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LEADERSHIP INFLUENCE ON INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP CREATIVITY

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Being this the second thesis I have written, one could think “oh, well, she got the hang of this”. Oh, well... no. You never get the hang of this, I guess. Each thesis marks the end of a path: it represents the final burst, the *coup de grâce* of the career of a student. To me, this work actually marks the end of my career *as* a student (assuming I won't fail at my graduation day). Of course, I would not have made it till here alone.

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LEADERSHIP INFLUENCE ON INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP CREATIVITY

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INTRODUCTION

During the last years, markets have developed following a rhythm that no one could ever foresee. This is due to the combination of numerous scientific, technological and social transformations that, joined together, caused the world itself to change at a much faster pace than we were used to. Of course, as society and environment change, companies must follow.

Once upon a time, dauntless entrepreneurs like Ford developed techniques that could allow their factories to fully exploit the potential of the workers, optimizing time, money, production and so on. Of course, times have changed, and needs as well. People- luckily- are no more simple assets on a financial plan's page, and markets do not simply ask for mass production goods. Perhaps, quite the opposite.

Nowadays, companies always live in a state of race: against time, against changes, against competitors. Adapting to the environment is not enough anymore: firms must be able to predict, imagine, learn, try, adapt. And when they succeed, they must recognize that it is time to start from the beginning once again. Employees need to learn how to fully exploit their creative potential, and sometimes they cannot do this alone.

Contemporary leaders recognize the importance of creativity and innovation in modern companies. A large number of studies, researches and experiments have been conducted to try to determine if and how creativity can be "taught", and if it is worth both for individuals and organizations. Nevertheless, despite some notable works have gained remarkable attention, literature is fragmented. Being a field still in progress, many researchers have developed theories supported with scientific evidence, but lacking a connection among each other. This work, therefore, is proposed as a guide- a compendium- to understand the importance of leadership for individual and group creativity.

The first chapter explains organizational creativity, the major theories, determinants and consequences. Hereafter, the second chapter focuses on the practical effects that the different leadership styles have on the creativity of individuals, and what

techniques leaders can adopt to foster it. Lastly, the theories previously described are employed to fit the mechanics of teams, which are ever-growing aspects of the current organizational reality.

Creativity is more than an interesting personality trait for some fortunate individuals, and if leaders want to properly develop and employ it, they must be able to become managers, psychologists, sociologists and much more. It is no easy task, but it truly allows companies to gain sustainable, long-lasting and rewarding advantages.

CHAPTER 1- CREATIVITY

1.1. Creativity and Individuals

1.1.1. Creativity Definition and Processes

The Oxford English Dictionary defines creativity as “*The use of imagination or original ideas to create something*”; and curiously, the example sentence that the very same dictionary reports is “*Firms are keen to encourage creativity*”¹. This statement is significant, since it underlines the importance that creativity has gained in the current business setting: from private to public companies, from art to R&D, having the good idea means assuring that a firm will remain competitive and gain bigger shares in the current highly unstable and mutable market. Exploiting new market areas, finding new ways to relate with customers and suppliers or developing new partnerships are only few examples of how creativity can be successfully employed in a business environment².

The increased attention brought to organizational creativity has led to the proliferation of studies, researches and experiments aimed to reach a better understanding of the nature of creativity and its relationships to individual and group performance. One of its general definitions is “the production of novel and appropriate ideas in any realm of the human activity”³. Consequently, for an idea to be truly creative it must be original and different from what is already existent, as well as *appropriate*. Appropriateness stresses the fact that the new product or process must solve the related problem or present an opportunity; the mere creation of strange and uncommon objects, for example, albeit original in some way, is not considered as creative activity.

Other studies describe creative ideas as formed by three elements: novelty, quality and relevance⁴. This framework is akin to the previous classification of creative ideas, with the only addition of the quality attribute. Oldham and Cummings, on the other hand,

¹ <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/creativity>

² Scott, W. E. “The Creative Individual” in *The Academy of Management Journal*, 8-3, 1965, p.212

³ Amabile, T.M. “Motivating Creativity in Organizations” in *California Management Review*, 40-1, 1997, p.40

⁴ Kaufman, J. C., Sternberg, R. J. “Creativity” in *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 39-4, 2007, p.55

provide another definition more focused on the organizational aspect of creativity, which is explained as the production of “novel and useful products, ideas, or procedures that provide an organization with important raw material for subsequent development and possible implementation”⁵.

Common to all these definitions is the practical importance of creativity, which must serve some specific purpose and thus is particularly relevant in problem-solving processes. Depending on the type and origin of problems and opportunities, Unsworth has divided creativity into four different styles:

- *Responsive creativity*, used to respond to problems due to external drivers;
- *Expected creativity*, used to discover problems due to external drivers;
- *Contributory creativity*, used to respond to problems due to internal drivers;
- *Proactive creativity*, used to discover problems due to internal drivers⁶.

With market characterized by highly unstable mechanisms and technologies in constant evolution, responsive creativity is the most common among the four typologies: many companies simply try to adjust to “keep up the pace” and respond to the threats and opportunities that the external environment brings to them. Still, in order to gain competitive advantage and to adequately respond to the ever-changing environment, firms should learn to become more proactively creative.⁷

But how does the creative process really work?

Firstly, a distinction must be made between creativity and creative problem solving.⁸

The process of creative generation involves the development of new and adequate ideas. It is composed by two phases: generative and exploratory. The *generative* phase includes the generation of new ideas or the development of various and different solutions; it is followed by the *exploratory* phase, during which the alternatives are

⁵ Jung Yoon, H., Kim, S., Lee, K., Nam Choi, J., Young Sung, S. “Tangible and Intangible Rewards and Employee Creativity: The Mediating Role of Situational Extrinsic Motivation” in *Creativity Research Journal*, 27-4, 2015, p.383

⁶ Unsworth, K. “Unpacking Creativity” in *Academy of Management Review*, 26-27, 2001, pp.289-297

⁷ Beng-Huat, T. *Determinants of Organizational Creativity*, University of South Australia, 2005, p.18

⁸ Abraham Carmeli, A., Reiter-Palmon, R., Ziv, E. “Inclusive Leadership and Employee Involvement in Creative Tasks in the Workplace: The Mediating Role of Psychological Safety” in *Psychology Faculty Publications*, 43, 2010, p.97

evaluated until one idea emerges as the best one. The two phases may occur numerous times before a final solution is found: the creative process is continuous, and the original idea can change considerably once reaching its definitive configuration.⁹

Creative problem solving refers to the process of developing a new product or process and it is a more detailed version of the general creativity generation model. The generative phase is thus divided in three sub-stages: problem identification, information search and ideation; while the exploratory phase includes ideas evaluation, selection and implementation.¹⁰

Another model splits the creative problem solving process into four phases: preparation, incubation, insight and verification.¹¹

During the first phase, *preparation*, the problem is examined and all the data and contextual elements are collected and studied. Even if this preliminary stage does not directly involve creative action, a deep understanding of the issue at hand is crucial for the development of new and appropriate ideas. Moreover, carefully asserting the problem, its context and its framework under different point of views allows to avoid biases that may hinder creativity.

Figure 1: The Creative Process Model



Source: Mcshane, S., Von Glinow, M. *Organizational Behavior*, McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2009, p.216

⁹ Kaufman, J. C., Sternberg, R. J., *cit.*, p.56

¹⁰ Abraham Carmeli, A., Reiter-Palmon, R., Ziv, E., *cit.*, p.97

¹¹ Mcshane, S., Von Glinow, M., *cit.*, p.215

Incubation is the phase of idea generation. In this phase, quantity is more important than quality: a high number of solutions are examined and recombined, and divergent thinking is employed to combine possibilities in new and uncommon ways. Since they represent an important trait of the creative process, the characteristics of divergent and convergent thinking will be examined later in this chapter.

The breaking point is reached during the *insight* phase: a sudden revelation, an idea never conceived before comes to mind. This trigger may happen in any moment and it represents the prototype of the final solution. Nonetheless, the idea is still in its embryonic stage and it needs further development and refining.

This refining is performed during the *verification* phase, which includes trial-and-error approaches, adjustments and re-shaping of the initial idea. Verification occurs numerous times during the whole creative problem solving process, since the model is not fixed: the four phases may not appear sequentially, some can take place more than one time and some others not even once.

1.1.2. *Amabile's Componential Theory and Model of Individual Creativity*

Due to her great contribution to the studies of creativity, Teresa Amabile is one of the most notable figures among creativity researchers. Her models served as basis for a wide number of further analyses and thus this brief section will focus only on her works.

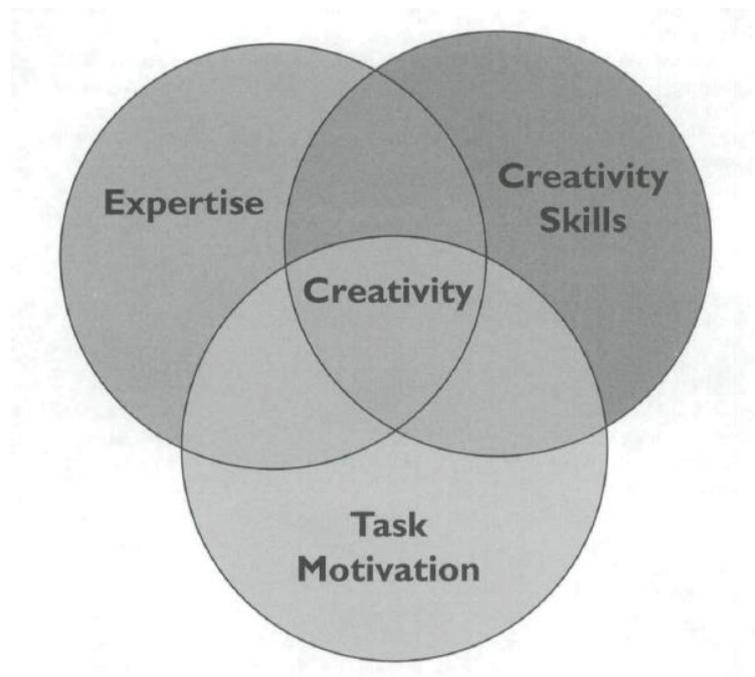
Creativity has often been addressed as an attribute of creative people. Which may be true, since some individuals own particular characteristics that make them more suitable for creative activity; but only partially. Amabile affirmed that all people are capable of creative behavior and that, above all, creativity can be stimulated by the work environment.¹²

The Componential Theory of Creativity asserts that creativity is influenced by three major components, and that the higher the level of each trait is, the higher the level of

¹² Amabile, T.M., *cit.*, 1997, p.42

the overall creativity will be. This theory does not limit itself to the work environment but it is relevant to all the possible creativity domains.

Figure 2: The Componential Theory of Creativity



Source: Amabile, T.M., *cit.*, 1997, p.43

As showed in Figure 2, the three components are expertise, creative thinking and intrinsic task motivation.

Expertise refers to the set of technical knowledge that an individual retains in a specific field. It includes the technical skills and information required to appropriately perform a task as well as the person's past experiences and problem solving schemes, the processes that allow him or her to find the solution for a given problem. Expertise also involves personal traits such as memory, imagination and ability to focus.

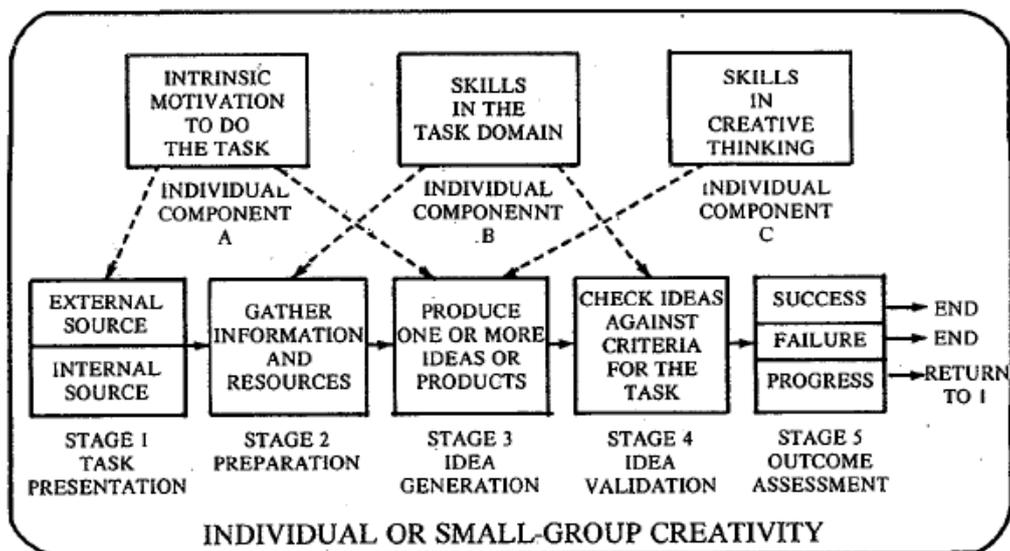
Creative thinking skills refer to cognitive styles that foster taking new perspectives, finding solutions that don't rely on past experience or traditional approaches, keeping the focus on the task and having an optimistic and lively approach to the work. Individual traits such as tolerance and a risk-oriented attitude fall in this section as

well. Even though these seem to be innate features of the person, they can be trained or improved through the employment of appropriate techniques.

The final constituent is *intrinsic task motivation*, a major determinant of individual creativity and the focus of a great number of studies on creativity. An individual is intrinsically motivated when his/her behavior is driven by personal interests and objectives, while extrinsic motivation on the other hand deals with incentives that go beyond the work itself. These can be the desire to gain more money, the need to fulfill the duties that the company imposes on workers or the achievement of some expected reward. Since the literature on motivation is extensive, a chapter will be reserved to it further in this text.

The three constituents represent the basis for the componential model of individual creativity. The model is multiplicative, meaning that each component is needed and that the outcome creativity is determined by the levels of all elements together.¹³

Figure 3: The Componential Model of Individual Creativity



Source: Amabile, T.M. "A Model of Creativity and Innovation in Organizations" in *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 10, 1988, p.138

¹³ Amabile, T.M., *cit.*, 1988, p.138

The model is composed by five phases, each one influenced by one or more of the three determinants of creativity. Even if the different phases are depicted as sequential, it is not mandatory that each one occurs after the previous one, or only once in the whole process. As stated formerly, the creative process is not fixed and the steps may repeat themselves or, on the other hand, be completely missed.

The first stage is *task presentation*, which can be internally or externally presented. While internally posed problems are more intrinsically motivating, in the business setting externally established tasks are more common.

The *preparation* phase includes the gathering of information and the preliminary definition of possible solution. This step is greatly influenced by domain-relevant skills: if the skills possessed by the person working on the task are relevant and good enough to appropriately manage it, the preparation phase will be brief. As opposite, if one's skills are not adequate enough, this will require more time for information collecting and thus the step could become rather time consuming.

Amabile notes that it is not possible to have too much knowledge about the task at hand. It is indeed true that some experiments showed that people with less knowledge tend to be more creative, since they have less fixed algorithms and thus they are more favored towards the development of more innovative associations and models. But the difference relies on how the information is stored, and not on the amount of it. Easy to access knowledge fosters creativity, and more information can only lead to more creativity. Oppositely, knowledge stored following rigid algorithms hinders creativity even if it is clearly domain-relevant.

The *idea generation* phase represents the middle of the project. During this phase, skills and motivation combine together to explore new or existing pathways and develop ideas and possible solution. Intrinsic task motivation is particularly important during this phase, since it supports the will to make riskier choices and to deeper explore the problem under different point of views.

While the third phase is necessary for the creation of new ideas, the fourth step, *idea validation*, assesses their appropriatedness. Given the importance of usefulness for a

product or process to be truly creative, task relevant skills are noticeably important during this stage since they provide analytical tools needed to properly state the value of the developed ideas.

The *outcome assessment* is the last step of the model. Depending on the results of the tests performed during the validation stage, the outcome may lead to the end of the process or bring back to the beginning of it. Specifically, if the tests result in a success or in a failure, the process ends; on the other hand, if there is no radical outcome but a certain amount of progress has been achieved, the process may repeat itself in order to bring (hopefully) better results thanks to the information gathered with the previous attempts.

The componential model and theory of creativity can be applied to every task, every person and every domain of creativity. Nevertheless, Amabile herself recognized that some people are “more creative” than others, depending on a number of factors that space from personal traits, to environment and to cognitive styles.

1.1.3. Creative Individuals

Before stating the determinants of individual creativity, an explanation of *when* a person can be defined as “creative” is required.

Some studies make a distinction between two types of creativity¹⁴: the first is the “Big-C”, which can be found in famous people such as Wordsworth, Einstein and so on. This kind of creativity is akin to the definition of the genius, and it is a peculiarity of few people with outstanding abilities. The second type is the “little-c”, the creativity that can be nurtured and trained by everyday people, useful in many aspects of the daily life. It is indeed true that creativity is not “reserved for special few [...], but relevant to the lives of us all”¹⁵.

¹⁴ Kaufman, J. C., Sternberg, R. J., *cit.*, p.57

¹⁵ *Idem*, p.58

A former approach to measure an individual's creativity is related with the concepts of productivity and eminence¹⁶. *Productivity* measured the number of contributes that a person provided to the academic field, including patents, articles and so on. The higher the production, the higher the (estimated) creative ability. *Eminence*, on the other hand, regarded the recognition that a person earned on his or her domain field. Eminence involved quantity and quality of work, but it is still a poor indicator of individual creativity. Both productivity and eminence could not measure individual creativity since they only dealt with people whose contributions were publicly recognized but, as we have seen, creativity is not an attribute for famous people only.

Contemporary measures of creativity are more concerned with concepts such as the number of the idea produced or quality of works. Developed by Teresa Amabile, the *consensual assessment technique* relies on experts of a certain discipline to rate pieces of creative works, and thus establish if and how much they are creative or not¹⁷. The most common typology of tests still deal with divergent thinking.

Divergent thinking is the ability of a person to produce as many ideas as possible¹⁸. Since its importance in the development of solutions, divergent thinking is also an important prerequisite for appropriate creative problem solving processes¹⁹. Divergent thinkers are capable of making connections by elaborating information derived from different knowledge spheres, using less fixed mental systems and uncovering unusual solutions to problems. Divergent thinkers have also shown to possess some specific personality attributes such as confidence and internal control, openness, independence and high intrinsic motivation²⁰. Divergent thinking is opposed to convergent thinking, that is the capacity to choose the best solution among the alternatives²¹.

¹⁶ Scott, W. E.. *cit.*, p.212

¹⁷ Kaufman, J. C., Sternberg, *cit*, p.56

¹⁸ Krueger, P., Tummars, L. *The Influence of Leadership on Creativity: A Systematic Review of Experimental Studies*, Sun Yat-sen University, 2014, p.12

¹⁹ Herman Brewer C. R. *Leader Creativity: How Essential Is This Ability?*, University Microfilms International, 2004, p.36

²⁰ Herman Brewer C. R., *cit.*, p.35

²¹ Krueger, P., Tummars, L., *cit.*, p.12

Creative measuring tests based on divergent thinking often ask the respondents to answer some questions that have no one correct response, but invite them to produce different solutions for a certain issue²². The results are then rated depending on four aspects:

- *Fluency*, the number of ideas created;
- *Elaboration*, the accuracy and the level of detail that an idea has been given;
- *Flexibility*, how much each idea is different from the others;
- *Originality*, how much the ideas are innovative in general.

These tests allow creativity to be assessed for every person, regardless of the social recognition or acknowledged production. They can be performed on people with either low or high levels of creativity, since they are able to measure both the presence or the absence of creativity itself. Thanks to this, studies and experiments allowed researchers to discover which the determinants of individual creativity are, as well as assess their importance for the development of a person's creative ability.

1.2. Creativity Determinants and Motivators

1.2.1. Personality and Individual Characteristics

Creativity is not the outcome of a mathematic problem, and thus it is not determined by a formula with precise coefficients. Rather, it is the sum of numerous facets of the human personality that can be strictly individual as well as produced by external stimuli.

