

ARE YOU A MANAGER OR A “DAMAGER”?

by Ed Bernacki



I recently saw a cartoon that showed an employee dropping an idea into a suggestion box. What the employee did not know was that the box had no bottom and all ideas fell into the resignation box, all under the cynical and watchful eye of his manager.

That's the reality for many employees. The boss talks about the need for new ideas but when they suggest an idea, they get shot down. I've been there. A boss gave me

Here are tips based on observation and research for managers and employees. Both have an important role to play in shaping an innovative business.

Tips for managers

If you are concerned about having too many ideas that are too broad in scope, then create a monthly or quarterly challenge by setting this question:

“Where do we need new ideas?”

Others will find totally new ways to achieve a result.

- Listen with open ears – if a new idea does not fit your style of problem solving, do not dismiss it. Take the time to understand how your employee came up with the idea. You may learn something.
- What *not* to say: “We’ve never done it like that before”.
- What to say: “How can you see this idea working for us?”

to communicate it well. Practise explaining your idea to co-workers until it make sense.

- Develop the discipline of creating half-page ideas – write down the basic idea in a clear and concise way. Put the user of the idea into your description.
- Innovation can only flow with a steady source of ideas. Good managers nurture these ideas, not damage them or the people who raise them.

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a project and suggested I follow the same process as she did the previous year. I thought about it and defined a way to get a stronger result.

People loved the solution. I thought I was being a good employee. She thought I wanted her job. I soon found that my job was structured into a junior role.

On the other hand, I have also seen staff become frustrated with a boss who did not support an idea when in fact the idea was either poor, or poorly communicated.

For example, “We need new ideas this month to improve how we distribute our products to customers”.

Consider these points:

- Be a manager of people and ideas, don’t be a “damager”.
- Their idea may not be your solution. It may be better. Congratulate yourself for hiring a creative employee.
- People have different styles of solving problems. Some people find minor improvements to existing processes and services.

- Ask them to develop the idea by writing it down with some bullet points of the “idea in action”.
- Some managers create a regular “ideas meeting” for staff to raise new ideas, no matter how odd or grand they seem.

Tips for employees

Remember that your ideas need to make sense to whoever you present them to.

Don’t waste a great idea by failing

Contact:

Ed Bernacki is an international writer and speaker on innovation based in Canada.
E-mail: info@wowgreatidea.com or visit www.wowgreatidea.com