



## Promote creativity and innovation within your business

Whether you're planning a new product, a new business venture or simply brainstorming, here are some tips to help boost creativity and innovation within your business:

1. **Don't assume the current way is the right way.** Challenge long standing processes that are currently used within your business and promote evolution of new systems and ideas for your business. Be as innovative as you like.
  2. **Ask the questions - what are you doing and why?** Don't stray from your original mission unless it's clear the new route will be beneficial. Always align your tasks with your goals but make sure you assess these regularly so you know what you're doing and why. It's a form of tracking.
  3. **The first solution may not be the most effective.** Hurrah you found one! But don't stop there. Refine it to ensure it's the best solution, test it, put it to use and then adapt it as necessary.
  4. **Meet new people in new industries.** It's amazing what happens beyond your bubble. Open yourself for new viewpoints and creative avenues that could relate to your business. Find out about business networking evenings in your area and go along. Take team members that you think might be interested in what's being presented; you may be surprised at what you learn about other industries.
  5. **Inspire the team** with real business success stories. Encourage them to learn and relate. Invite guest speakers to team meetings or watch inspirational clips together on YouTube.
6. **You can't learn less.** Regularly research new ideas or possibilities. You never know what will trigger a fantastic idea. Most of this can be done online through social media, but encourage brainstorming and team input on project or product business possibilities.
  7. **Don't bury issues - celebrate them.** Make problem solving fun and have the team break from their daily tasks to brainstorm. You could learn a lot from their fresh perspectives, and they'll enjoy being a part of the decision making process.
  8. **Your employees are your first/most important customer.** Treat them with the necessary respect and value their opinions!

*'They always say time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself'* - Andy Warhol

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## The busy-person's guide to effective multitasking in the office

**Multitasking.** The great 2000s buzz-word. All women know the skill of talking on the phone whilst doing pretty much anything, and men perfected the art of listening to sport and reading the newspaper way back in 1926.

It is a common misconception that multitasking is this art of doing more than one task simultaneously. Of course, in reality, multitasking at work is not doing multiple things at the same time, but sharing bursts of time between two or more tasks in an age where we are constantly interrupted.

But sometimes multitasking can be an ineffective waste of time - why is this? Multitasking is a delicate blend of

organisation, prioritising and balance, not just trying to do everything at once. Trying to do too much at the same time can lead to multiple unfinished or poorly completed jobs.

The key to effective multitasking is working on only one task requiring complicated thought processes and decision making, and keeping the others basic or mundane. Say, switching between writing a report and buying stationery online.

Pair up tasks which cover each end of the spectrum. Switching between two complicated tasks can leave you with a confused and unfinished mess. Having one complex task interspersed with a

simple one can give your brain the rest it needs, while still utilising that time effectively.

Make a guesstimate of how long your daily tasks will take you. Do any short tasks on their own, as this will be best use of your time. Work two longer tasks together so that you don't get so distracted, for example when you get sick of writing your 10 page report, catch up on your filing, and then switch back again when you're bored.

Next time you start trying to do everything at once, take a second to think about what task works well with another and you'll end up with a much better result.

### Multitasking home truths and tips:

1. Emailing and texting during meetings and phone calls is not multitasking. It's called being distracted and disrespectful.
2. Dedicating yourself to one single task is always more effective.
3. Group together similarly themed tasks e.g. paying bills, reconciling bank statements and writing financial reports. This way your brain is already tuned to the financial channel.
4. Clearly identify the priority of your workload and save multitasking for non-urgent tasks. Devote intensive time to the urgent stuff. Decide in advance which hours will be for multitasking.
5. Returning your emails and answering phone calls can take your headspace away from critical work. Try allocating an hour every second day to putting your head down and focusing on one or two urgent or important tasks. Turn off the phone, close your email, shut the door and simply work.
6. Interruptions are a part of daily life, incorporate them into your multitasking time and you won't feel guilty about not emailing for one hour.



## The importance of morale

When morale is higher, people are happier to come to work and put in the effort to achieve results. Having a motivated team can increase productivity. Performance and creativity tend to be boosted with good morale as it encourages the confidence for employees to put forward new and innovative ideas.

Often employers notice that there is a significant reduction in leave days when morale is improved. Staff will be passionate about the success of the business and are less likely to take sick leave or extended holidays.

Another important aspect to ensuring high morale within your team is employee retention. The benefit is that keeping staff is less expensive and you avoid the cost of recruitment and training. Reward your current employees adequately and they will most likely be there for the long haul.



## How to boost team morale within your business

It's that time of year when team morale begins to drop. The colder months tend to lean toward less social interaction and more 'bunking down.' This in turn leads to a general lack of motivation amongst employees. What better time to launch a rocket ship so to speak, and organise some exciting boosters for your team?