Personality is the most intimate determinant of individual creativity. Though numerous determinants can be induced, or trained, there is a basis of innate personal traits that induce a disposition towards creative acts. Udwadia divided these traits into five major groups²³:

²² Kaufman, J. C., Sternberg, *cit*, p.56

²³ Udwadia, F. E. "Creativity and Innovation in Organizations- Two Models and Managerial Implications" in *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 38, 1990, p.69

- *Perseverance, high energy and hard work*

Creative people have shown the tendency to be deeply committed to their work. They pursue their goal with tenacity, they do not resign when facing failure and they remain focused on the task they must complete. They do not panic in case of uncertainty, but rather they are able to concentrate and keep their patience²⁴.

- *Curiosity, sense of self as creative*

A broad range of interests and the desire to wide it even more is a common feature among high creative people. They are open-minded, curious and oriented towards new learning²⁵. Early life experiences such as journeys through different countries may serve as a stimulus for the development of creative abilities in children, since they develop a favorable attitude towards the discovery of different perspectives and point of views²⁶.

- *Autonomy and independence of judgement*

Creative thinkers establish their own schedules and have high self-confidence. They have low need for affiliation²⁷ and less interested in receiving social praise or become part of a social groups. Creative people are not ashamed of saying what they think, even if (and above all) their opinion explicitly challenges the common belief.

- *Risk-taking orientation*

Even when the outcome is uncertain, creative individuals accept to explore new paths and are not afraid of the consequences, showing thus a certain degree of courage²⁸. Low need for approval and high interest in intrinsic motivated goals make creative people more prone to undertake risky tasks and put focus and effort into them.

²⁴ Beng-Huat, T., *cit.*, p.10

²⁵ Mcshane, S., Von Glinow, M., *cit.*, p.218

²⁶ Scott, W. E., *cit.*, p.216

²⁷ Mcshane, S., Von Glinow, M., *cit.*, p.218

²⁸ Scott, W. E., *cit.*, p.216

- *Intrinsic motivation*

Defined as “the single most important personal quality that enhanced creativity”²⁹, intrinsic motivation is the very core of creative action in every domain. If a person is interested and excited about the job, if there is the possibility for him (or her) to reach new knowledge and expand their information pool, and if a problem poses enough challenge to thrill its solver, creativity will be greatly increased.

To summarize, common to all creative individuals is a sense of unconformity, autonomy and freedom. Even though all the characteristics that have been examined until this point hold a rather positive sense, one common belief was that mental illnesses and negative affects positively affect creativity, especially because many great creative achievers suffered from mental disorders (Van Gogh, Munch, Beethoven and many more). Nevertheless, no evidence has been found that creative individuals are psychologically unhealthy³⁰.

In conclusion, Amabile compiled a list of qualities that promote or inhibit creativity. The list is exhibited in the following tables.

Table 1: Qualities of Problem Solvers that Promote Creativity

1. Various Personality Traits
<i>Special qualities in the personality of the problem-solver, including persistence, curiosity, energy, and intellectual honesty. The positive personality traits that were mentioned in these interviews displayed a great deal of overlap with those uncovered in the work of previous creativity researchers.</i>
2. Self-motivation
<i>Being self-driven, excited by the work itself, enthusiastic, attracted by the challenge of the problem, having a sense of working on something important, and a belief in or commitment to the idea.</i>
3. Special Cognitive Abilities
<i>Special talents in the problem solver's particular field, as well as general problem-solving abilities and tactics for creative thinking.</i>
4. Risk-orientation
<i>Unconventional, attracted to challenge, oriented toward taking risks and doing things differently.</i>

²⁹ Udawadia, F. E., *cit.*, p.70

³⁰ Scott, W. E., *cit.*, p.219

5. Expertise in the Area
<i>Talent, experience, and acquired knowledge in the particular field.</i>
6. Qualities of the Group
<i>Synergy arising from the intellectual, personal, and social qualities of the individuals making up the project team.</i>
7. Diverse Experience
<i>Broad general knowledge and experience in a wide range of domains.</i>
8. Social Skill
<i>Good social and/or political skills, good rapport with others, being a good listener and a good team player, and being broad-minded or open to others' ideas.</i>
9. Brilliance
<i>A high level of general intelligence.</i>
10. Naivete
<i>Being naive or new to the field, not biased by preconceptions or bound by old ways of doing things.</i>

Source: Amabile, T.M., cit., 1988, pp.128-129

Table 2: Qualities of Problem Solvers that Inhibit Creativity

1. Unmotivated
<i>Lack of motivation for the work, not being challenged by the problem, having a pessimistic attitude toward the likely outcome; complacent, lazy.</i>
2. Unskilled
<i>Lack of ability or experience in the problem area.</i>
3. Inflexible
<i>Being set in one's own ways, opinionated, unwilling to do things differently, too constrained by one's education or training.</i>
4. Externally Motivated
<i>Being motivated primarily by money, recognition, or other factors aside from the work itself, responding primarily to restrictions and goals set by others, being competitive and jealous of someone else's success.</i>
5. Socially Unskilled
<i>Lack of social or political skills, such as being a poor team player.</i>

Source: Amabile, T.M., cit., 1988, pp. 128-129

1.2.2. Self-Determination

Tightly connected with the concept of autonomy and intrinsic motivation, self-determination is one of the major drivers of individual creativity. The self-determination theory asserts that people are more prone to be creative and involved in their job if they feel they have some degree of freedom in their choices³¹; more specifically, it is the *perceived* freedom that influences intrinsic motivation³². Intrinsic motivation thus increases when people experience feelings of self-government and independence; on the other hand, if a person feels forced to do something, or he is given no choice on work options such as constraints on time or amount to work to be done, intrinsic motivation lowers. And as motivation lowers, so does creativity. People also pursue autonomy, better competence and good social relations but, at the same time, they must perceive that these aspirations come from their own desire.³³

Self-determination theory is thus strictly related to rewards. Extrinsic rewards are mostly considered as detrimental; if a person know that she is paid for doing a certain job, she feels less involved because she thinks that she is only performing their duties and fulfilling the organization's expectations³⁴ ³⁵. Nevertheless, a study performed by Butt, Choi and Malik proved that extrinsic reward can indeed promote creative activity³⁶ if two conditions are present:

1. The presence of *valence*, namely the value that an employee assigns to a certain reward³⁷; and
2. The possibility that an individual possesses an internal locus of control.

Loci of control determine the approach that a person holds towards the consequences of the events that occur in the surrounding environment. If a person tends to ascribe the consequences of events to external factors (for example, if she blames other people

³¹ Tighe, E. *The Motivational Influences of Mood on Creativity*, University Microfilms International, 1992, p.20

³² *Idem*, p.23

³³ Judge, T. A., Robbins, S. P. *Organizational Behavior*, Prentice Hall, 2012, p.242

³⁴ *Idem*, p.243

³⁵ Tighe, E., *cit.*, p.21

³⁶ Butt, A. N., Choi, J. N., Malik, M. A. R. "Rewards and Employee Creative Performance: Moderating Effects of Creative Self-Efficacy, Reward Importance, and Locus of Control" in *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 36, 2015, p.70

³⁷ *Idem*, p.61

for a failure), then she possesses an external locus of control. Vice versa, if a person believes that she is the controller of her own situation, then the locus of control is internal.³⁸ An employee may be induced to think that he is working only for external reasons, and thus feel less intrinsically motivated, if external rewards are prominent; but if this employee own an internal locus of control, and thus believes that he is responsible of his actions, then his perception of being controlled by external factors would be low.³⁹ This theory is highly subjective, in the sense that relies on each individual's personality and perception. For this reason, managers must be aware of each worker's disposition and valence when managing rewards.

This does not mean that people cannot be trained to be more self-determinate. A research promoted by Sheldon has demonstrated that, when parents grant children independence and freedom from constraints, creativity is increased⁴⁰. Autonomy is necessary to achieve greater creative potential. Some people may in fact live in an intermediary stage, in which they have reached some levels of unconformity but still have to obtain an adequate degree of independence and self-confidence, and thus still have to achieve their maximum creative potential⁴¹. For this reason, it is important for managers to provide their employees with enough autonomy, in order to foster their creativity and motivations.

1.2.3. Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation is perhaps the most important determinant of individual creativity. It surely determines whether a person will exploit his expertise and skills to approach a given task or not.⁴² Moreover, if a person is strongly intrinsically motivated, he can even handle a possible lack of abilities by increasing the effort spent in learning or by looking for different skills in new domains.⁴³

³⁸ *Idem*, p.62

³⁹ *Idem*, p.70

⁴⁰ Sheldon, K. M. "Creativity and Self-Determination in Personality" in *Creativity Research Journal*, 8-1, 1995, p.30

⁴¹ *Idem*, p.32

⁴² Tighe, E., *cit.*, p.18

⁴³ Amabile, T.M., *cit.*, 1997, p.44

The importance of intrinsic motivation lies in the fact that it allows people to freely experiment with the task at hand as well as better concentrate on the task itself⁴⁴. This is determined by an individual's self-determination and competence level: if a person is not sure about himself or does not trust his own abilities, it is unlikely that he will display high levels of intrinsic motivation.⁴⁵

Extrinsic constraints and inducements play the opposite role. The awareness that they are working under limits of time or strict surveillance, or simply when extrinsic motivators (such as money rewards or public acknowledgement) add up to the initial intrinsic ones, greatly increases the possibility that employees feel less involved with their task. This is called "the overjustification effect".⁴⁶ Moreover, extrinsic motivation is especially threatening for creativity. Extrinsic constraints usually do not invite workers to explore the task or find new and innovative ways to solve a problem, but rather to simply solve it; for this reason, employees rely on well known, past procedures that allow them to easily conclude their job, thus not engaging in fruitful creativity processes⁴⁷.

Nevertheless, extrinsic motivation must not be demonized as completely and definitely harmful for creativity; extrinsic incentives such as a monetary compensation or a set deadline are not only useful, but also required. There are some cases in which extrinsic motivation helps in the fulfillment of the tasks, especially when the tasks do not need an elevated level of creativity. For this reason, extrinsic motivation can greatly stimulate people to appropriately fulfill repetitive duties, or simple and mechanical jobs⁴⁸. Moreover, if the external rewards improve self-confidence or provide people with more information, skills or opportunities, they undeniably improve intrinsic motivation and creativity⁴⁹.

Finally, Amabile underlines the fact that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, though often believed to be mutually exclusive, they truly are not. Not always, at least. If a

⁴⁴ Tighe, E., *cit.*, p.18

⁴⁵ *Idem*, p.21

⁴⁶ *Idem*, p.21

⁴⁷ Amabile, T.M., *cit.*, 1988, pp.142-143

⁴⁸ *Idem*, p.144

⁴⁹ Jung Yoon, H., Kim, S., Lee, K., Nam Choi, J., Young Sung, S., *cit.*, p.386

person is strongly intrinsically motivated, extrinsic motivation simply adds up to the initial motivation, and does not hinder it.⁵⁰ Of course, the effect of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations depends on the variable conditions of work and workers and above all on their *situational motivation*; which represents their current driver of motivation and relies on the specificities of the tasks at hand and on the employees' psychological conditions⁵¹. *Initial intrinsic motivation* therefore is one determinant of the effects of extrinsic motivation. Amabile then identifies two other factors: the *type of extrinsic motivator* used, and the *timing of the extrinsic motivation*⁵².

Extrinsic motivators are organized into three categories:

- Useful feedback and positive recognition, which may increase the amount of information provided to a person as well as offer opportunities to improve his or her performance. These and similar kinds of rewards are called *informational extrinsic motivators*.
- When extrinsic motivators stimulate a person to deeply engage in his or her task, they are called *enabling extrinsic motivators*. Since these first two types of motivators produce positive effects when combined with intrinsic motivators, they are called *synergistic extrinsic motivators*.
- Lastly, when external constraints or rewards undermine a person's self-esteem and confidence, as well as undercut her perceived ability to perform a task, they are called *controlling extrinsic motivators* and are considered as *non-synergistic extrinsic motivators*.

The third determinant of the effects of extrinsic motivators is the *timing*. Depending on which phase of the creative problem solving process a person is facing, extrinsic motivation can be either useful or harmful. If the process is moving across the stages of information gathering, or through the final validation phase, more algorithmic approaches are required, and extrinsic rewards may increase a worker's motivation. On the other hand, if the process involves idea generation or other types of creative

⁵⁰ Amabile, T.M., *cit.*, 1988, p.146

⁵¹ Jung Yoon, H., Kim, S., Lee, K., Nam Choi, J., Young Sung, S., *cit.*, p.386

⁵²Amabile, T.M., *cit.*, 1997, p.45

activity, it is recommended to reduce extrinsic motivators in order to allow the employee to fully focus on his task, without being diverted by outside factors.

To conclude, Amabile developed the *intrinsic motivation principle of creativity*: “Intrinsic motivation is conducive to creativity. Controlling extrinsic motivation is detrimental to creativity, but informational or enabling extrinsic motivation can be conducive, particularly if initial levels of intrinsic motivation are high⁵³.”

To managers, this implies a tough task: to balance an employee’s abilities and challenges, in order to assign him a fulfilling job which, hopefully, may lead him to a state of flow. *Flow* is defined as a pleasant and gratifying experience that rises when a person perceives his abilities to be proportional to his duties: therefore, the task is not too simple nor too difficult. An excessively easy task may indeed bore the worker while, on the other hand, a too complicated assignment may create feelings of anger and frustration⁵⁴. Flow stands in-between, and it implies the greatest level of engagement that a worker can reach.

1.2.4. *Affect and Mood*

Mood is a pervasive feeling state that influences choices and actions, even if less strongly than emotions do. Mood changes can be triggered by a large range of events, both positive or negative, and it is believed to influence creativity at various degrees⁵⁵. Positive mood is especially associated with greater capacities of organization of information: people in a positive mood recall things from different categories, associate more elements and of different cognitive fields⁵⁶.

Negative mood, on the other hand, can influence creativity as well: studies have demonstrated that sadness or anger can occur when the task at hand is difficult or

⁵³ Amabile, T.M., *cit.*, 1997, p.46

⁵⁴ Davison, R. M., Mo, C., Yan, Y. “Employee Creativity Formation: The Roles of Knowledge Seeking, Knowledge Contributing and Flow Experience in Web 2.0 Virtual Communities” in *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29, 2013 p.1924

⁵⁵ Tighe, E., *cit.*, pp.8-9

⁵⁶ Amabile, T. M., Barsade, S. G., Mueller, S. J., Staw, B. M. “Affect and Creativity at Work” in *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 50, 2005, p.369

exceeds the person's potential, thus operating as a stimulus for creative activity⁵⁷. Some have also argued that, since both positive and negative mood trigger memory nodes, a combination of the two mental states could lead to an overall stronger effect⁵⁸; nevertheless, experiments have demonstrated that such a case does not occur⁵⁹.

Moreover, positive affect can influence creativity on three temporal aspects:

- Affect can be an *antecedent of creativity* if the event that stimulates the positive mood is induced a day before or less, since the beneficial effect lowers from the second day on. Therefore, if people are in a good mood when they engage in creative performance, creativity could be enhanced.
- Affect can be a *consequence of creativity*, but only within the day that the creativity act takes place. Within that day, people may experience pleasant feelings after engaging in creative activities.
- Finally, when people feel positive emotions while producing creative outcomes, affect can be a *concomitant of creativity*⁶⁰.

Since mood can change according to numerous factors, creating a social and work environment that encourages positive emotions can therefore be a valuable source of creativity stimulation.

1.2.5. Social Context and External Influence

Even though an individual is obviously a major determinant of his/her own creative potential, the external environment plays as much an important role. The context in which a person is included shapes his creative ability from his early years: studies have demonstrated that parents greatly influence a child's creativity if they encourage independence and autonomy, promote education and foster individual growth⁶¹. Of

⁵⁷ *Idem*, p.393

⁵⁸ *Idem*, p.372

⁵⁹ *Idem*, p.391

⁶⁰ Amabile, T. M., Barsade, S. G., Mueller, S. J., Staw, B. M., *cit.*, pp.385-389

⁶¹ Herman Brewer C. R., *cit.*, p.32

course, the social impact increases with the enlargement of a person's connections, therefore an adult is supposed to be subjected to a greater variety of influences.

A person can be part of different types of networks, which in turn produce different effects on creativity. If an individual has connections with people disconnected from each other, with different backgrounds, interests and personalities, he/she will more probably engage in more novel creative processes, since he/she can draw information from a wider and more varied pool. Alternatively, if a person is deeply involved in a network formed by close contacts and strict relationships, he/she could receive better support and his/her inventions could be more easily accepted and adopted. The strength of the relationship is also an important determinant: studies have indeed found an inverse correlation between the strength of a tie and individual creativity. Therefore, weak connections provide better support for creativity since they foster independent thinking and allow the gathering of information from several different sources.

In dyadic communication, the act of sharing useful technical information between two subjects is called *creative interaction*. Creative interactions occur between two actors:

- The *source*, that is the individual who possesses useful knowledge;
- The *recipient*, the person who seeks this knowledge and receives it from the source.

The interaction itself is composed by three sequential phases: *acquiring* of useful knowledge, *processing* of this knowledge, and *realizing* the possible value of the outcome. After this, the common idea generation-evaluation process occurs⁶².

Figure 4 represents the difference between individual and dyadic knowledge sharing.

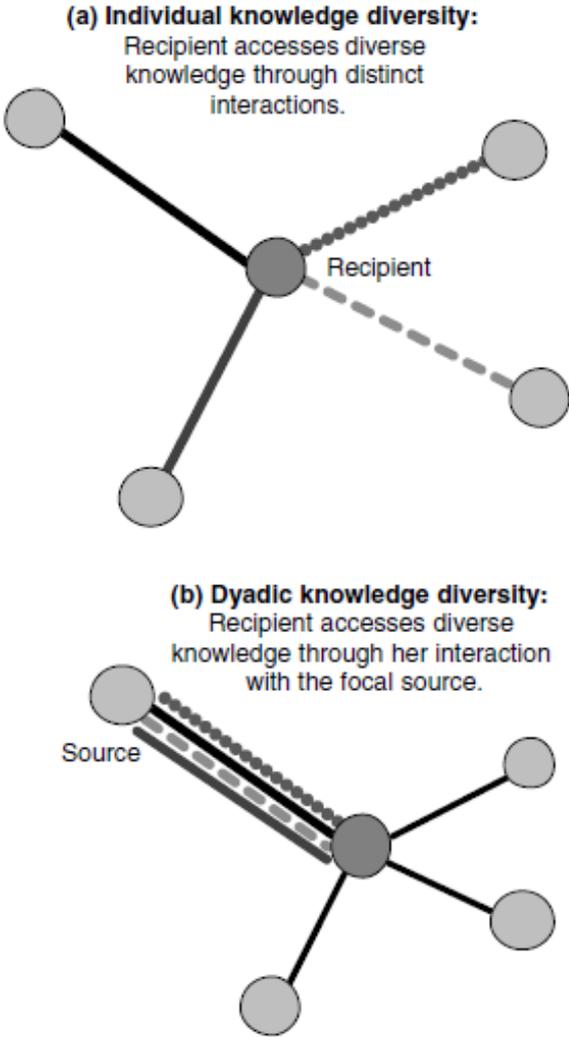
Multiple, weak ties allow a person to access to a various pool of knowledge, thus greatly increasing the recipient's creativity.⁶³

⁶² Sosa, M. E. "Where Do Creative Interactions Come From? The Role of Tie Content and Social Networks" in *Organization Science*, 22-1, 2011, p.2

⁶³ *Idem*, p.17

On the other hand, strong dyadic ties may represent an even better facilitator of creativity. This depends on the strength of the tie, which is determined by a combination of the actual duration of the bond and the emotional intensity of the two parts. Strong ties imply that individuals are greatly intrinsically motivated to nurture the relationship, receive grater support and contribute to the development of a positive work environment. This, in turn, creates a climate of confidence that fosters the development of more innovative and novel ideas.

Figure 4: Knowledge Diversity at Individual and Relational Levels



Source: Sosa, M. E, *cit.*, p.3

This theory, however, concerns organizational interactions and moreover the connections developed in organizational settings. Organizational creativity represents a specific branch of individual (or group) creativity, it has its own determinants and factors and represents a major source of competitive advantage in the contemporary market environment.

