ENCOURAGING NO-BOX THINKING

20 STRATEGIES ANYONE CAN USE

OKLAHOMA CareerTech

Encouraging "no-box" thinking—a mindset where the constraints of tradition and "how we've always done it" are removed—requires a shift from rigid processes to a culture of psychological safety, experimentation, and diverse input.

Fostering Culture and Psychological Safety

1. **Redefine Setbacks as Learning:** Celebrate "failing forward" to encourage risk-taking.
2. **Reward Unconventional Ideas:** Praise team members who challenge the status quo, even if their ideas aren't initially implemented.
3. **Implement a Policy of Fearlessness:** Ensure everyone feels safe sharing ideas without judgment.
4. **Use "Yes, and..." Techniques:** Ensure team members build upon others' ideas rather than shut them down.
5. **Encourage Team Diversity:** Assemble groups with varying cultural, age, and experience backgrounds to improve the potential for unique viewpoints.

Brainstorming with Structure

6. **Try "No-Box" Problem Solving:** Facilitate sessions where the premise is to solve a problem by assuming traditional constraints do not exist.
7. **Use Silent Brainstorming:** Avoid group-thinking by having team members write ideas individually before sharing.
8. **Experiment with Backwards Brainstorming:** Ask, "How could we cause problems X, Y, and Z?" Then, work backward to find solutions.
9. **Start the Clock for Rapid Ideation:** Set a timer to encourage fast, unfiltered thinking that focuses first on quantity over quality.
10. **Ask the "Five Whys":** Drill down to the root cause of a problem, rather than address its symptoms.

Establishing a Supportive Workplace

11. **Encourage "Walking Meetings":** Encourage taking short walks outside for creative problem-solving.
12. **Create Internal Think Tanks:** Allow team members dedicated time to work on passion projects.
13. **Introduce a Newcomer's Mindset:** Encourage managers to approach issues without preconceptions.
14. **Rotate Facilitators:** Change who leads meetings to bring new styles and perspectives to the forefront.
15. **Use Engaging Tools:** Use toys, visual aids, or games in meeting rooms to promote a relaxed, creative atmosphere.

Shifting Perspectives

16. **Pose "What if...?" Scenarios:** Challenge the team to flip their assumptions about products or processes.
17. **Seek External Perspectives:** Invite someone from a different industry or department to brainstorming sessions.
18. **Work Backward:** Describe the desired future state, then work backward to determine what is required to achieve it.
19. **Rotate Roles:** Allow team members to step into different roles to see the work from a new angle.
20. **Use Visual Mapping:** Use tools like mind mapping to visualize connections that aren't obvious in lists.