**Recognise special personal events** - Acknowledge birthdays and the length of time spent with the company. Organise a coffee shout or buy a cake from the local bakery and get the whole team together to recognise the occasion.

**Communicate** - Encourage conversation and idea sharing amongst team members. Remember that most of our time is spent at work and it's a good way to learn more about each other.



**Acknowledge and reward hard work** - Order in pizza for lunch, have Friday after work drinks or simply send around a congratulatory email. As long as you ensure the right people are rewarded and your staff feel valued.

**Encourage regular breaks** - Remind employees to stop work for 10 or 15 minutes in the morning and afternoon. Suggest popping outside for fresh air or coffee. It actually improves productivity.

**Smile and have fun** - Organise team events away from the office, whether it be a team building exercise or a group lunch. Work can be stressful at times and can lead to burnout. It's important to add an element of light heartedness, as long as it's done in good taste. Employees will prosper from positive energy.

## An education in ergonomics

Ergonomics is the relationship between comfort and efficiency. Effective ergonomics can lead to less injury in the office workplace and higher employee satisfaction. The way we sit, move and spend our day always needs to be assessed and developed to maximise productivity while enhancing health. Here are some tips on ergonomics that employees should be made aware of:

- Have the computer monitor just below eye level and adjust the screen to eliminate glare from windows and lights
- The centre line of the keyboard should be level with the height of your elbow and tilted back slightly so that wrists remain flat
- Use an adjustable chair and get comfortable with the adjustment settings - it's also important to upgrade furniture regularly

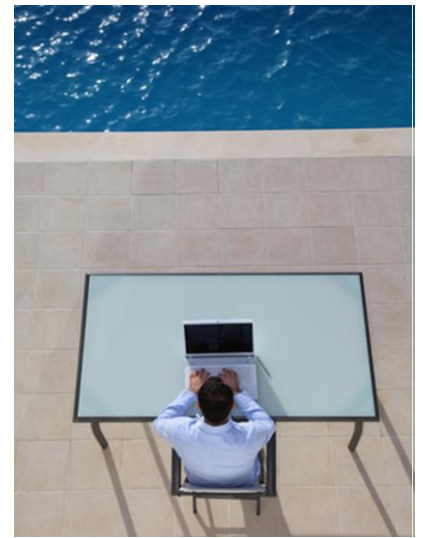
Ensure staff are informed about effective ergonomics. It's best to prevent health and safety issues before they arise. If you want more information about workplace health and safety, visit [www.acc.co.nz](http://www.acc.co.nz).



## Netiquette - Focus on Out of Office Emails

If you're going away on holiday, it's important to let people know you're away. It can be frustrating for those trying to get in touch with you about an urgent matter, only to get no response to their emails or voicemail. Setting up an automatic reply is a good way to communicate with clients and prevent them from going elsewhere to solve their issue.

- Mention the date you'll be out of the office from and the date you'll return to work
- State whether you'll be clearing emails while you're away
- Ensure you've listed other colleagues who can be contacted in your absence
- Ensure the main company phone number is included in the email
- Remember to keep it brief. Your clients will be contacting you because they need something, so they require a quick answer or solution - make sure you point them in the right direction.



## Ingredients for Business Success

Preparing a plan and then monitoring it, on an ongoing basis, is a very important ingredient for business success. The other key ingredients for business success include:

- Being concerned about your staff, communicating with staff, letting staff know what your business plan is
- Having concern for customers, establishing databases, having an ongoing communication strategy to keep customers informed about developments within your business
- Having concern for suppliers, having open and frank discussions with suppliers about your customers demographics and preferences, arranging to purchase products suitable for sale within your business and supported by extraordinary service from your suppliers

The key is to keep on reviewing the plan. When you start in business, find a 'difference' in your offerings. Find a 'niche market'. Try and learn from other people. Employ people who are very capable and maybe smarter than you. Know what you are doing and where you are headed in the market place.

Be humble and patient and realise that a business is not a sprint – it's a marathon.

## Business Plans - Some Questions to Consider on Suppliers

Some questions to consider when reviewing your suppliers for the preparation of a business plan:

- Who are your major suppliers and for which products/services?
- What are your annual purchases?
- What are your suppliers' terms of trade?
- Have you negotiated the best terms of trade with suppliers?
- Are there alternative suppliers?
- Do you involve suppliers in marketing/promotion activities?
- Do you negotiate special prices for specific purchases?
- Do you obtain quotes from alternative suppliers?
- Have you given personal guarantees to suppliers?



### An Important Message

*While every effort has been made to provide valuable, useful information in this publication, this firm and any related suppliers or associated companies accept no responsibility or any form of liability from reliance upon or use of its contents. Any suggestions should be considered carefully within your own particular circumstances, as they are intended as general information only. Please contact Lianne if you wish to discuss any business matters.*



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