1.3. Determinants of Organizational Creativity

1.3.1. The Organizational Structure

Several studies have demonstrated that “the social environment can influence both the level and the frequency of creative behavior⁶⁴”. Specifically, the social environment in which employees live and perform almost every day is their organization; individual and groups are thus greatly influenced by the organizational settings. Companies are multifaceted systems that are composed by multiple elements, and each and every element affects the creative performance of the individuals that work inside the company itself. Given the great variety of these elements, the major determinants of organizational creativity can be divided into three groups:

1. Organizational climate and culture;
2. Organizational structure;
3. Skills, rewards and resources management.

- *Organizational climate and culture*

Organizational climate is perhaps the most important factor that influence creativity. There is large consensus among various researchers that a firm that provides freedom and openness encourage people to engage in more fruitful creative activity. This is because the lack of constraints and the perception of working in a “safe” environment help employees to express their ideas without the fear of the consequences, even (and

⁶⁴ Amabile, T.M., Conti, R., Coon, H., Herron, M., Lazenby, J. “Assessing the Work Environment for Creativity” in *Academy of Management Journal*, 39-5, 1996, p.1155

above all) when their ideas are radical or atypical^{65 66}. For this reason, it is important for a company to obtain a learning orientation and to stimulate innovation and idea generation^{67 68}. Moreover, a worker given with high degrees of autonomy is more inclined to feel responsible for his (or her) own work, thus more intrinsically motivated⁶⁹; nevertheless, constant encouragement and supportive feedback are other useful tools that managers can use to foster their employees' creativity and motivation. Forms of informal but fair evaluation have been shown to be particularly valuable for workers as well, since they allow them to receive constructive opinions about their performance without being forced by timelines and pressures^{70 71}. Pressures in particular have shown mixed evidence: Amabile distinguishes between *excessive workload pressure*, which is detrimental for creativity since it may induce people to rely on easy, overused solutions to speed up and simplify the task⁷²; and *challenge*, which, on the other hand, can stimulate a person to test herself and try to employ better and more novel ideas⁷³.

- *Organizational structure*

According to Senge, there are five factors that determine if an organization has developed a learning structure:

1. *System thinking*, which represents the awareness that a company is a complex system made of connections and elements that influence each other;
2. *Personal mastery*, the individual view of a person's own skills, potentialities and weaknesses that determine his or her vision and personal goals;
3. *Mental models*, inner representations of the world that people unconsciously make and that sometimes prevent new learning;

⁶⁵Andriopoulos, C., "Determinants of Organizational Creativity: A Literature Review" in *Management Decision*, 39-10, 2011, pp.835-836

⁶⁶Romeiro, A. A., Wood Jr., T. "Bounded Creativity: Understanding the Restrictions on Creative Work in Advertising Agencies" in *Brazilian Administration Review*, 12-1, 2015, p.5

⁶⁷ Andriopoulos, C., *cit.*, p.834

⁶⁸ Amabile, T.M., Conti, R., Coon, H., Herron, M., Lazenby, J., *cit.*, p.1159

⁶⁹ *Idem*, p.1161

⁷⁰ *Idem*, p.1160

⁷¹ Udwardia, F. E., *cit.*, p.73

⁷² Amabile, T.M., *cit.*, 1988, pp.148-149

⁷³ Amabile, T.M., Conti, R., Coon, H., Herron, M., Lazenby, J., *cit.*, p.1161

4. *Building shared vision*, the creation of a common goal towards which all members of the organization strive;
5. *Team learning*, which occurs when people exchange knowledge, information and point of views to improve both personal and team's performance^{74 75}.

Information sharing and reciprocal support are thus key elements for an organization that aims to reinforce creativity. Companies must allow freedom for people as well as for knowledge, and thus adopt flexible structures and low bureaucracy⁷⁶, few regulations⁷⁷ and highly interconnected jobs⁷⁸.

- *Skills, rewards and resources management*

Even if every person can be capable of creative activity on various degrees, managers must be aware of the fact that not every person holds the interest or the predisposition to do it. Some people are more suitable than others, and each man or woman has his or her own interests and abilities that suit for specific job. Therefore, in order to establish a creative environment, managers must carefully hire the right people and assign them the right tasks⁷⁹. People with a wide range of interests, intelligent, self-determined and willing to take risks are usually the most appropriate for high challenging and creative environments⁸⁰.

Still, people require motivation, and motivation comes from rewards. As we have seen, the management of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards requires particular attention since they can both foster and hinder creativity. They are also very variable: for example, some people may value monetary incentives, while some others may prefer jobs that provide them with opportunities to improve their skills⁸¹.

⁷⁴ Senge, P.M. *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice Of The Learning Organization*, Doubleday, New York, 1990

⁷⁵ Beng-Huat, T., *cit.*, p.26

⁷⁶ Bonciu, C., Coman, A. "Leadership and Creativity" in *Manager*, 19, 2014, p.32

⁷⁷ Andriopoulos, C., *cit.*, p.837

⁷⁸ Herman Brewer C. R., *cit.*, p.26

⁷⁹ Bonciu, C., Coman, A., *cit.*, p.33

⁸⁰ Andriopoulos, C., *cit.*, p.836

⁸¹ Bonciu, C., Coman, A., *cit.*, p.33

Lastly, an individual or a team must be assigned an adequate amount of resources, especially time and money⁸². When resources are perceived to be fair, people may feel that they are working on a valuable task⁸³. If, on the other hand, a project is given too few resources, it may make impossible to experiment and develop new ideas. Managers must be able to find a threshold level of sufficiency that allows employees to satisfactorily complete the task while searching and testing novel ideas, yet without investing too much: an abundance of resources may result in nothing more than wastefulness since, after reaching the threshold level, an increase in resources is not proven to support nor performance nor motivation⁸⁴.

Based on these assumptions, Teresa Amabile developed her own *Componential Theory of Organizational Creativity and Innovation*⁸⁵. The model exhibits the three main elements of the work environment that influence individual creativity: management practices, resources and organizational motivation.

The model is a more extended version of the Componential Theory of Creativity. Here, the three main characteristics of the work environment are shown to influence individual creativity which, in turn, improves organizational innovation.

The *organizational motivation to innovate* must be clear and permeate all the members of a company, top-down. The company must show an orientation towards innovation and creativity, a risk-taking attitude together with passion and enthusiasm.

Moreover, *resources* must be adequately allocated: they include time, money, possibilities of training, information and people with expertise.

Finally, *management practices* include all levels of management, but the most impactful for individual creativity is the level of individual and project department. Management that promotes autonomy, provides good communication between employees and supervisors, sets clear goals, grants supports and builds teams with

⁸² Andriopoulos, C., *cit.*, p.836

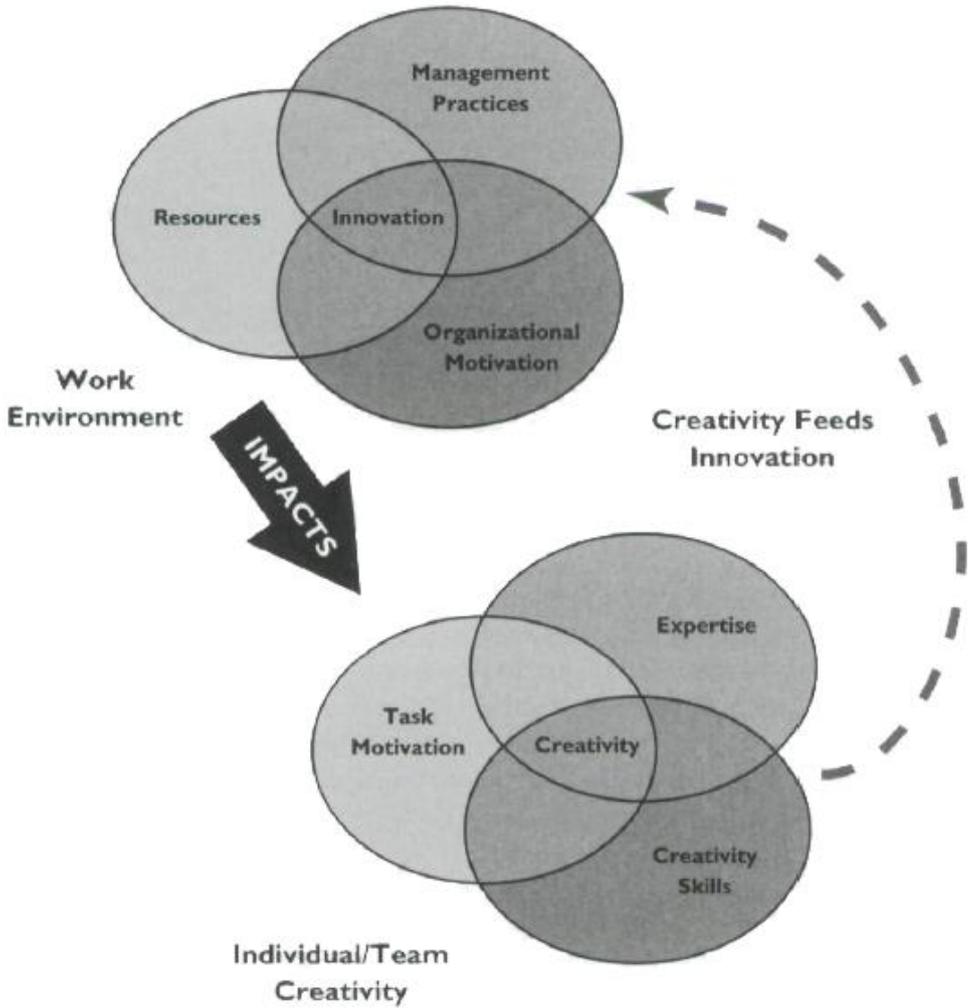
⁸³ Amabile, T.M., Conti, R., Coon, H., Herron, M., Lazenby, J., *cit.*, p.1161

⁸⁴ Andriopoulos, C., *cit.*, pp.836-837

⁸⁵ Amabile, T.M., *cit.*, 1997, p.53

capable and trustful individuals establishes a positive organizational climate for creativity.

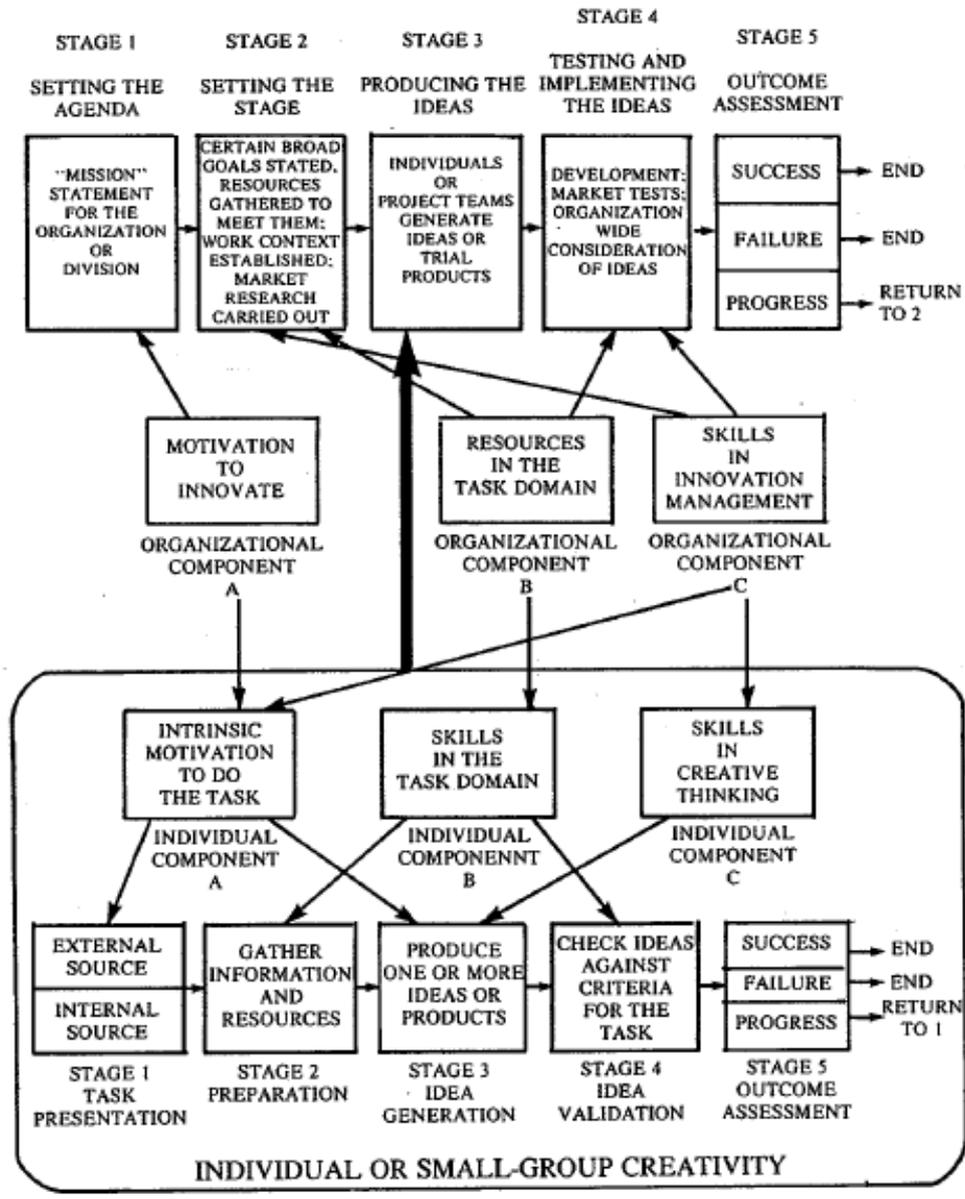
Figure 5: Impact of the Organizational Environment on Creativity



Source: Amabile, T.M., *cit.*, 1997, p.53

Besides, the three elements are fundamental for the organizational innovation process. Amabile includes them in her *Componential Model of Organizational Innovation*:

Figure 6: The Componential Model of Organizational Innovation



Source: Amabile, T.M., *cit.*, 1988, p.152

The model links the three components of organizational environment with the five-steps process of organizational innovation. Each step is influenced by one or more organizational component which, in turn, draw from the components of individual creativity.

The first stage, *setting the agenda*, requires the definition of a mission and the setting of related general goals. Here the effect of the motivation to innovate is strong, and it is often determined by an external shock identified by the top management.

Setting the stage includes the definition of the external environment, the establishment of groups and teams, the delineation of more specific goals and the preparation for the idea generation phase. During this step, resources organization and management skills are crucial.

The stage of *producing the ideas* is influenced by individual creativity and motivation. During this phase, employees are called to exploit their creative potential and skills to provide new proposals and solutions.

Testing and implementing the ideas involves experimenting as well as the production and evaluation of prototypes. If the outcome is not adequate, the process may turn back to phase 3 and repeat. When a satisfactory (and satisfying) solution has been found, the project can proceed to its final phase.

The *outcome assessment* can lead to a success, a failure or a progress. Since the innovation process is not longitudinally linear, in the case that a fully acceptable solution has not been found the process can return to phase 2 and start again⁸⁶.

As we have seen, organizational creativity is influenced by a multiplicity of elements drawn from all management levels. If handled properly, these elements contribute to the creation of a constructive work climate that will allow people to exploit their creative potential at their best⁸⁷.

To conclude, Amabile provides a list of the environmental factors that promote and inhibit creativity. The list is here presented as a summary of the concepts examined in this paragraph.

⁸⁶ Amabile, T.M., *cit.*, 1988, pp.160-163

⁸⁷ Amabile, T.M., *cit.*, 1997, pp.52-54

Table 3: Qualities of Environments That Promote Creativity

1. Freedom
<i>Freedom in deciding what to do or how to accomplish the task, a sense of control over one's own work and ideas. The most important type of freedom, as described by these interviewees, is operational autonomy – freedom in the day-to-day conduct of one's work, freedom in deciding how to achieve the overall goal or mission of a project.</i>
2. Good Project Management
<i>A manager who serves as a good role model, is enthusiastic, has good communication skills, protects the project team from outside distractions and interference, matches tasks to workers' skills and interests, and sets a clear direction without managing too tightly.</i>
3. Sufficient Resources
<i>Access to necessary resources, including facilities, equipment, information, funds and people.</i>
4. Encouragement
<i>Management enthusiasm for new ideas, creating an atmosphere free of threatening evaluation.</i>
5. Various Organizational Characteristics
<i>A mechanism for considering new ideas, a corporate climate marked by cooperation and collaboration across levels and divisions, an atmosphere where innovation is prized and failure is not fatal.</i>
6. Recognition
<i>A general sense that creative work will receive appropriate feedback, recognition, and reward.</i>
7. Sufficient Time
<i>Time to think creatively about the problem, to explore different perspectives rather than having to impose an already- determined approach.</i>
8. Challenge
<i>A sense of challenge arising from the intriguing nature of the problem itself or its importance to the organization (internalized by the individual as a personal sense of challenge).</i>
9. Pressure
<i>A sense of urgency that is internally generated from competition with outside organizations, or from a general desire to accomplish something important.</i>

Source: Amabile, T.M., *cit.*, 1988, pp.146-147

Table 4: Qualities of Environments That Inhibit Creativity

1. Various Organizational Characteristics
<i>Inappropriate reward systems in the organization; excessive red tape; a corporate climate marked by a lack of cooperation across divisions and levels, little regard for innovation in general.</i>
2. Constraint
<i>Lack of freedom in deciding what to do or how to accomplish the task, lack of sense of control over one's own work and ideas.</i>
3. Organizational Disinterest
<i>A lack of organizational support, interest, or faith in a project; a perceived apathy toward any accomplishments coming from the project.</i>
4. Poor Project Management
<i>Manager unable to set clear direction, manager with poor technical or communication skills, manager who controls too tightly or allows distractions and fragmentation of the team's efforts.</i>
5. Evaluation
<i>Inappropriate or inequitable evaluation and feedback systems, unrealistic expectations, an environment focused on criticism and external evaluation.</i>
6. Insufficient Resources
<i>A lack of appropriate facilities, equipment, materials, funds, or people.</i>
7. Time Pressure
<i>Insufficient time to think creatively about the problem; too great a workload within an unrealistic time frame; high frequency of "fire-fighting."</i>
8. Overemphasis on the Status Quo
<i>Reluctance of managers or co-workers to change their way of doing things; an unwillingness to take risks.</i>
9. Competition
<i>Interpersonal or intergroup activity within the organization, fostering a self-defensive attitude.</i>

Source: Amabile, T.M., *cit.*, 1988, pp.146-147

1.3.2. Leadership Style

Among all the determinants of organizational creativity, leadership styles greatly and directly influence the behavior of employees. First of all, leaders are responsible for the employees' assignments: managers have to build effective teams where workers can feel safe and willing to express their ideas⁸⁸. It is quite common among organizations to have some people holding the "superstar" status: they can be of

⁸⁸ Andriopoulos, C., *cit.*, p.835

higher rank, recognized value, or simply more charismatic. Thus, leader's role is to balance the equilibrium in groups where these people tend to monopolize the discussion by allowing everyone to speak up and express their idea⁸⁹. Diversity in people's opinions, characteristics, or expertise is demonstrated to enhance creativity, but these people must be in the condition to be heard⁹⁰.

Creating a climate of encouragement, support and trust is imperative for leaders, since their role can be truly inspirational and increase employee's intrinsic motivation and job engagement⁹¹. It is also important for leaders to build a clear vision of the organization, its values and goals⁹² and the prominent role of creativity to achieve them. Sharing the vision and providing enthusiasm makes individuals more committed to their jobs and makes them more motivated to act, both individually and collectively, in support of it⁹³.

