is an ancient legend about a time in the history of humanity when society so abused wisdom that wisemen decided to take the secret of happiness and success away from man and hide it where mankind would never find it again. The big question was where to hide it? A council was called by the chief of the wisemen to discuss this question. The lesser of the wisemen said, "We will bury the secret of happiness and success into the dark depths of the earth."

The chief wiseman responded, "No, that will never do, for mankind will dig deep down into the earth and find it."

Then they said, "Well we will sink the secret of happiness and success into the dark depths of the deepest ocean."

But again the chief wiseman replied, "No not there, for humankind will surely learn to dive into the dark depths of the ocean and will find it."



Then, one of the lesser wisemen said, "We will take it to the top of the highest mountain and hide it there."

But again the chief wiseman said, "No for humankind will eventually climb even the highest mountain and find it, and again take it up for themselves."

Then, the chief wiseman said, "Here is what we will do with the secret of happiness and success. We will hide it deep inside every individual, for they will never think to look for it there."

To this day according to legend, people have been running back and forth across the earth – digging, diving, and climbing, in search of something that they already possess within themselves.

A Sports Model for Teamwork



If you are a manager, consider the following: Old-line hierarchical companies follow a football model of organization. Everyone lines up in a specific place under the direction of the quarterback. The quarterback is the only person responsible for seeing the whole field and determining strategy. Action stops in between plays, so the company has time to plan and look ahead. A better model for today's modern corporate environment is basketball. Here, people flow around the floor, instantly adapting to changing circumstances. There's virtually no pausing of play. People form and reform in various offensive and defensive alignments. Modern corporations need flexibility and teamwork, which provides the ability to handle changing circumstances.



Source: Bernard Avishai of Monitor Consultants in Cambridge, MA

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ONE MINUTE IDEAS

Liftoff to Space Exploration

See a real-time map of where the space shuttle, International Space Station, and other satellites are located. You can also find lots of information and news about space travel and the universe.

Check it out at: www.nasa.gov

Be on the lookout for coaching moments

Coaching isn't appropriate for every situation. Sometimes, staffers want to work on their own, uninterrupted by the boss.

To spot employees ready for coaching, pay attention to when things aren't going well or when they could use an extra hand on a tough project. That's when they'll be eager to work with you.

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How To Run An Excuse-Free Office

Is excuse-making a problem in your office? Excuses are really just defense mechanisms because employees fear blame, embarrassment, reprimands, and firings. As a manager, it is your job to turn mistake-making into a learning experience for your employees. Here are some suggestions to help you reduce the amount of excuse-making that goes on under your command:

- **Make sure your employees know your expectations.** Clarify tasks and assignments that will be each employee's responsibility. Explain how what the employee is doing fits into the bigger picture. This is often an oversight in many businesses and detaches the worker from feeling like he is performing meaningful work.
- **Help the employee anticipate possible problems and how she will handle them.**
- **Make sure the employee knows where to go for help.**
- **After the task has been completed, discuss it.** Was it a success or a failure? Did the employee meet expectations?
- **Discuss with the employee what he or she learned from the work.**
- **Discuss with the employee what he or she could have done differently** or more effectively during the course of the work.
- **Praise the employee when applicable.**

— Adapted with permission from *Nations' Business and First Draft*

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