However, not every phase of the creative innovation process actually needs a leader, or the same leading approach. When the project is in its discovery stage, for example, leaders should step back and let employees with different cognitive and thinking style to assume control. It is very important for leaders to be able to separate the various phases of the innovation process, understand which phase the project is currently experiencing and develop a proper leading methodology⁹⁴. As an exemplification, Schein divided the process of organizational creation in four steps, each of it requires different leading roles:

- The first stage of initial creation requires the leader to be an *animator*, to provide enthusiasm and fill the team with energy and motivation;
- After the organization has stabilized, it needs a direction: the leader thus needs to be a *creator of culture*, building and sharing vision, mission, beliefs and values;

⁸⁹ Amabile, T. M., Khaire, M., "Creativity and the Role of the Leader" in *Harvard Business Review*, 2008, p.3

⁹⁰ *Idem*, p.4

⁹¹ Herman Brewer C. R., *cit.*, p.27

⁹² Chen, K., Huang, C., Yien, J. "The Perceived Leader Support Behavior for Subordinate's Creativity: The Moderating Effect of Trust" in *Journal of Social Sciences*, 7-2, 2011, p.259

⁹³ Andriopoulos, C., *cit.*, pp.834-835

⁹⁴ Amabile, T. M., Khaire, M., *cit.*, p.6

- The leader then proceeds towards the objectives that he (or she) has set, becoming the *sustainer of culture*;
- During periods of uncertainty, the leader must be able to recognize possibilities and threats and act as a *change agent*, fostering the learning of new knowledge and replacing unusable information⁹⁵.

Far from being the old-style, autocratic entrepreneur, the role of a leader has been considerably evolved during the years. Multiple management approaches have been developed, each of which with its own characteristics and impact on individual and team creativity: thus, this work proceeds by examining and confronting the effects that the various leading styles have on creativity.

⁹⁵ Beng-Huat, T., *cit.*, p.27

CHAPTER 2- LEADERSHIP INFLUENCE ON INDIVIDUAL CREATIVITY

2.1. Leadership Styles and Theories

2.1.1. Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership emphasizes the role of the leader as crucial figure in an organizational or team environment. Leaders are authentic- as opposed to pseudo¹- when they possess personal values² and skill that allow them to become inspirational and motivational sources for their employees. Authentic leaders are strong, charismatic individuals capable of creating a climate of self-confidence, trust and support³ by sharing and spreading their values, creating strong bonds with their employees⁴. The four main pillars of authentic leadership are:

- *Self-awareness*: the knowledge a person has about himself or herself, including limits and possibilities, abilities, personal characteristics and the way of approaching and influencing other people;
- *Balanced processing*: the ability to objectively analyze situations and data in order to find a proper solution to a given problem or situation;
- *Internalized moral perspective*: the set of moral values that influence both personal and organizational choices, giving coherence to the leader's actions;
- *Relational transparency*: the predisposition towards openness and self-disclosure⁵.

Relational transparency is particularly significant for creativity. Sharing opinions and ideas creates a positive chain reaction that encourages other people to do the same, thus building a climate of psychological safety and propension towards risk taking. This, in turn, allows people to produce more creative ideas, test different and various

¹ Krueger, P., Tummens, L., *cit.*, p.11

² Erdilb, O., Müceldili, B., Turan, H. "The Influence of Authentic Leadership on Creativity and Innovativeness" in *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 99, 2013, p.675

³ Černe, M., Jaklič, M., Škerlavaj, M. "Authentic Leadership, Creativity, and Innovation: A Multilevel Perspective" in *Leadership*, 9-1, 2013, p.67

⁴ *Idem*

⁵ Marques, C., Miguel, C., Miguel, P., Rego, A., Sousa, F. "Hope and Positive Affect Mediating the Authentic Leadership and Creativity Relationship" in *Journal of Business Research*, 67, 2014, p.202

solutions and be more proactive; transparent leaders, at the same time, share a larger amount of information and establish strong relationships. When individuals perceive their leader to be genuinely supporting innovation, they feel more intrinsically motivated⁶ as well as more persistent when engaging in creative activities⁷.

Perception is important. Empirical research has demonstrated that, for a leader to be influential on employees' creativity and motivation, it is not required only to possess the attitudes examined above; attitudes must also be noticed. The perception that individuals have of their leader is thus the true determinant of employees' behavior⁸.

Authentic leadership has also important effects on a person's psychological capital. Positive psychological capital is determined by the presence of high levels of four different factors which are, in turn, predictors of creativity:

- *Self-efficacy*

Self-efficacy is constituted by a combination of self-esteem, self-awareness, confidence and mastery in the knowledge and abilities that a person holds. Self-efficacious people are also strongly intrinsically motivated. Self-efficacy is decisive for the development of a creative attitude and, due to its importance, it will be further examined later in this chapter.

- *Hope*

Hope encourages individuals to pursue their objective, even if (and above all) in the face of impediments and failure. Hopeful people are persistent in the pursue of their goals and they tend to examine various and different course of actions, thanks to their strong intrinsic motivation and creative potential⁹.

- *Optimism*

Optimistic people are inclined to give more importance to positive events: they are motivated, persevering and willing to take alternative routes to achieve their goals.

⁶ Černe, M., Jaklič, M., Škerlavaj, M., *cit.*, p.68

⁷ Marques, C., Miguel, C., Miguel, P., Rego, A., Sousa, F., *cit.*, 2014, p.202

⁸ Černe, M., Jaklič, M., Škerlavaj, M., *cit.*, p.76

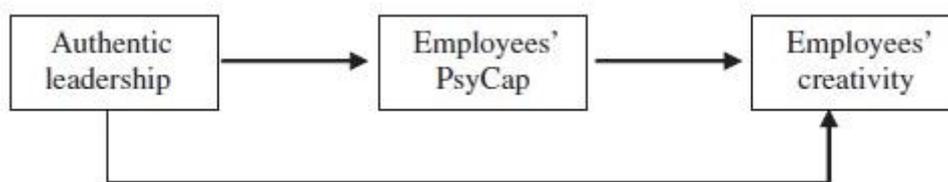
⁹ Marques, C., Miguel, C., Miguel, P., Rego, A., Sousa, F., *cit.*, 2014, p.203

Optimists are also less disposed towards the development of negative mental states such as depression, guilt and self-blame.

- *Resilience*

Resilient people excel during times of uncertainty. They are able to re-examine situations, experiment and undertake different approaches towards problems, included the issues that emerge during stressful situations. Resilient people are often curious, dedicated and deeply interested in their domain.

Figure 1: The Moderating Effect of Psychological Capital between Authentic Leadership and Employees' Creativity



Source: Marques, C., Miguel, C., Miguel, P., Rego, A., Sousa, F. "Authentic Leadership Promoting Employees' Psychological Capital and Creativity" in *Journal of Business Research*, 65, 2012, p.430

Authentic leaders are realistic and rational, reliable role models that employees can look at and take inspiration from. When leaders become trustworthy and vehicles of positive values such as enthusiasm, optimism and confidence, employees' values are enhanced as well¹⁰. Inspiration from the leader improves employees' psychological capital and creates a constructive environment in which creative activity is esteemed, stimulated and rewarded.

To conclude, authentic leadership is a theory concerned with the building of positive leader-employee relationships and an encouraging work environment¹¹. For this reason, it constitutes the basis of other leadership styles- such as transactional or transformational.¹²

¹⁰ Marques, C., Miguel, C., Miguel, P., Rego, A., Sousa, F., cit., 2012, pp.431-432

¹¹ Krueger, P., Tummens, L., cit., p.11

¹² Černe, M., Jaklič, M., Škerlavaj, M., cit., p.65

2.1.2. Transactional Leadership

The transactional leadership style is based on the establishment of contracts and exchanges between leaders and followers¹³. Transactional leaders value extrinsic rewards, which are set depending on the obtainment of specific goals or performance standards¹⁴. Therefore, transactional leadership is not always believed to encourage creativity: since rewards are mostly external and rely on the achievement of the objectives, employees are not always asked to find creative solutions; especially if the completion of a task is put at risk by the additional expenditure of resources that experiments and trials require¹⁵.

Transactional leaders have then the delicate job to define goals that can lead to an improved creativity performance, balancing at the same time extrinsic and intrinsic rewards¹⁶. In order to do this, leaders can exploit various options:

They can set *creativity goals*, which specify the need for original and uncommon outcomes. Studies have demonstrated that this approach, compared to the definition of unspecific goals, could lead either to positive or indifferent impacts on creativity; meaning that, in the worst scenario, no negative effects are implied.

Leaders can also establish *performance goals*, focusing on the development of multiple solutions. This typology of goals, however, have been proved to reduce intrinsic motivation and thus to be potentially harmful for creativity. Some studies clearly demonstrated that performance goals have a negative impact on employee's creativity¹⁷. Once again, is a leader's duty to be able to define adequate and specific objectives.

¹³ Abbas, J., Akram, T., Haider, M. J., Hussain, S. T., Lei, S. "Transactional Leadership and Organizational Creativity: Examining the Mediating Role of Knowledge Sharing Behavior" in *Cogent Business & Management*, 4, 2017, p.3

¹⁴ Khan, I., Khan, Z. A., Nawaz, A. "Leadership Theories and Styles: A Literature Review" in *Journal of Resources Development and Management*, 16, 2016, p.3

¹⁵ Jung, D. I. "Transformational and Transactional Leadership and Their Effects on Creativity in Groups" in *Creativity Research Journal*, 13-2, 2001, pp.187-188

¹⁶ Hughes, D. J., Lee, A., Legoode, A., Newmand, A., Wei Tian, A. "Leadership, Creativity, and Innovation: A Critical Review and Practical Recommendations" in *The Leadership Quarterly*, 29, 2018, p.554

¹⁷ Krueger, P., Tummars, L., *cit.*, pp.15-16

The transactional leadership style is composed by three elements: contingent reward, and active or passive management-by-exception.

- *Contingent reward*: the contingent reward approach provides tangible rewards in return for results. Leaders are thus called to provide directions, useful information and practical support to their followers, in order to build confidence and a climate of psychological safety.
- *Management by exception (active)*: quite the opposite of the contingent reward system, management by exception gives employees extreme autonomy by almost removing the figure of the leader itself. Individuals are trusted and given the freedom to manage themselves. Nevertheless, this typology of leadership does not truly stimulate innovativeness since people are only asked to reach a set standard level or fulfill some need.
- *Management by exception (passive)*: similar to the active style, leaders who follow the passive approach provide no directions, nor goals nor standards. It represents a particularly detached method that leaves the team with complete autonomy¹⁸, where the leader intervenes only in case of bad situations to warn or admonish¹⁹.

Even though transactional leadership has often been presented as detrimental for creativity, there are some cases in which it can lead to positive results. Environments characterized by uncertainty, lack of rule and chaotic mechanics call for specific directions and transactional leaders excel at this. Extrinsic rewards can provide help and motivation in times of risk or in those domains where situations change quickly, work must be optimized and failure is not accepted²⁰. Still, if leaders want to make their workers feel more committed and instill in them a long-term vision, they undeniably have to increase non-material rewards and employees' intrinsic motivation²¹.

¹⁸ Khan, I., Khan, Z. A., Nawaz, A., *cit.*, p.4

¹⁹ Hughes, D. J., Lee, A., Legoode, A., Newmand, A., Wei Tian, A., *cit.*, p.553

²⁰ Khan, I., Khan, Z. A., Nawaz, A., *cit.*, p.4

²¹ Jiang, W., Ma, X. "Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership, and Employee Creativity in Entrepreneurial Firms" in *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 54-3, 2018, p.319

2.1.3. Transformational Leadership

If transactional leadership focuses on providing extrinsic motivations, transformational leadership represents the opposite. Transformational leaders are strong, charismatic men or women who believe in the importance of the relationship between leaders and followers. The main task of a transformational leader is to share their values and vision to their followers, in order to create a common mission around which both individuals and the organization work: the higher the involvement that the workers feel with their leader, the higher their intrinsic motivation. And, when they strongly identify with their leader, employees assimilate the leader's (and organizational) goals and pursue them with increased effort. Moreover, even if followers are strongly advocated to share the leader's view, they are even more encouraged to safely express their own opinions²². The creation of a climate of psychological safety is another main feature of the transformational leadership style, since reciprocal trust and safety promote free speaking which is, in turn, an essential requirement for creativity; overall, transformational leadership has indeed been demonstrated to be more creativity stimulating than transactional leadership²³, especially in those risky and challenging organizational settings that always ask for new innovations²⁴.

Transformational leaders excel in reinforcing individual creativity; to do so, four leadership dimensions are necessary:

- *Idealized influence*

Idealized influence is the primary characteristic of transformational leaders, often connected to charisma. Charismatic leaders set high expectations and objectives for their followers, increasing their self-esteem and building trust and confidence. These leaders are strong figures with remarkable rhetorical abilities, they are able to enkindle their employees and act as a role-model for them. Setting exceptional standards of

²² Jung, D. I., *cit.*, p.187

²³ Krueger, P., Tummors, L., *cit.*, p.13

²⁴ Çekmeceliolu, H. G., Özbağ, G. K. "Leadership and Creativity: The Impact of Transformational Leadership on Individual Creativity" in *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 235, 2016, p.247

performance acts as a stimulus for both workers' motivation and creativity²⁵, even though empirical evidence showed that this effect is strong at individual or organizational level, but not for units²⁶.

- *Inspirational motivation*

Individuals perform at their best when they believe they can do so. Transformational leaders help their followers to broaden their vision and exploit their unique skills and inclinations in favor of the organization. Loose constraints and freedom allow people to be more creative and more involved in their tasks, as well as to be more connected to the organization's values and goals²⁷.

- *Intellectual stimulation*

Leaders can also stimulate other individuals by teaching them not to rely on previous beliefs and approaches²⁸, but still reframe problems from different point of views and develop alternative solutions. Intellectual stimulation allows people to increase their creative potential while, at the same time, learning to manage complex problems and keeping a rational eye²⁹.

- *Individualized consideration*

When following the individualized consideration approach, leaders recognize the importance of every single person working in the organization³⁰. Transformational leaders are open to discussion, support and confront with their followers³¹; employees are listened and given attention, which leads to improved self-actualization, self-esteem and job satisfaction³².

²⁵ Khan, I., Khan, Z. A., Nawaz, A., *cit.*, p.4

²⁶ Herman Brewer C. R., *cit.*, p.75

²⁷ Khan, I., Khan, Z. A., Nawaz, A., *cit.*, p.5

²⁸ Çekmecelioglua, H. G., Özbağ, G. K., *cit.*, p.244

²⁹ Khan, I., Khan, Z. A., Nawaz, A., *cit.*, p.5

³⁰ *Idem*

³¹ Çekmecelioglua, H. G., Özbağ, G. K., *cit.*, p.245

³² Herman Brewer C. R., *cit.*, p.78

The four constructs of transformational leaders are traits of the personality that a person can either naturally possess or be trained at. Everyone can learn to develop such skills, but research combined with the Jungian theory of psychological types suggest that people intrinsically retain only half of them³³:

Table 1: Transformational Leader Constructs-Intrinsic Strengths and Training Needs

Functions	Intrinsic Strengths	Training Needs
Sensing-Thinking	IM; IS	IC; II
Sensing-Feeling	IM; IC	IS, II
Intuitive-Thinking	II, IS	IC; IM
Intuitive-Feeling	IC; II	IM; IS

Note. IC-Individualized Consideration; II-Idealized Influence (charisma behavior); IM-Inspirational Motivation; IS-Intellectual Stimulation.

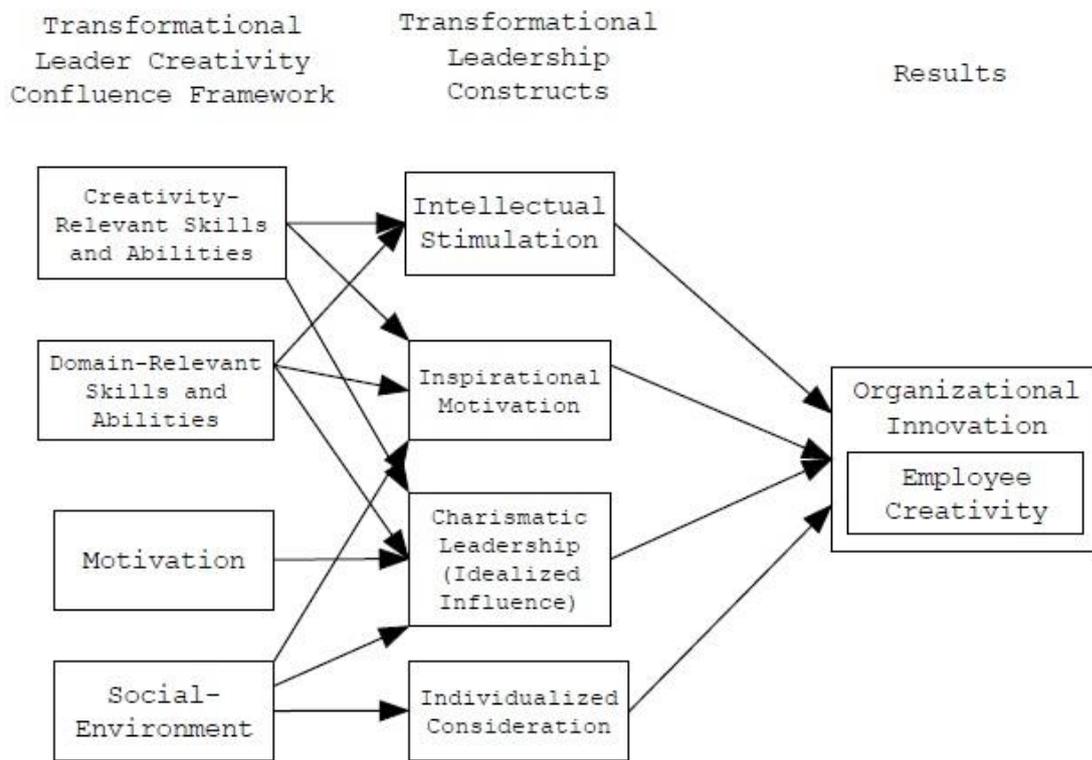
Source: Herman Brewer C. R., *cit.*, p.73

Leaders interested in developing a complete transformational approach should then understand which traits they already possess and try to acquire the ones they lack.

Lastly, a model proposed by Brewer represents the connection between Amabile’s componential theory of creativity and the four elements of transformational leadership. Each constituent of the componential theory is essential for the correct development and employment of one or more leadership approaches; at the end, the whole set of factors contribute to foster organizational innovation and, in turn, employees’ creativity.

³³ *Idem*, p.73

Figure 2: Transformational Creativity, Elements, and Results



Source: Herman Brewer C. R., *cit.*, p.83

2.1.4. Inclusive Leadership

Inclusive leaders promote individual creativity by helping employees to feel involved in the organizational (or team) decisions and pushing them to express their ideas, giving high value to their contribution and creating a climate of psychological safety. Specifically, leaders can improve employees' performance by providing adequate feedback, promoting organizational justice and fostering trust³⁴. Individuals are encouraged to bond with their leaders and the organization itself, with free access to information and, into understandable limits, resources³⁵.

Randel et al. have grouped the various characteristics of inclusive leadership into categories belonging to two macro classes: facilitating belongingness and indicating value for uniqueness.

³⁴ Abraham Carmeli, A., Reiter-Palmon, R., Ziv, E., *cit.*, pp.7-8

³⁵ *Idem*, p.16

Facilitating belongingness refers to the approaches that make employees feel more involved into a company's business and activities. This category includes three different behaviors:

1. *Supporting group members*, expressing concern for their need, encouraging opinion sharing and creating a climate of reciprocal interest.
2. *Ensuring justice and equity*, which represents a key issue for leaders, since it implies demonstrating that all workers are worth the same, regardless of age, culture, sex, physical conditions and so. Ensuring justice also means that individuals are evaluated on the basis of unbiased, fair criteria that assure that every worker holds the same possibilities than the others. Plans and informal events must be scheduled according to each individual's needs and limitations, even the ones concerning the private sphere. If a person perceives that his or her problems are irrelevant to the organization or the leaders, (s)he will probably feel far less disposed to engage deeply in work or increase the level of organizational commitment.
3. *Shared decision making*, the final approach to increase employees' sense of belongingness. It implies involving followers in organizational or team decisions, sharing power and allowing all individuals to participate into decision making processes or planning meetings, as well as fostering group participation.

If creating a sense of group inclusiveness and common purpose is crucial under an organizational perspective, recognizing that each individual is different and unique is fundamental as well. For this reason, leaders should *indicate value for uniqueness* in order to help their followers to recognize, employ and exploit their strengths. To do this, two methods are proposed:

1. By *encouraging diverse contribution* each group member is pushed to share his point of view even in the case that it does not follow the common opinion. Since this may lead to social rejection of either the contributor or the leader (or both), especially when the ideas proposed lead to disappointment or failure, inclusive

leaders must be able to carefully analyze the situation and try to develop group cohesion and diversity acceptance;

2. *Helping group members fully contribute* assures that everyone is encouraged to speak, regardless of the opinion they have or their status among the group. A leader can ease a person's desire to contribute by privately speaking with him or her beforehand, in order to reinforce bonds and facilitate inclusion³⁶.

To conclude, inclusive leadership is a positive leading style which main purpose is to stimulate individuals' creativity, making it particularly suitable for complex, knowledge intensive environments filled with uncertainty and highly variable markets³⁷.

2.1.5. Empowering leadership

Empowering leadership includes sharing power with employees, increasing their autonomy and providing guidance and support³⁸. Zhang and Zhou have demonstrated how uncertainty avoidance and trust towards supervisors are two major predictors for empowering leadership's efficacy, especially when they are both high.

Uncertainty avoidance measures the tendency of an individual to search for directions when situations are unstable; when this situation occurs, workers may turn to supervisors if they *trust* them and consider them sincere. When both these conditions are met, empowering leaders perform at their best: by encouraging employees and providing them with guidance and information, empowering leaders create a climate of psychological safety that is positive for creativity. On the other hand, if employees do not trust their leaders, they are unlikely to rely on them; workers may instead

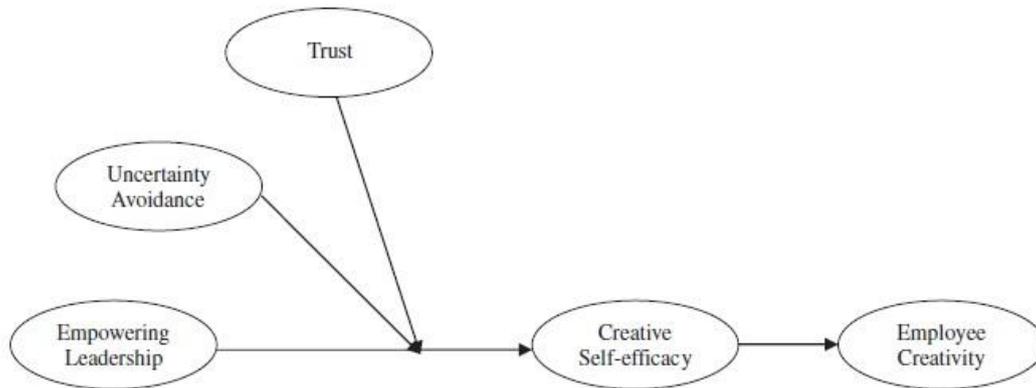
³⁶ Chung, B. G., Dean, M. A., Ehrhart, K. H., Galvin, B. M., Kedharnath, U., Rande, A. E., Shore, L. M. "Inclusive Leadership: Realizing Positive Outcomes through Belongingness and Being Valued for Uniqueness" in *Human Resource Management Review*, 28, 2018, pp.193-194

³⁷ Abraham Carmeli, A., Reiter-Palmon, R., Ziv, E., *cit.*, p.17

³⁸ Bartol, K. M., Zhang, X. "Linking Empowering Leadership and Employee Creativity: The Influence of Psychological Empowerment, Intrinsic Motivation, and Creative Process Engagement" in *Academy of Management Journal*, 53-1, 2010, p.109

develop feelings of insecurity and decide to employ old, “safe” solutions to solve the problems they are asked to face³⁹.

Figure 3: The Model of Empowering Leadership



Source: Zhang, X., Zhou, J., *cit.*, p.151

Lastly, empowering leadership style is marked by the presence of four elements:

1. *Enhancing the meaningfulness of work*, i.e. demonstrating that an individual's work is worthy and useful to the organization;
2. *Participation in decision making*;
3. *Expressing confidence in high performance*, namely telling employees that they are believed capable of outstanding performances; and
4. *Providing autonomy from bureaucratic constraints*, by allowing followers to make important decisions⁴⁰.

³⁹ Zhang, X., Zhou, J. “Empowering Leadership, Uncertainty Avoidance, Trust, and Employee Creativity: Interaction Effects and a Mediating Mechanism” in *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 124, 2014, p.152

⁴⁰ Kruijen, P., Tummers, L., *cit.*, p.10

2.1.6. Resonant Leadership

One of the most recent theories on leadership and motivation has focused on the importance of creating connections among leaders and followers, people and organizations, in order to make a company (or a team) a cohesive entity where individuals feel comfortable with each other, are nurtured and determined to pursue common goals: this style is called *resonant leadership*.

Resonant leaders are confident and competent people, strongly self-efficient⁴¹, who are able to create positive environments and inspire and stimulate coworkers and followers⁴². More than a simple management theory, resonant leadership includes elements of economic sciences, psychology and philosophy; the aim is to create and maintain the *resonance*, an equilibrium among people and their leaders that can reveal and exploit the positive energies of both. Nevertheless, resonance is difficult to reach and even more complicated to preserve since leaders, followers and organizations are all subjected to high levels of stress, accidents, uncertainty and difficulties that may induce towards *dissonance*⁴³. For this reason, a true resonant leader must pay attention to the environment, the people living and working in it, as well as his (or her) own private life.

Resonant leaders recognize the fact that individuals do not perform well when driven by feelings of anger or fear. In fact, even if people who are scared by their leaders initially appear more engaged in their job, there is no gain in the long-term vision. Workers who feel useless or are not given proper appreciation are not likely to share organizational values, vision and objectives, and thus they will not exert much effort when working on them⁴⁴. On the other hand, when workers see that their leaders are truly involved, passionate people who believe in their values and in their followers,

⁴¹ Boyatzis, R., McKee, A. *La Leadership Risonante- Intelligenza Emotiva in Azione*, RCS Libri s.p.a., 2006, p.169

⁴² *Idem*, p.2

⁴³ *Idem*, p.5

⁴⁴ Aysen, B., Taner, B. "The Role of Resonant Leadership in Organizations" in *European Scientific Journal*, 1, 2013, p.596

employees will become more motivated as well⁴⁵: since resonance (and unfortunately dissonance as well) is contagious⁴⁶.

In order to create resonance, leaders must possess three main characteristics: mindfulness, hope, and compassion.

- *Mindfulness* embodies the deep awareness of one's true self as well as the conditions of the surrounding people and environment. Mindfulness includes the ability of reading signals, both coming from us or from the outside, understanding them and recognize if and how they can be successfully employed to identify problems or opportunities⁴⁷. It is a key feature of resonant leaders: mindfulness individuals are more receptive, creative and able to valorize people and situations⁴⁸. Being mindful is especially useful when facing ambiguous situations where outcomes are unknown, or when meeting difficulties⁴⁹: mindfulness allows individuals to better analyze the odds without falling into the *mindlessness*, a state of mind that appears when people lose their sense of reality and do not recognize (or admit) that the circumstances are changing, often adversely. When facing mindlessness, individuals tend to attribute to external factors the responsibility for failures, become more irritable and usually more presumptuous; followers and colleagues perceive this, the climate worsens, creating dissonance, and everyone's motivation and creativity lessens⁵⁰. For this reason, leaders must foster inner reflection⁵¹ and not lose their ability to listen⁵²: since, as we already said, dissonance is contagious, a mindless leader has a negative influence even on the individuals surrounding him (or her).

⁴⁵ Boyatzis, R., McKee, A., *cit.*, p.21

⁴⁶ *Idem*, pp.22-23

⁴⁷ *Idem*, p.73

⁴⁸ *Idem*, p.74

⁴⁹ *Idem*, p.118

⁵⁰ *Idem*, pp.126-127

⁵¹ *Idem*, p.138

⁵² *Idem*, p.142

- *Hope* is a feeling of enthusiasm and self-confidence that instills in individuals the belief that they can achieve results and realize their objectives⁵³: when people feel inspired, they focus on their strengths and intensely work towards the realization of a vision or a goal. Hope and other benefic sentiments such as enthusiasm or happiness are positive *attractors*: they stimulate the brain and hormones which, in turn, increase individual levels of energy and determination, allow for better focus and for more accurate situation analysis. If, oppositely, attractors are negative (such as anger, jealousy, resentment and so on), the perception results distorted, the weak points are overemphasized, and people commonly fall into a condition of high *stress*. Stress is detrimental for creativity, since it narrows the range of the possibilities that are being evaluated, it lessens the accuracy during decision making processes and it leads to cynicism; which is a state of mind that causes an individual to focus on the negative aspects of people, charging them with faults and responsibilities that often are to be ascribed only to the individual him/herself⁵⁴. To avoid the generation of such a situation, leaders should first of all be mindful, know and support individuals and define a clear vision that everyone can relate with and believe in⁵⁵; they should also be optimistic and confident, but at the same time set feasible and realistic objectives⁵⁶.
- Lastly, *compassion* is defined as “empathy in action” since it comprehends the capacity of caring and understanding other people, as well as the will to actively take action to activate the change⁵⁷. In organizational settings, compassion helps managers to avoid falling into heavy stressful conditions even during periods of crisis. Moreover, creating an environment where individuals feel supported and cherished increases motivation, job involvement; it facilitates long-term employment, it stimulates better leading approaches and lead to better relations with customers⁵⁸. To help the creation and the diffusion of compassion in a

⁵³ *Idem*, p.152

⁵⁴ *Idem*, p.157

⁵⁵ *Idem*, p.165

⁵⁶ *Idem*, p.154

⁵⁷ *Idem*, p.180

⁵⁸ *Idem*, p.187

working environment, one of the most recommended techniques is *coaching*: a compassionate coaching session, held by mindful individuals with great regard to the inclinations and the interests of the people they are teaching to, represents a strong tool that encourages the birth of attentive, open-minded leaders and followers, and fosters the renewal process that is necessary for the continual growth of a healthy company⁵⁹.

Mindfulness, hope and compassion are the three main attributes of personality that can help individuals to avoid (or emerge from) the *sacrifice syndrome*, one of the most common and dreadful consequences of dissonant leadership. Managers that put everything of themselves into their work, individuals that were not able to resonate with followers or colleagues, people whose mistakes or bad choices have drifted apart from their cherished ones or simply men and women afraid of the responsibilities and uncertainties that the future brings are all common targets of the sacrifice syndrome. This sort of mental illness brings stress, demotivation, skepticism in themselves as well as in other people and a sort of loss of direction and vision; sometimes, people do not even realize that something has led them to fall into this syndrome. For some, dissonance is the norm. The burdens that leaders have to face every single day may weaken them, if they are not able to resonate and balance work, private life and individual interests and necessities⁶⁰; and lead them to even worse working performances. To stop this vicious cycle, resonant leaders are able to employ mindfulness, hope and compassion to continuously renew themselves, even when the odds at first appear to be fairly good, in order to prevent the appearance of the syndrome and create a positive working environment for them and for their followers⁶¹, increasing their creativity and job satisfaction⁶². The following figure represents the cycles of sacrifice and renewal, their interaction and their effects on individuals and leadership.

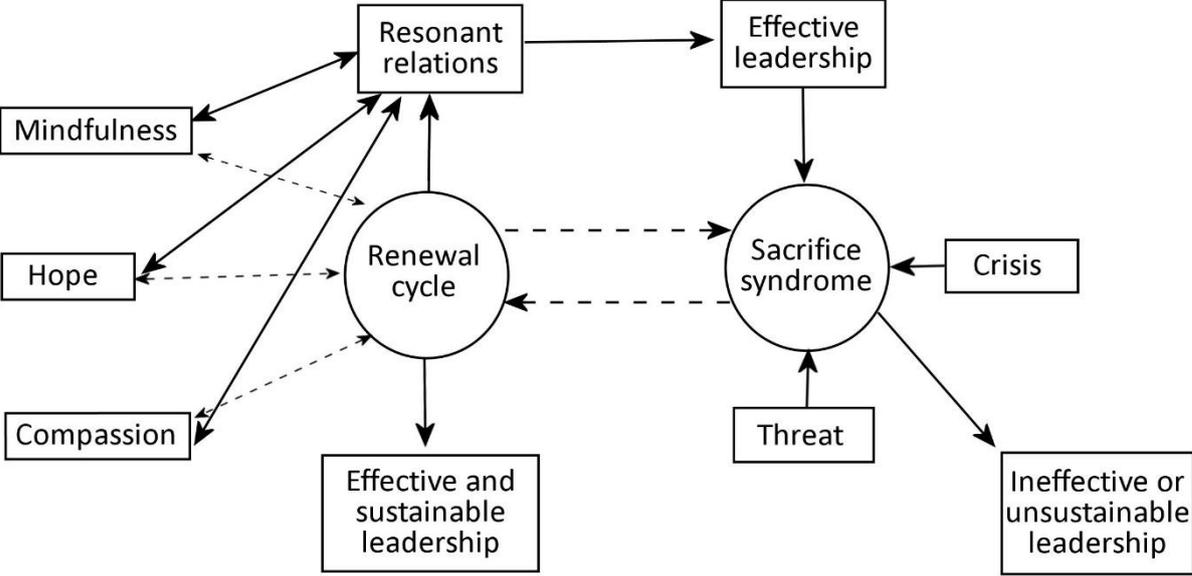
⁵⁹ *Idem*, pp.194-196

⁶⁰ *Idem*, p.6

⁶¹ *Idem*, p.61

⁶² Bawafaa, E., Laschinger, H., Wong, C. A. "The Influence of Resonant Leadership on the Structural Empowerment and Job Satisfaction of Registered Nurses" in *Journal of Research in Nursing*, 0, 2015, p.9

Figure 4: Sustaining Resonance and Efficiency through the Cycle of Sacrifice and Renewal



Note: The effects that involve the leader’s inner self are indicated by dotted arrows. The effects related with the social interactions between leaders and other individuals are indicated by solid lines.

Source: Boyatzis, R., McKee, A., *cit.*, p.72

2.1.7. Servant leadership

The servant leadership style focuses on the growth of all the members of the organization. Employees are supported and taught to become autonomous: thus, leaders are asked to foster their followers’ progress and help them learn how to exploit their uniqueness. This leadership style places on the same level leaders and workers, everyone committed to organizational vision and goals⁶³. Research has demonstrated that, though moderate, servant leadership has a positive influence on employee’s creativity and innovation⁶⁴.

⁶³ Khan, I., Khan, Z. A., Nawaz, A., *cit.*, p.3

⁶⁴ Hughes, D. J., Lee, A., Legoode, A., Newmand, A., Wei Tian, A., *cit.*, p.553

2.2. Creativity Stimulation Approaches

2.2.1. Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)

Leader-member exchange is based on the assumption that the relationships a leader creates with each member of its team are dyadic and different from one another⁶⁵; which means that leaders develop relationships that can vary from a range from low to high quality and thus, depending on their characteristics, have different impacts on followers' creativity.

Low-quality relationships are simple and formal working associations where leaders are mostly detached from their followers, the interactions are formal and there is limited autonomy and sharing⁶⁶. These typologies of relationships are detrimental for creativity since leaders tend to often blame workers personally in case of mistakes, provide no support, feedback or autonomy and establish no trust; under these conditions, employees perceive that engage in creative and potentially risky activities may be dangerous or not worth the effort, and so rely on common and careful solutions.⁶⁷ They are also more prone to overlook the organization's goals in favor of personal interest, and ignore their leaders if followers believe them to be unworthy⁶⁸.

On the other hand, high-quality relationships are based on reciprocal confidence and high expectations. Strong bonds are positively conducive of employee creativity for multiple reasons: they facilitate spontaneous speaking, promote information exchange, increase the level of perceived assistance from superiors⁶⁹ and encourage experimentation and risk-taking. Moreover, being treated with consideration induces employees to respond to the perceived care with increased effort and dedication towards work⁷⁰.

⁶⁵ Niessen, C., Spurk, D., Volmer, J. "Leader–Member Exchange (LMX), Job Autonomy, and Creative Work Involvement" in *The Leadership Quarterly*, 23, 2012, p.457

⁶⁶ Janssen, O., Qu, R., Shi, K. "Leader–Member Exchange and Follower Creativity: The Moderating Roles of Leader and Follower Expectations for Creativity" in *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 28-4, 2017, p.605

⁶⁷ *Idem*, pp.607-608

⁶⁸ Huang, L., Liu, D., Krasikova, D. V. "I Can Do It, so Can You: The Role of Leader Creative Self-Efficacy in Facilitating Follower Creativity" in *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 132, 2016, p.53

⁶⁹ Janssen, O., Qu, R., Shi, K., *cit.*, p.606

⁷⁰ Niessen, C., Spurk, D., Volmer, J., *cit.*, p.458

Nevertheless, even when leaders and members are involved in high-level relationships, some elements may undermine the positive effects that such relations usually have on creativity; role expectations, if incorrect, can indeed negatively influence the effects of LMX. For example, when a leader holds great esteem for a follower but does not believe her capable of adequate creative activity, the leader himself may not provide adequate support. Or, oppositely, followers may not have enough self-expectation to engage in fruitful creative acts⁷¹. For this reason, leaders should be sure to exploit their role to assure that followers are allowed to exploit their full creative potential; since, given their position of power, leaders have great influence upon employees' performance, expectancies and behavior⁷².

As we have seen, the beneficial effects of LMX on employees' creativity are various, but they can be essentially grouped into two main factors:

1. Followers that share a close relationship with their leader can take more advantages from the leader's creativity-stimulating approaches; and
2. The increased level of trust lead employees to engage more deeply into their work and perform better when encouraged from the leader they esteem⁷³.

A small amount of research also highlighted some negative aspects related to LMX. When leader and follower engage in a too strong relation, the former may create a form of control on the latter; that is, the employee may follow his leader even if she is giving inappropriate or erroneous indications, considerably undermining creativity and freedom of thought. Otherwise, when leaders show too great expectations for an individual, this person may develop feelings of pressure and stress since he (or she) may feel unable to repay the leader's trust. Apart from these cases, however, literature and empirical research on LMX has demonstrated that the beneficial effects on employees' creativity exceed by a great amount the possible negative ones⁷⁴.

⁷¹ Janssen, O., Qu, R., Shi, K., *cit.*, pp.608-609

⁷² *Idem*, p.618

⁷³ Huang, L., Liu, D., Krasikova, D. V., *cit.*, p.53

⁷⁴ Carnevale, J. B., Crede, M., Harms, P., Huang, L., Uhl-Bien, M. "Leading to Stimulate Employees' Ideas: A Quantitative Review of Leader-Member Exchange, Employee Voice, Creativity, and Innovative Behavior" in *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 66-4, 2017, p.524

To conclude, Hughes et al. compiled a table listing different leadership styles and their impact on creativity. The results are limited to the ones obtained in Hughes's study, but they still offer an item of comparison and provide an overview of most of the theories examined.

Table 2: Range and Mean Correlations between Various Leadership Styles and Creativity

Leadership approach	Creativity		
	N	Range	Average
Transformational (overall)	36	-0.13-0.68	+
Idealized Influence	4	0.08-0.18	+
Inspirational motivation	4	0.11-0.21	+
Intellectual stimulation	3	0.05-0.19	+
Individualized consideration	5	0.08-0.27	+
LMX	22	0.04-0.65	++
Transactional (overall)	6	-0.29-0.46	~
Contingent reward	2	0.12-0.14	+
Active management by exception	1	-0.03	~
Passive management by exception	2	-0.06-0.02	~
Empowering leadership	15	0.20-0.66	++
Authentic leadership	7	0.01-0.75	++
Servant leadership	8	-0.04-0.59	+

Note: The column 'Average' indicates the magnitude of the average correlation based on Cohen's⁷⁵ rule of thumb; ~ = average correlation is ≤ 0.10 ; + = (small) average r is between 0.10 and 0.30; ++ = (medium) average r is between 0.30 and 0.50.

Source: Hughes, D. J., Lee, A., Legoode, A., Newmand, A., Wei Tian, A., *cit.*, p.553

2.2.2. Creative Self-Efficacy (CSE)

An individual is highly self-efficient when he (or she) believes in his (or her) ability to perform and achieve something⁷⁶; narrowing the field, creative self-efficacy (CSE) represents the self-belief to engage fruitfully in creative activity⁷⁷. Individuals with strong self-efficacy are more determined and self-confident, more willing to take risk

⁷⁵ Cohen, J. "A Power Primer" in *Psychological Bulletin*, 112, 1992

⁷⁶ Judge, T. A., Robbins, S. P., *cit.*, p.249

⁷⁷ Gu, Q., Jiang, W. "Leader Creativity Expectations Motivate Employee Creativity: A Moderated Mediation Examination" in *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 28-5, 2017, p.727

and more motivated to perform creatively, since they believe they can do so⁷⁸; on the other hand, people low in self-efficacy give up more easily and are loosely committed to their work⁷⁹.

Given its multilevel and multifactor nature⁸⁰, creative self-efficacy has numerous determinants from different domains. Still, the two major categories of determinants are personal and organizational.

- *Personal determinants*

An individual's mindset represents the first factor that influences CSE. It can be distinguished between fixed mindset, i.e. the idea that people intrinsically possess a set of basic creative skills that remain roughly the same for a person's whole life; and the malleable mindset, namely the belief that creative skills can be learned, forgiven, improved or modified on the basis of the experiences that an individual faces. Possessing a highly malleable mindset has been demonstrated to be favorable for CSE, since believing that each own's abilities can be improved also increases the conviction that creative outcomes can be successfully obtained.

Even if a person does not initially present high creative self-efficacy levels, there are various methods that can be employed to train for it⁸¹. Bandura classified them into four processes:

1. *Enactive mastery*: training programs and seminars allow workers to gain direct experience of the job, thus increasing self-confidence and expertise.
2. *Vicarious modeling*: by seeing someone successfully performing a task, people increase their own conviction to be able to do the same. This is especially effective when the role model is similar to the observer.

⁷⁸ *Idem*, p.728

⁷⁹ Judge, T. A., Robbins, S. P., *cit.*, p.249

⁸⁰ Puente-Díaz, R. "Creative Self-Efficacy: An Exploration of Its Antecedents, Consequences, and Applied Implications" in *The Journal of Psychology*, 150-2, 2016, p.177

⁸¹ *Idem*, p.181

3. *Verbal persuasion*: individuals acquire self-confidence when other people encourage them and persuade them that they can effectively accomplish their objectives.
 4. *Arousal*: arousal can both improve self-efficacy, when people have to face challenging, highly creative tasks; or weaken it, in the case that the job is slow and repetitive⁸².
- *Organizational determinants*

The organizational environment has already been demonstrated to considerably affect workers' behavior and attitude. Creative self-efficacy represents no exception: multiple factors can either nurture or weaken it, and among them the most relevant are the leadership style, the expectation from others, the quality of the relationships and the rewards received.⁸³

Leaders can control both their followers' CSE as well as their own one. Transformational and empowering leadership are the most benefic for creative self-efficacy, since these style focus on uncertainty avoidance, trust, employees' support and learning attitudes⁸⁴. Leaders also define what is creative and, by doing so, they can influence their followers' perception and encourage them to partake in creativity generation acts⁸⁵; moreover, when leaders themselves are high in CSE, their conduct is even more fruitful.

The belief to be able to obtain creative results works as a source of motivation that followers perceive, understand and absorb, especially if their leader shows support, encouragement or provides rewards.

At the same time, self-efficient leaders are themselves influenced by their followers, their different point of views, their working processes and methods. Leaders who are receptive and understanding minimize the risk of developing a negative environment, avoid punishment or reprisal and therefore foster free and unconventional creative

⁸² Judge, T. A., Robbins, S. P., *cit.*, pp.250-251

⁸³ Puente-Díaz, R., *cit.*, p.182

⁸⁴ *Idem*, p.184

⁸⁵ *Idem*, p.182

thinking. Even in case of failure, self-efficient leaders are able to exploit the unfavorable situation to gain useful information and proceed onwards, conveying in employees the feeling that failures lead not to a dead end, but can be overcome instead⁸⁶.

Common to the LMX theory, knowing that other people have high expectations fosters the confidence of individuals and their conviction of being able to achieve creative objectives. At the same time, having strong bonds based on trust and reciprocal support represents another important determinant of organizational CSE. Working with the right persons in a constructive environment lead to increased determination, motivation and self-esteem⁸⁷.

Lastly, rewards are important to activate a virtuous circle among self-efficacy, performance and rewards. When self-efficient individuals are extrinsically compensated for their positive achievements, they reach the outcome they were striving for; thus, seeing that their efforts are worthwhile will increase self-efficacy which, in turn, leads to better performance and thus better rewards. On the other hands, external rewards are not a suitable encouragement for people low in CSE. Individuals that do not believe in their creative potential do not want to strive for rewards, since they suppose they cannot achieve them. Extrinsic rewards based on creativity are seen as a threat, as they represent expectations that low self-efficient people believe they are not able to repay. Individuals with low CSE are afraid of the perspective on failure and, rather than try and not succeed, prefer not to attempt at all⁸⁸.

In sum, creative self-efficacy is a powerful tool that leaders can use to improve followers' motivation, engagement and, above all, creative performance.

⁸⁶ Huang, L., Liu, D., Krasikova, D. V., *cit.*, pp.51-52

⁸⁷ Puente-Díaz, R., *cit.*, p.182

⁸⁸ Butt, A. N., Choi, J. N., Malik, M. A. R., *cit.*, p.61

2.2.3. Trust

Trust has often been mentioned as one of the most important consequences of positive leadership styles and healthy organizational environments. Since most of the contemporary leadership theories involve the development of ties between leaders and followers, trust is a necessary prerequisite for the establishment of such bonds.

Basically, the importance of trust relies in the fact that, trusting a person means being willingly to take more risks⁸⁹ because we hold high expectations of that person⁹⁰. From a business point of view this is particularly important for leaders and followers, since highly unstable markets- such as markets coping with creativity and innovation- require risky actions and attitudes. Personal trust is essentially divided into two types: *cognition-based trust*, where reliance is built on the amount of knowledge, skill and information that an individual holds; and *affect-based trust*, deeper and in some sense more intimate, centered on reciprocal support, esteem and altruism⁹¹. Most of the theories regarding leader-follower trust represent affect-based relationships⁹².

Trustworthy leaders are able to create a climate of psychological safety and to repay their followers' expectations, while at the same time encouraging them to be proactive⁹³. Still, even if the dyadic trust relationship between leader and followers is essential, trust plays even a larger role in team context: a well-structured team is composed by people who are not afraid to share information and opinions with each other, regardless of their task or domain of competence

⁸⁹ Zhang, X., Zhou, J., *cit.*, p.152

⁹⁰ Chen, K., Huang, C., Yien, J., *cit.*, p.259

⁹¹ *Idem*

⁹² Zhang, X., Zhou, J., *cit.*, p.152

⁹³ Chen, K., Huang, C., Yien, J., *cit.*, p.262

CHAPTER 3- LEADERSHIP INFLUENCE ON GROUP CREATIVITY

3.1. Teams and Creativity

3.1.1. Teams and Individuals

Groups and teams have obtained large approval as modern tools to manage the more and more unstable and various challenges that organizations have to face, given their flexibility, their usually small dimension and their temporary nature¹. As a definition, groups are formed when two or more people work together towards the accomplishment of the same goal. A further distinction can then be made between groups, units of people which members perform their tasks without interacting with each other; and teams, where members cooperate and actively influence each other's (and global) performances². Still, the two expressions are often employed indifferently.

A team's overall performance is believed to be more than the sum of the single performances of its members³. Some researchers, such as Steiner, divided the effects of individual action on team's performance into two categories: disjunctive tasks occur when the best member of a group determines the general outcome; while additive tasks are those in which the results is the simple sum of the single accomplishments⁴. Still, most theories agree in identifying team's climate as a major factor influencing individual and group creativity. When positive relationships are established, free information sharing is stimulated and all members are adequately integrated, group creativity results enhanced⁵. More specifically, to West four main factors are decisive to foster creativity and innovation:

- The correct development of shared goals and *vision*;
- A sense of *participative safety*, i.e. the feeling that everyone can freely share its opinions without fearing unpleasant consequences;

¹ Judge, T. A., Robbins, S. P., *cit.*, p.342

² *Idem*, p.343

³ Taggar, S. "Individual Creativity and Group Ability to Utilize Individual Creative Resources: A Multilevel Model" in *The Academy of Management Journal*, 45-2, 2002, p.327

⁴ Mann, L., Pirolo-Merlo, A. "The Relationship Between Individual Creativity and Team Creativity: Aggregating Across People and Time" in *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 25, 2004, p.237

⁵ Taggar, S., *cit.*, p.327

- *Task orientation*, the common standard of performance that all team members agree to strive for;
- The expectation that the team and the organization are willing to *support innovation*⁶.

When all these elements are present, team's efforts will likely produce positive outcomes that exceeds individuals' distinct contributions. Not every task is nevertheless suited for group approaches. Sometimes, single individuals are preferred. Teams are best for tasks that require information, different perspectives, ideas development and divergent thinking. Since groups are made of different people, they can surely generate a large number of proposals; and since people are different from one another, the pool of solutions will include more creative and variable options. Still, teamwork is more time-consuming and people must be able to collaborate and work together. If a team is not well balanced and individuals in it cannot successfully cooperate, conflicts are expected to rise and bring detrimental effects to both individual and group performances⁷.

3.1.2. *Collective Creativity*

When individuals work together to achieve creative outcomes, the final solution is not the result of the creative effort of an individual alone; collective creativity occurs in fact when two or more people collaborate to the same project and, at the same time, the creative contributions of the single participants cannot be clearly defined or ascribed to specific individuals⁸. The social interactions that teams create inside them allow the members to obtain insights people alone could not find, thus increasing the overall creative potential and allowing groups to be more creatively performing than single individuals. This theory also recognizes that sometimes creative insights are fruits of random triggers, and teams increase the possibilities that these triggers can

⁶ Mann, L., Pirola-Merlo, A., *cit.*, p.237

⁷ Judge, T. A., Robbins, S. P., *cit.*, pp.324-326

⁸ Parjanen, S. "Experiencing Creativity in the Organization: From Individual Creativity to Collective Creativity" in *Interdisciplinary Journal of Information, Knowledge, and Management*, 7, 2012, p.110

occur⁹. Collective creativity is fostered by organizations that provide support, resources and skills to the employees, since the characteristics of the environment have a direct influence on the people that work inside it; and since people in an organization are supposed (and expected) to work together, the favorable elements of the surrounding setting allow better teamwork, and thus better outcomes¹⁰.

Collective action holds also some disadvantages. Meetings and discussion, for example, are mostly time-consuming and it is not always guaranteed that team members will well relate to each other; therefore, effective management is required to form adequate groups and maintain equilibrium. Shared goals that can be pursued by all the members of the team, as well as a leader able to synchronize and direct their energies with a suitable strategy, are two significant conditions that could enhance collective creativity¹¹.

Lastly, as shown in Figure 1, together with strategy, leadership and organizational culture, methods for ideas generation are also required to correctly manage individuals and processes. Brainstorming and other techniques will be thus analyzed further in this chapter, along with the theories supporting collective creativity.

3.1.3. Shared Leadership and Information Exchange

As we have seen, the presence of expertise and relevant skills significantly influences individual creativity. In collective contexts, the sharing of information allows team members to overcome the possible lack of abilities and share knowledge that increases the amount of proficiency a person can draw from, thus improving individual and team creativity. Group members almost always have different skills and capabilities, and leaders should encourage internal information exchange in order to allow every follower to fully exploit the overall team's potential; at the same time, researches have

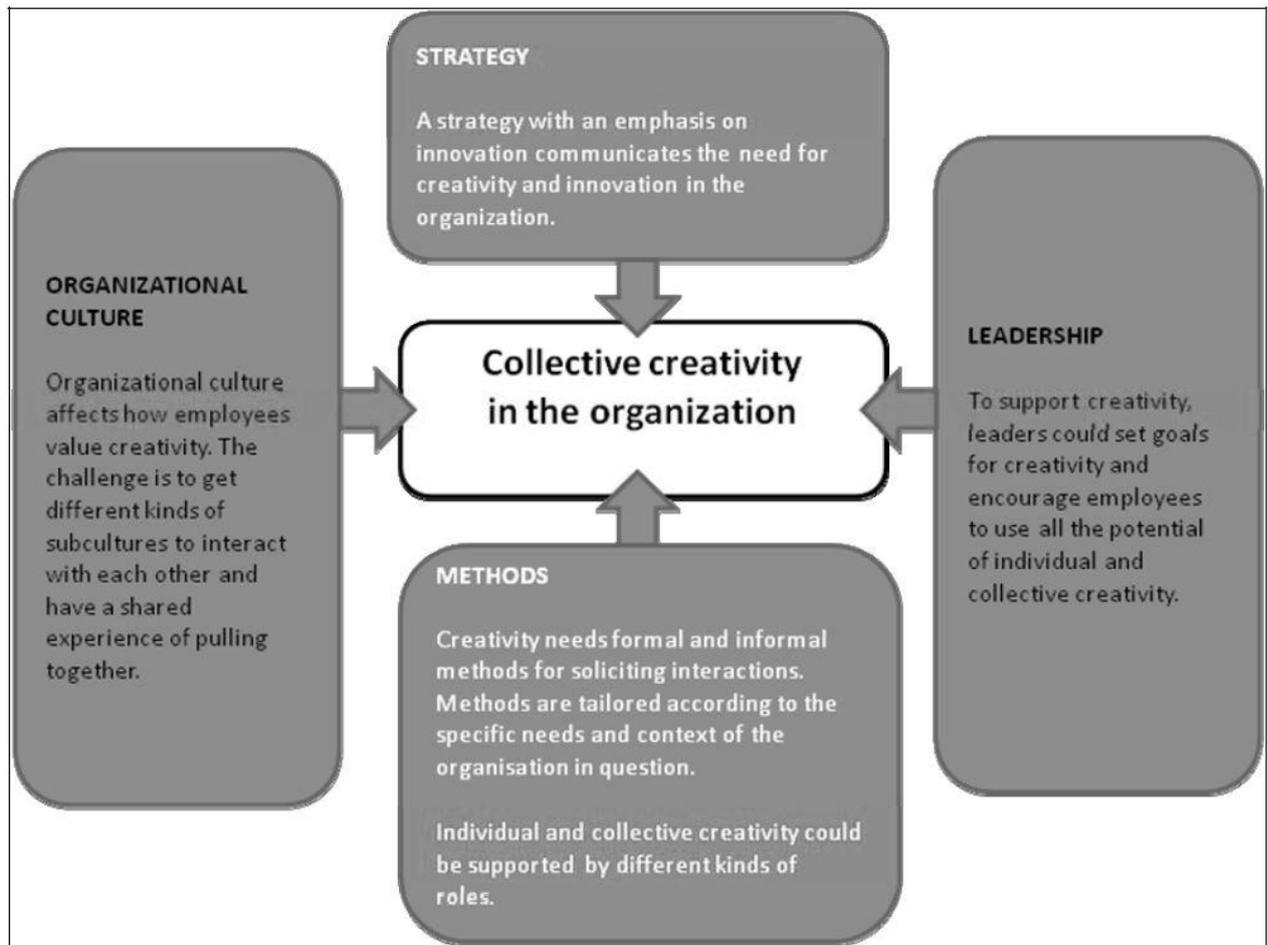
⁹ *Idem*, p.113

¹⁰Humala, I. "Typology on Leadership Toward Creativity in Virtual Work" in *Interdisciplinary Journal of Information, Knowledge, and Management*, 12, 2017, p.212

¹¹ Parjanen, S., *cit.*, p.119

showed that communication with external sources (such as the market) are favorable for creativity and innovation as well¹².

Figure 1: The Characteristics that Support Collective Creativity in the Organization



Source: Parjanen, S., *cit.*, p.123

Proper knowledge sharing needs a proper environment; psychological safety and positive personal relationships, for example, are just two of the necessary prerequisites for individuals to spontaneously share information. For this reason, leaders must be able to create and preserve the best environment. Transactional¹³, transformational or empowering leadership styles are the most suited for this purpose, since they promote

¹² Abraham Carmeli, A., Reiter-Palmon, R., Ziv, E., *cit.*, p.99

¹³ Abbas, J., Akram, T., Haider, M. J., Hussain, S. T., Lei, S., *cit.*, p.4

individual support and interpersonal exchanges¹⁴. If people are disposed to learn from each other, the benefits could be even more than the ones provided by traditional teaching lessons¹⁵.

To better exploit the competences and the strengths of team members, a successful approach is shared leadership. This theory assumes that each individual of the group exerts a part of the duties that are usually attributed to a single leading figure¹⁶. Moreover, shared leadership is employed to better exploit the strengths of the different team members: some tasks are indeed more suitable for individuals with certain predispositions, while some other tasks are best appropriate for other people. In different teams, leadership is thus bestowed to the member that holds the abilities needed to perform the task at hand, and that can most successfully guide the other teammates¹⁷. Therefore, shared leadership approaches influence both individual and team performances and outcomes, where information and knowledge come from different sources¹⁸.

Shared leadership is built on reciprocal influence; accordingly, for this style to provide positive results, team members must perform in a stimulating environment that makes them willing to both share knowledge and accept other members' contribution. For such a climate to arise, three conditions have to be met:

- *Shared purpose* is the first prerequisite; all team members must agree to strive towards the same objective. If individuals share the same goals, they are more willing to carry some of the leader's responsibilities, as well as to engage in collective actions.

¹⁴ Abraham Carmeli, A., Reiter-Palmon, R., Ziv, E., *cit.*, p. 100

¹⁵ Cheung, S., Gong, Y., Huang, J., Wang, M. "Unfolding the Proactive Process for Creativity: Integration of the Employee Proactivity, Information Exchange, and Psychological Safety Perspectives" in *Journal of Management*, 38-5, 2012, p.1617

¹⁶ Chen, Z., Gu, J., Huang, Q., Huang, S., Liu, H. "A Multilevel Analysis of the Relationship between Shared Leadership and Creativity in Inter-Organizational Teams" in *The Journal of Creative Behavior*, 52-2, 2016, pp.111-112

¹⁷ Chen, T., Wu, C. "Collective Psychological Capital: Linking Shared Leadership, Organizational Commitment, and Creativity" in *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 74, 2018, p.82

¹⁸ Carson, J. B., Marrone, J. A., Tesluk, P. E. "Shared Leadership in Teams: An Investigation of Antecedent Conditions and Performance" in *The Academy of Management Journal*, 2007, p.7

- The second element is *social support*, i.e. the personal, psychological and emotional support that individuals should provide to each other. If people believe to be esteemed and cherished, they will increase their level of commitment and be more motivated and creative.
- Lastly, *voice* is required for individuals to actively engage in team activities, freely share opinions, provide participation and take part in decision making activities.

Together, these three elements foster a helpful group climate that allow members to benefit the most from shared leadership¹⁹. If the environment is favorable, people could more proactively engage in team activities; and proactive individuals are more persistent against difficulties or failure, provide alternative solutions and can better analyze problems and opportunities. They are also more favorable to communicate their ideas and information²⁰, as well as more creatively performing: they indeed engage more deeply into creativity creation processes as well as produce more high quality creative ideas²¹.

To conclude, by interacting with other members and sharing useful information, in addition to being willing to listen to their colleagues' opinions, proactive individuals create trust which, as we have already seen, is a major determinant for creativity. Shared leadership, knowledge communication and proactive personalities are once more then confirmed to positively influence team (and individual) creativity²². Figure 2 provides a graphic representation of the relationships discussed above.

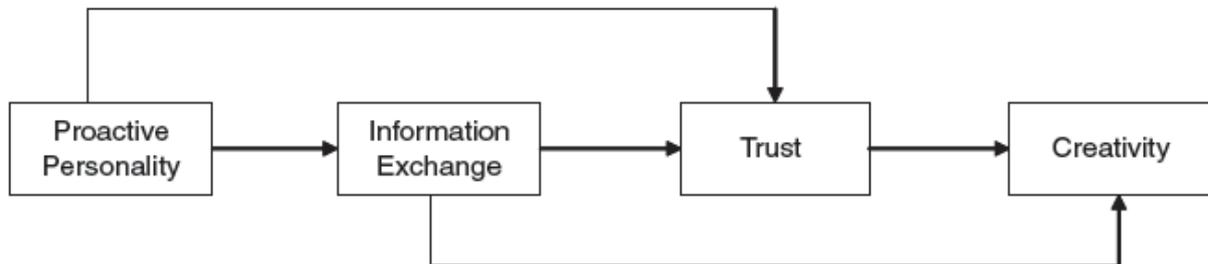
¹⁹ *Idem*, pp.12-14

²⁰ Binnewies, C., Ohly, S., Sonnentag, S. "Taking Personal Initiative and Communicating About Ideas: What Is Important for the Creative Process and for Idea Creativity?" in *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 16-4, 2007, p.438

²¹ *Idem*, p.449

²² Cheung, S., Gong, Y., Huang, J., Wang, M., *cit.*, p.1626

Figure 2: The Integrative Model of the Proactive Process for Creativity



Source: Cheung, S., Gong, Y., Huang, J., Wang, M., *cit.*, p.1615

3.1.4. Networks

When working involves various individuals and favors the establishment of new relationships, a network is established. Networks are social structures formed by actors and the ties among them, and these ties are bond to influence both individual's and team's performance, enabling easier information sharing, feedback and knowledge diffusion²³. Each tie is different from the other, since different are the people that form it; therefore, the information that can be obtained can vary in quality, form, amount and so on²⁴. The connections that provide to the *ego*, the central individual, non-redundant and various knowledge are called *structural holes*, while the useful information obtained is referred to as *social capital*.²⁵ It is difficult to establish which conditions are best suited for the creation of a creativity-stimulating network, since multiple factors and variables are involved and their effects change from worker to worker.

The structures that a network can have are essentially two: closed and brokered; the former involves strong and reciprocally supporting relationships, while the actors in the latter structure are unconnected and distant to each other. Each structure has its own strengths: closed networks foster close bonds that create trust, create

²³ Soda, G., Stea, D., Pedersen, T. "Network Structure, Collaborative Context, and Individual Creativity" in *Journal of Management*, 2017, pp.1-2

²⁴ *Idem*, p.4

²⁵ Hahn, M. E., Lee, D. S., Lee, K. C. "Network Structure, Organizational Learning Culture, and Employee Creativity in System Integration Companies: The Mediating Effects of Exploitation and Exploration" in *Computers in Human Behavior*, 42, 2015, p.169

psychological safety and promote information sharing; on the other hand, brokered systems allow the formation of structural holes that provide more various knowledge and social capital²⁶, thus supporting the generation of new and creative ideas²⁷. Since both styles can improve creativity, each in its own way, studies have suggested that the best environment incorporates both close and distant ties²⁸.

Borgatti and Foster have distinguished between *structure* and *content*: the first refers to the way actors and links are distributed in a network, while the second describes the typology of information that the networks carries and thus allows for an implicit recognition of the kind of ties that are present²⁹. Nevertheless, empirical research has demonstrated that structure and content don't directly influence employees' creativity, but simply create the conditions necessary for it to arise: what is truly significant is the individuals' willingness to collaborate and share information, as well as how much they fit their position in the network's social structure³⁰. Hence, managers can try to create the best environment for creativity but still cannot predict with absolute certainty how workers will react³¹.

A network has high density if the connections among the various team members involve leading behaviors: in teams that adopt shared leadership approaches, for example, different employees undertake partially the role of leaders, influencing their teammates³². But even if this does not happen, leaders play a major role in networks with high centrality is displayed as well. Leaders that hold strong positions in their teams have a strong impact on the whole team's performance; but at the same time, leaders themselves are influenced by the relationship that are at stake in their network. A study made by Balkundi, Kilduff and Harrison examined these two different situations in the context of charismatic leadership.

²⁶ *Idem*

²⁷ Soda, G., Stea, D., Pedersen, T., *cit.*, p.2

²⁸ Hahn, M. E., Lee, D. S., Lee, K. C., *cit.*, p.169

²⁹ Borgatti, S. P., Foster, P. C. "The Network Paradigm in Organizational Research: A Review and Typology" in *Journal of Management*, 29, 2003

³⁰ Soda, G., Stea, D., Pedersen, T., *cit.*, p.20

³¹ *Idem*, p.21

³² Carson, J. B., Marrone, J. A., Tesluk, P. E., *cit.*, pp.8-9

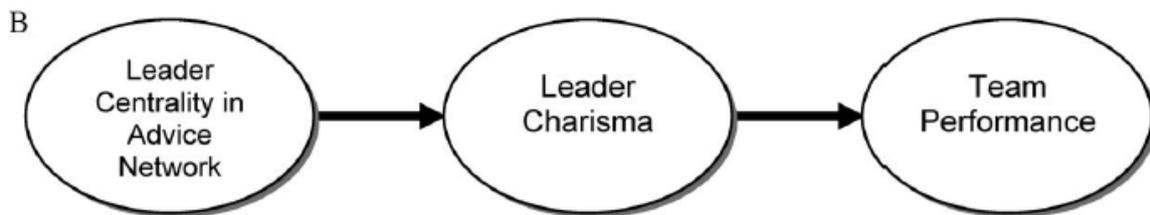
Figure 3: Models of Leader Centrality and Leader Charisma Effects on Team Performance
A: Charisma-to-Centrality Model



Source: Balkundi, P., Harrison, D. A., Kilduff, M. "Centrality and Charisma: Comparing How Leader Networks and Attributions Affect Team Performance" in *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 96-6, 2011, p.1210

The first case is called Charisma-to-Centrality. Here, charisma is seen as a marked trait of an individual's personality that allows him or her to obtain a central position in the network, thus influencing the other members thanks to characteristics such as optimism, ability to visualize and communicate goals, good resource management and so on. Charismatic leaders take advantage of their position and build strong relationships with their followers and are able to promote information sharing and increase motivation and, possibly, performance.

Figure 4: Models of Leader Centrality and Leader Charisma Effects on Team Performance
B: Centrality-to-Charisma Model



Source: Balkundi, P., Harrison, D. A., Kilduff, M., *cit.*, p.1210

On the other hand, the Centrality-to-Charisma model assumes that charisma itself is not only an innate part of the personality, but can slowly develop from the condition of centrality that a person assumes inside the network context. The very fact of being in a prominent position inside a team can be sufficient for a leader to be seen as influential by the followers, thus increasing his or her own level of self-confidence and charisma, fostering the creation of strong bonds, inspirational behaviors and information sharing. If leader-followers interaction is promoted, workers are more disposed to see and value the qualities of their leader who, in return, is given the possibility to positively influence the team's overall performance³³.

This second approach seems to hold the most beneficial effects on teams: leaders who are central in their networks and can establish numerous relationships with their followers are seen as charismatic; individual personality still has a role, but innate charisma has been demonstrated not to be the most important determinant. Appropriate contexts and situations can, on the other hand, help people to disclose their qualities and show their inner potential³⁴.

Lastly, a study by Soda and Bizzi underlined how networks can have even a negative impact on creativity. More specifically, they focused their attention on the concept of *deviation*, which refers to the degree of distance that a person places between him/herself and the past experiences, the projects, or the coworkers. Deviation is seen as the opposite of routine, in the sense that deviating avoids repeating common and already used solutions or processes; in sum, deviation is necessary for the development of creative ideas³⁵. Thus, challenging the conventional definition, creativity is here defined as a variation from the habitual, defined as "the replication of activities over time", and from the conformist, the replication of activities in a social context³⁶. Following the same concept, creativity can therefore be a result of the deviation from the past and deviation from partners.

³³ Balkundi, P., Harrison, D. A., Kilduff, M., *cit.*, p.1211

³⁴ *Idem*, p.1217

³⁵ Bizzi, L., Soda, G. "Think Different? An Investigation of Network Antecedents and Performance Consequences of Creativity as Deviation" in *Strategic Organization*, 10-2, 2012, p.100

³⁶ *Idem*, p.101

People often tend to replicate their past behaviors, especially if they have proved to be successful. Projects, processes and solutions that have previously worked can be perceived as adequate for present problems as well, and for this reason they are employed without questioning. Still, this is a major hindrance for creativity: *deviation from the past* is necessary for the production of innovative ideas, even if it surely represents a more difficult and challenging approach since it means breaking from past models and creating something that has never been seen before, starting something anew; with new risks, new ambiguities, but hopefully new positive outcomes³⁷.

Deviating from the past is especially difficult when individuals hold strong and numerous ties in a network, since the uncertainties that deviations bring may negatively affect the established relationships, causing doubt and compromising the individual's positive social reputation. External ties with individuals coming from different contexts are perilous as well, since a too diverse knowledge may cause confusion and hinder motivation, which is a necessary factor for individuals and teams that want to exploit the creative potential of new information; and if employees are not motivated, it is far more probable that they will simply rely on past, easier and non-creative solutions³⁸. Internal ties may lower deviation as well, since strongly connected members often develop feelings of inertia and get used to rely on the same, well-known resources and processes. In these cases, the integration of new individuals that do not share common practices with the team may foster experimentation, providing new points of view and new information³⁹.

Even if, as we have already seen, individuals in an organization or a network tend to share knowledge, creativity truly emerges when new ideas differ from the ones proposed by the colleagues: this is called *deviation from partners*. Therefore, potentially high creative individuals should try to make good use of the information they receive from other people without completely relying on it; since the risk is to generate

³⁷ *Idem*, pp.101-102

³⁸ *Idem*, p.103

³⁹ *Idem*, pp.104-105

solutions that are too similar to each other⁴⁰. As in the case of deviation from the past, tight external ties are not always beneficial for creativity: the presence of a popular, charismatic person, the willingness to establish and maintain a good social judgment and the tendency to conform and imitate the other members of a group are factors that negatively influence the level of deviation from the partners⁴¹. Teams where members are strongly internally tied are made of workers that know, trust and rely on each other; for this reason, they may tend to rely only on their internally produced knowledge. Here again, individuals that had no previous internal tie with the other team members represent an opportunity to broad the group's perspective and stimulate people to deviate from their partners⁴².

Still, despite these premises, empirical research has reported that deviation from the past is truly beneficial for creativity, fostering it and underlying the importance to differentiate from past experiences⁴³; but deviation from partners is not, at least not so markedly. The complex nature of the network of connections that an organization establishes with suppliers, associates and contractors in fact makes collaboration more fruitful than deviation, since positive partnerships often lead to increased bargaining power and more advantageous negotiating⁴⁴. Moreover, if a team happens to be not exceptionally creative, avoiding risky differentiation seems to be better alternative⁴⁵. Hence, a careful analysis of the team's strengths and weaknesses, combined with the awareness that there is no fixed pattern to determine a group's success, still remains decisive for those managers who want to fully exploit their employees' creative potential.

⁴⁰ *Idem*, p.102

⁴¹ *Idem*, p.104

⁴² *Idem*, p.105

⁴³ *Idem*, p.118

⁴⁴ *Idem*, p.109

⁴⁵ *Idem*, p.119

3.2. Building Creative Teams

3.2.1. Personality

Different cognitive styles and individual personalities can influence the overall team's creativity and performance by creating combinations that allow group members to exploit their creative potential while, at the same time, using the different characteristics of the personalities to reach more creative, accurate and possibly better solutions⁴⁶. To assess and classify the diverse typologies of personality, the most common approach is the *five factor model*⁴⁷, or "*big five*"⁴⁸.

The five factor taxonomy assumes that each person's character is composed by a certain amount of five different factors: Extraversion, Neuroticism⁴⁹, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness and Openness to Experience⁵⁰.

- *Extraversion* is the trait possessed by people who are friendly, lively, talkative, optimistic and self-confident. Extravert individuals feel low social pressure and are not afraid neither to express their opinion, nor of being judged by others. Team members high on extraversion are able to create a climate of psychological safety, and thus they foster communication and promote the free sharing of ideas⁵¹. Nevertheless, studies have demonstrated that, even if extraverts infuse teammates with positive emotions, a group composed by numerous extravert people does not lead to better performance since there would be no individuals willing to fulfill roles of minor importance or follow instructions: the relationship between the number of extravert members and group performance is thus represented by a \cap shape⁵².

⁴⁶ De Vreede, T., Reiter-Palmon, R., Wigert, B. *Handbook of Organizational Creativity*, Academic Press, 2012, p.298

⁴⁷ Barrick, M. R., Mount, M. K., Neubert, M. J., Stewart, G. L. "Relating Member Ability and Personality to Work-Team Processes and Team Effectiveness" in *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 83-3, 1998, p.380

⁴⁸ Baer, M., Hollingshead, A. B., Jacobsohn, G. C., Oldham, G. R. "The Personality Composition of Teams and Creativity: The Moderating Role of Team Creative Confidence" in *Journal of Creative Behavior*, 42-4, 2008, p.256

⁴⁹ *Idem*, p.259

⁵⁰ Barrick, M. R., Mount, M. K., Neubert, M. J., Stewart, G. L., *cit.*, p.380

⁵¹ Baer, M., Hollingshead, A. B., Jacobsohn, G. C., Oldham, G. R., *cit.*, pp.257-258

⁵² Barrick, M. R., Mount, M. K., Neubert, M. J., Stewart, G. L., *cit.*, p.381

- Quite the opposite, *neurotic* individuals tend to experience negative emotional states and less able to control impulses and outbursts⁵³. The effects of neuroticism on team creativity are ambiguous: in fact, it is certainly true that emotionally stable team members encourage cooperation and psychological safety while, on the other hand, neurotic people may bring discord⁵⁴; but, at the same time, a certain degree of discussion and criticism is needed to boost creative idea generation. Neurotic members may provide different point of views and offer food for thought, avoiding thus the adoption of familiar, commonly accepted solutions. Even if at first they may seem unpleasant, their sincere feedback may lead to improved ideas, both in quantity and quality, as well as to the establishment of a climate where honesty and debate are fostered and positively employed⁵⁵.
- *Agreeableness* can be found in tolerant, cooperative and trustworthy people. Agreeable individuals are able to handle conflict maintain a positive working environment, even when facing difficulties. Oppositely, disagreeable members, similarly to neurotic people, may cause tensions to arise and reduce team cohesion⁵⁶. Still, in this case as well, some level of disagreeableness can help the group to question ideas, give voice to alternative opinions and stimulate creativity⁵⁷.
- The *conscientiousness* trait is composed by two elements: *achievement*, which represents individual motivation, the willingness of an individual to success; and *dependability*, the capability of being precise, careful and reflective⁵⁸. Conscientious people positively and cumulatively influence team performance, in the sense that the more conscientious individuals are present in a group, the more the group should excel in overall task performance, regardless of the tasks that the single individuals have to accomplish⁵⁹. Still, the effects of

⁵³ Baer, M., Hollingshead, A. B., Jacobsohn, G. C., Oldham, G. R., *cit.*, p.259

⁵⁴ Barrick, M. R., Mount, M. K., Neubert, M. J., Stewart, G. L., *cit.*, pp.381-382

⁵⁵ Baer, M., Hollingshead, A. B., Jacobsohn, G. C., Oldham, G. R., *cit.*, pp.259-260

⁵⁶ Barrick, M. R., Mount, M. K., Neubert, M. J., Stewart, G. L., *cit.*, p.381

⁵⁷ Baer, M., Hollingshead, A. B., Jacobsohn, G. C., Oldham, G. R., *cit.*, p.260

⁵⁸ *Idem*, pp.258-259

⁵⁹ Barrick, M. R., Mount, M. K., Neubert, M. J., Stewart, G. L., *cit.*, p.380

conscientiousness are not so positive if related to creativity. Studies have demonstrated that the dependability component is the major driver in conscientious people, and dependability usually translates into the tendency to follow established rules, adopt fixed approaches and avoid experimentation and cross-fertilization of ideas. The rigid mindset of high conscientious individuals is not suitable for creative processes, and for this reason low in conscientiousness team members could be more appropriate for groups that want to maximize their creative potential⁶⁰.

- Lastly, *openness to experience* is the personality characteristic more directly related to creativity. Openness to experience refers in fact to the desire to explore and experiment, think “outside the box”, create creative synergies with the other members of the team and engage in divergent thinking processes⁶¹. Nevertheless, a study by Schilpzand, Herold and Shalley has revealed that, for a team to be highly creative, there is no need for members to score high on openness to experience. Too open individuals are focused only on the divergent thinking phase of the creative process and may not be able or willing to give the other members the possibility to constructively criticize or express their opinions. For this reason, heterogeneity is recommended: in order for a group to be creatively productive, a moderate level of openness to experience is sufficient; while, at the same time, a low on openness person is required to fruitfully implement the convergent thinking phases⁶².

To sum up, an efficient creative team needs to be able to fully exploit the different personalities and cognitive styles of different people. More specifically, creativity is enhanced if a group includes individuals that score high on extraversion, low on conscientiousness and high/moderate and low in openness to experience. This is especially true when the whole team is creative confident, i.e. when the members believe that the whole team is capable of obtaining great creative outcomes⁶³: creative

⁶⁰ Baer, M., Hollingshead, A. B., Jacobsohn, G. C., Oldham, G. R., *cit.*, p.259

⁶¹ *Idem*, p.258

⁶² Herold, D. M., Schilpzand, M. C., Shalley, C. E. “Members’ Openness to Experience and Teams’ Creative Performance” in *Small Group Research*, 42-1, 2011, p.68

⁶³ De Vreede, T., Reiter-Palmon, R., Wigert, B., *cit.*, p.299

confidence encourages individuals to begin thinking collectively, creating and exploiting creative synergies that make the group able to take advantage of the diversities and jointly work towards the realization of common goals⁶⁴.

3.2.2. Functional and Cultural Diversity

Teams are often composed by members belonging to different fields of experience. According to the *information processing theory*⁶⁵, this variety of perspectives provides to the group non-redundant knowledge that homogeneous teams cannot have, increasing thus the possibility that innovative combinations and original ideas emerge⁶⁶; moreover, it improves problem solving⁶⁷. Functional diversity is therefore considered one of the most useful approaches for leaders that want to maximize the creative potential of their teams⁶⁸. Nevertheless, it is not exempt from downsides.

When team members are closely related to each other, social categorizations may lead to the exclusion of the member that comes “from the outgroup⁶⁹”. The *categorization perspective* assumes in fact that people in teams tend to create subgroups on the basis of similarity and diversities, thus favoring individuals that belong to their same subgroup, hence fragmenting the team and creating contrasts⁷⁰.

But mostly, the difficulty to manage, analyze and combine different information is harmful for team performance, even if the overall degree of group creativity seems to be high. In this case, the pool of knowledge is indeed wide but the creative potential remains unexploited⁷¹. To minimize the negative effects of functional diversity, Zhang proposes the use of group longevity as moderator.

⁶⁴Baer, M., Hollingshead, A. B., Jacobsohn, G. C., Oldham, G. R., *cit.*, p.261

⁶⁵ Zhang, Y. “Functional Diversity and Group Creativity: The Role of Group Longevity” in *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 52-1, 2016, p.99

⁶⁶ Bizzi, L., Soda, G., *cit.*, p.106

⁶⁷ Mannix, E. A., Sauer, S. J., Yong, K. “Conflict and Creativity in Interdisciplinary Teams” in *Small Group Research*, 45-3, 2014, p.268

⁶⁸ De Vreede, T., Reiter-Palmon, R., Wigert, B., *cit.*, p.298

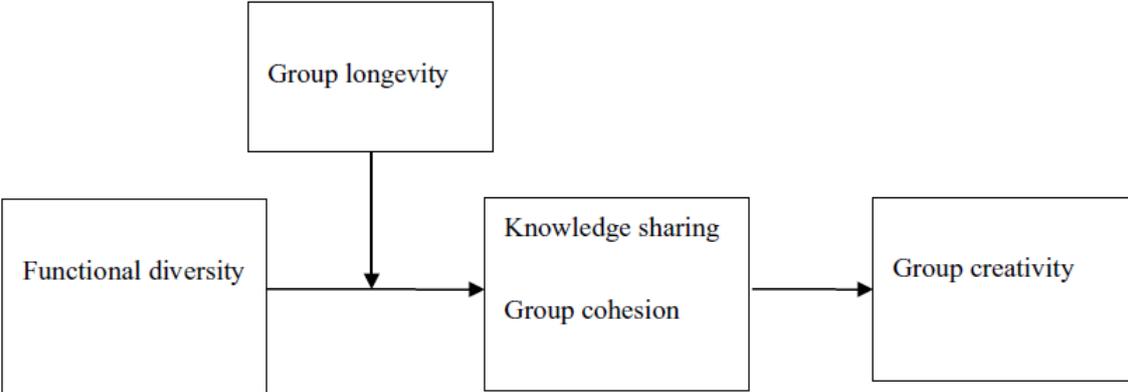
⁶⁹ Boerner, S., Hüttermann, H. “Fostering Innovation in Functionally Diverse Teams: The Two Faces of Transformational Leadership” in *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 20-6, 2011, p.834

⁷⁰ Zhang, Y., *cit.*, p.99

⁷¹ Bizzi, L., Soda, G., *cit.*, p. 110

Given the diversity of the group members, when individuals work together for short periods of time they tend to rely on categorizations to establish roles and relationships. When time is not enough for people to know each other and build trust, individuals tend to associate to those men and women that perceive being similar to them. If this occurs, new information is not transmitted among the team members and thus there will be no advantage in terms of group creativity. On the other side, if the group is given the possibility to work together for an extended period of time, the bonds will deepen. Increased cooperation and mutual support lead to knowledge sharing and better group cohesion, all elements that positively influence creativity since they enhance motivation, willingness to collaborate and more efficient communication and new information management. As group longevity increases, the negative effects of functional diversity (i.e. categorization) lessen in favor of information processing. Increasing the time that team member spend together may therefore bring to positive results in terms of team performance and creativity⁷².

Figure 5: Theoretical Model of the Moderation Role of Group Longevity



Source: Zhang, Y., *cit.*, p.104

⁷² Zhang, Y., *cit.*, pp.100-104

Although demographic diversity has been found harmful for the overall team outcomes, its influence on creativity has produced different results⁷³. Cultural diversity, above all, has been proved to have both positive and negative effects on team creativity.

As negative sides, members coming from different cultures often experience difficulties in communication. The efficacy of information sharing and decision making thus result reduced, and creativity hindered⁷⁴. More specifically, there are two kinds of diversity that multiculturalism can carry:

- *Surface-level* cultural diversity involves language, physical traits and other features of the person that allow his or her country of origin to be easily identified. When this occurs, the team may react hostilely since other members may perceive the diversity as a threat for their own identity; and, consequently, the whole team identity could become fragmented.
- *Deep-level* cultural diversity, conversely, regards values, beliefs and social norms that are usually embedded in a culture. Diversity in such elements may cause difficulties in communication, misunderstandings and lack of comprehension between team members with different principles.

Both types of diversity undermine trust, complicate the establishment of a climate of psychological safety and create conflicts that hinder the creativity potential of the team. When individuals categorize, they tend to strengthen the position of their group at the expense of the others, and this is detrimental for the team's environment⁷⁵.

Still, these obstacles can be mitigated if managers are willing to exploit the benefits of multiculturalism. The variety of perspectives than different cultures can bring to the team constitutes an important source of non-redundant knowledge and, if adequately managed, can greatly improve creativity of both individuals and teams; in fact, when people are exposed to different information, they can combine it in new and

⁷³ De Vreede, T., Reiter-Palmon, R., Wigert, B., *cit.*, p.297

⁷⁴ Leung, K., Wang, J. "Social Processes and Team Creativity in Multicultural Teams: A Socio-Technical Framework" in *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 36, 2015, p.1009

⁷⁵ *Idem*, pp.1011-1012

unconventional ways⁷⁶. For this reason, it is important for leaders to create a *climate for inclusion*. If members, whichever differences may have, perceive to be part of a group in which their diversity is valued as a source of advantage, their involvement and interest will increase. At the same time, interactions among different individuals will be fostered, thus preventing the formation of categories that may obstacle communication and fostering knowledge sharing and group identity⁷⁷.

3.2.3. Creativity Receiving

When assembling a team, leaders must be aware of the large variety of factors which presence influences and defines the ability to recognize creativity in other individuals or ideas. These factors, or mental processes, are:

- *Creativity perception or recognition*, the perception of a target as being creative;
- *Creativity judgment*, the categorization of such target as creative;
- *Creativity forecasting*, the esteem made by perceivers that the target would eventually achieve the desired results;
- *Evaluation accuracy*, the actual correctness of the aforementioned forecast.

These first four elements define the broader concept of *creativity evaluation*. Moving ahead,

- *Creativity adoption* defines the willingness to acquire the creative target (for example, to hire a creative employee or to buy a new, creative product); and lastly,
- *Creativity implementation* refers to the practical application of the target's creativity.

⁷⁶ Chen, C., Li, C., Lin, C., Tien, Y. "A Multilevel Model of Team Cultural Diversity and Creativity: The Role of Climate for Inclusion" in *Journal of Creative Behavior*, 51-2, 2017, p.165

⁷⁷ *Idem*, pp.166-167

Combined together, these features provide a general representation of the processes included in the concept of *creativity receiving*⁷⁸.

When evaluating a possible creative subject (or object), a wide number of elements may influence the judgment both on the target and the receiver's side; such elements can therefore be grouped into three sets: creators', perceivers' and contextual characteristics. Tables 1, 2 and 3 provide a summary of the whole sets of elements that influence an individual's perception of creativity.

Table 1: Creators' Characteristics

Biographic data	<i>Gender, native language, age, race; and similarity with the evaluator's own characteristics.</i>
Personality traits	<i>Behavior and character. Narcissism in particular is seen as a predictor of creativity.</i>
Reputation	<i>Social status, number and quality of social relationship.</i>
Affective display	<i>Expression of passion or motivation.</i>
Impression management	<i>The initial idea that the target forms on the perceiver.</i>

Source: Bavato, D., Tasselli, S., Wang, X. M., Wu, J., Zhou, J., *cit.*, pp.6-8

Table 2: Perceivers' Characteristics

Personality traits	<i>Predisposition towards novelty, openness to experience.</i>
Creative ability	<i>Individual creativity, originality or fluency.</i>
Organizational role	<i>Position of the perceiver inside the organizational structure.</i>
Prior knowledge and experience	<i>Ability to exploit past experiences to identify new opportunities. Experience may also hinder perception if individuals focus more on obtaining results than experimenting.</i>
Schema incongruity	<i>The degree of diversity between existing and radical new products.</i>

⁷⁸ Bavato, D., Tasselli, S., Wang, X. M., Wu, J., Zhou, J. "Understanding the Receiving Side of Creativity: A Multidisciplinary Review and Implications for Management Research" in *Journal of Management*, 1-26, 2019, pp.2-3

Implicit theories of creativity	<i>Definitions of creativity that each person forms into his/her own mind.</i>
Construal level	<i>Predictions and expectations, influenced by the perceiver's own creativity and ability to evaluate abstract situations.</i>
Regulatory focus	<i>Caution, self-efficacy, perception of risk.</i>
Goal orientation	<i>Perceiver's personal motivations and ambitions.</i>
Group characteristics and processes	<i>Team diversity, interaction among members, space for individual action.</i>

Source: Bavato, D., Tasselli, S., Wang, X. M., Wu, J., Zhou, J., *cit.*, pp.8-13

Table 3: Contextual Characteristics

Training	<i>Training programs on creativity</i>
Group identity	<i>Degree and quality of personal and group identity.</i>
Leadership, supervisory, and team support	<i>Presence of a positive creativity-stimulating environment.</i>
Organizational-level characteristics	<i>Hierarchy, values and culture.</i>
Social influence	<i>Willingness to imitate or repeat other individuals' successes.</i>
Cross-cultural differences	<i>Culturally different approaches to creativity.</i>
Field-level influences	<i>Characteristics of the surrounding system.</i>

Source: Bavato, D., Tasselli, S., Wang, X. M., Wu, J., Zhou, J., *cit.*, pp.13-16

Creativity receiving may sometimes lead to a particular paradox: in fact, even if companies and managers often claim to seek creative workers and solutions, they indeed refuse to adopt truly innovative approaches in order to avoid risks and keep follow already established trends and paths. For this reason, ideas similar to other,

successful ones are often more praised than completely original solutions.⁷⁹ This can happen both among members of the same group, and between members and leader.

At team level, social and personal identities exert a great influence on both creativity expression and reception. People with a strong *social identity* tend to conform to the rules and standards of the group while, at the same time, reject ideas that deviate too much from such norms. On the other hand, individuals high in *personal identity* are less afraid to express their true opinions and exhibit original behaviors, while at the same time prioritize their own preferences when evaluating others⁸⁰.

At leadership level, two different typologies of leaders exercise two different impacts on followers' creativity:

Performance goal leaders are concerned with maintaining dominance, establishing a position of power and highlight their own personal successes. These leaders are not expected to recognize creativity as it should be, since novelty can be seen as a disruption of the *status quo* and thus a deviation from the leader's established ideas and solutions.

In contrast, *mastery goal* leaders focus on their own self-growth and knowledge enrichment; information that diverges from what is already known is therefore seen as a potential source of advantage. These leaders are more willing to foster followers' creativity, encouraging them to explore new solutions and providing feedback⁸¹. Of course, this does not mean that leaders should always accept with pleasure each and every radical idea that comes from their team; subordinates should be given voice, but at the same time leaders should know that they must be able to find the most appropriate approach to effectively receive and manage all the different opinions that they are submitted with⁸².

⁷⁹ Adarves-Yorno, I., Haslam, S. A., Postmes, T. "And Now for Something Completely Different? The Impact of Group Membership on Perceptions of Creativity" in *Social Influence*, 3-4, 2008, pp.249-250

⁸⁰ *Idem*, pp. 251-252

⁸¹ Janssen, o., Sijbom, R. B. L., Van Yperen, N. W. "How to Get Radical Creative Ideas into a Leader's Mind? Leader's Achievement Goals and Subordinates' Voice of Creative Ideas" in *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 24-2, 2014, p.281

⁸² *Idem*, p.292

3.3. Leading Creative Teams

3.3.1. Idea Generation Techniques

In teams, individuals are asked to generate ideas while at the same time evaluate the ones proposed by other members. This often occurs during designated meetings in which employees are called to exploit their creative potential and produce solutions relevant for the problem at hand. In this regard, the most common idea generation technique is brainstorming.

Although quite popular and well-known⁸³, *brainstorming* is not exempt from flaws. This method focuses on the massive generation of multiple ideas which, at least during the initial phases of the process, are not evaluated on the basis of their quality or appropriateness⁸⁴. Even if brainstorming increases the number of ideas generated in group⁸⁵, there are other techniques that allow to overcome the main weaknesses of brainstorming, which can be summarized into two major factors:

Cognitive interference comprises all the contextual factors that commonly occur during a brainstorming session, and that cause individual attention and commitment to decrease: the fact that other people are talking, the tendency of individuals to wander off when explaining their idea or the effort that it takes to pay attention at other members' ideas while at the same time elaborate one's own are all elements that reduce individual efficiency⁸⁶ and slow down the entire process⁸⁷, especially in the case of large teams⁸⁸.

Social inhibition can be caused by both individual and team dynamics: social anxious members may be concerned about the opinions of other members even if normally brainstorming rules avoid criticism; or they can fall into social loafing or free riding if they perceive their effort to be irrelevant. In contrast, people may also overestimate the value of their idea if compared to the ones of the other group members. Even more,

⁸³ Paulus, P. B. "Groups, Teams, and Creativity: The Creative Potential of Idea-Generating Groups" in *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 49-2, 2000, p.241

⁸⁴ De Vreede, T., Reiter-Palmon, R., Wigert, B., *cit.*, p.312

⁸⁵ Paulus, P. B., Yang, H., *cit.*, p.77

⁸⁶ Paulus, P. B., *cit.*, p.241

⁸⁷ Paulus, P. B., Yang, H., *cit.*, p.77

⁸⁸ De Vreede, T., Reiter-Palmon, R., Wigert, B., *cit.*, p.313

some other individuals may compare their team to other ones in term of number and type of ideas generated⁸⁹.

To overcome these weaknesses, a number of methods have been developed that reduce the negative effects of social inhibition and cognitive interference. Most of them focus on avoiding social anxiety by employing writing instead of vocal expression⁹⁰ when expressing ideas. Electronic brainstorming in particular brings a triple advantage: it reduces production blocking since it allows all group members to communicate at the same moment; grants anonymity, thus reducing social fear, while at the same time making members individually responsible for their actions⁹¹.

Another common idea generation method is the *nominal group technique*: participants are asked to initially independently write down their ideas, and then explain, discuss and rate them together with the team; a similar version of this technique is the *written-feedback* approach, in which members exchange a written copy of their ideas during the independent writing phase. Studies have demonstrated that, even if “brainwriting” is more creatively performing than brainstorming, techniques that involve the mutual sharing of ideas do not increase individual idea generation. This may be due to two reasons: individuals do not pay attention to the ideas expressed by other members of the group, since they are occupied in elaborating their own ones (*attention hypothesis*); or the brainstorming/brainwriting session does not allow people to efficiently elaborate other members’ ideas, given the amount of effort and attention required by the session itself (*incubation hypothesis*)⁹².

Each technique, therefore, carries its own advantages and disadvantages, and leaders must carefully manage sessions in order to provide the best opportunities for teams to let their creative potential arise. By accounting for individual performance, thus rewarding both individual and group positive outcomes, team members low in motivation may increase their involvement and participate with improved interest⁹³.

⁸⁹ Paulus, P. B., *cit.*, pp.241-242

⁹⁰ Paulus, P. B., Yang, H. “Idea Generation in Groups: A Basis for Creativity in Organizations” in *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 82-1, 2000, p.78

⁹¹ Paulus, P. B., *cit.*, pp.243-244

⁹² Paulus, P. B., Yang, H., *cit.*, pp.78-79

⁹³ Paulus, P. B., *cit.*, pp.244-245

Furthermore, if individuals are encouraged to pay attention to other members' contributions and if, at the same time, digressions are kept under control, idea sharing can truly create opportunities to increase individual creative idea generation⁹⁴.

3.3.2. Conflict

Teams are composed of individuals, and as such it is not uncommon for some degree of conflict to arise. Under an organizational environment, and more specifically in teams, conflict can take two forms: relationship and task.

Relationship conflict occurs when individuals are hostile to each other on the basis of personal differences or different cognitive styles, past experiences, reciprocal dislike and so on⁹⁵. It may lead to negative feelings such as disrespect or loss of trust⁹⁶, and it is seen as detrimental for performance⁹⁷, creativity⁹⁸ and innovation. Especially when teams are cross-functional or composed by diversified members, communication is essential; and since relationship conflict hinders the willingness of team members to cooperate with each other, this typology of disagreement results particularly harmful for group synergy and creativity⁹⁹. Moreover, when people are involved in interpersonal disputes, they are less inclined to focus on their tasks as well as less willing to work together, even when pursuing team (and not individual) objectives¹⁰⁰. As such, the role of the leader is essential in managing and maintaining an equilibrium inside the team. Transformational leaders, for example, act to enhance team trust and encourage followers to strive for group goals, setting aside individual discord and self-interest; and if the leader provides examples of good will, forgiveness and desire to cooperate, other members may want to adopt the same behavior¹⁰¹.

⁹⁴ *Idem*, p.246

⁹⁵ Mannix, E. A., Sauer, S. J., Yong, K., *cit.*, p.269

⁹⁶ Bai, Y., Lin, L., Ping Li, P. "How To Enable Employee Creativity in a Team Context: A Cross-Level Mediating Process of Transformational Leadership" in *Journal of Business Research*, 69, 2016, p.3243

⁹⁷ Mannix, E. A., Sauer, S. J., Yong, K., *cit.*, p.269

⁹⁸ De Vreede, T., Reiter-Palmon, R., Wigert, B., *cit.*, p.308

⁹⁹ Boerner, S., Hüttermann, H., *cit.*, p.839

¹⁰⁰ Mannix, E. A., Sauer, S. J., Yong, K., *cit.*, p.269

¹⁰¹ Bai, Y., Lin, L., Ping Li, P., *cit.*, p.3243

Task conflict brings quite different consequences instead. It consists in a discrepancy regarding the various methods, actions or procedures that different team members believe to be the best suitable for the completion of a task¹⁰². A moderate to high level of task conflicts has been demonstrated to increase creativity, following a \cap -shaped relationship¹⁰³. Since teams are often composed by members differing in perspective, proficiency and cognitive styles, what initially seems a divergence on opinions become a fruitful opportunity to learn, explore and integrate different ideas¹⁰⁴. Still, task conflict can trigger positive outcomes if individuals are willing to accept the sharing of knowledge and motivated to conjointly engage in problem solving activities¹⁰⁵; if the level of task conflict is too elevated, members do not recognize the value of diversity or the creation of subgroups and categorizations hinders information exchange, the advantages of task conflict are not expected to arise¹⁰⁶. Once again, leadership styles such as transformational leadership can help the team to create a climate of acceptance, inclusion and motivation towards the pursue of common goals¹⁰⁷. Nevertheless, transformational leaders have two different impacts on task conflict: on one hand, they may cause the appearance of conflicts since transformational leaders advocate reciprocal intellectual stimulation and the free expression of ideas, thus causing members with different judgments to at first collide, and then cooperate; on the other hand, a too strong identification with the leader, which transformational leadership promotes, may cause members to become too similar and dependent to the leader, at the expense of their own original point of view; furthermore, members may feel reluctant to express their opinions thus creating groupthink¹⁰⁸. For this reason, transformational leaders have to carefully manage the advantages and the drawbacks of their leadership style, in order to minimize the

¹⁰² Boerner, S., Hüttermann, H., *cit.*, p.837

¹⁰³ De Vreede, T., Reiter-Palmon, R., Wigert, B., *cit.*, p.308

¹⁰⁴ Boerner, S., Hüttermann, H., *cit.*, p.837

¹⁰⁵ Boerner, S., Hüttermann, H., *cit.*, p.838

¹⁰⁶ Mannix, E. A., Sauer, S. J., Yong, K., *cit.*, p.268

¹⁰⁷ Bai, Y., Lin, L., Ping Li, P., *cit.*, p.3242

¹⁰⁸ Boerner, S., Hüttermann, H., *cit.*, pp.844-845

negative effects while at the same time creating opportunities for the benefits to arise¹⁰⁹.

Finally, it is important to observe that task and relationship conflict are related to each other, since the first can lead the second¹¹⁰. If initial task conflict is not managed correctly, individual behaviors may cross the line of constructive debate and become inappropriate for the climate of the team. If criticisms give rise to personal offenses, impoliteness or other harmful behaviors, task conflict may turn into relationship conflict which, as it has been demonstrated, only brings negative effects on group creativity and performance¹¹¹.

3.3.3. *Virtual Teams*

In addition to standard, face-to-face teams, the recent development of communication technologies has allowed the birth of virtual teams. Companies run their business throughout different countries, and virtual teams consent to workers from all around the world to meet and discuss projects¹¹². At the same time, virtuality makes possible the exchange of information among partners, clients and suppliers at a long distance; all embedded in what is referred to as a *virtual network*¹¹³.

Virtual teams involve individuals who do not share the same space and are not physically in contact with each other. For this reason, high status members often assume positions of dominance inside the team: past successes, age or position inside the company allow for an immediate identification of the status of a member.¹¹⁴ According to this, proper leadership styles are to be employed by managers to mitigate the downsides of virtual teams, while at the same time fully exploiting the advantages.

¹⁰⁹ *Idem*, p.849

¹¹⁰ De Vreede, T., Reiter-Palmon, R., Wigert, B., *cit.*, p.307

¹¹¹ Boerner, S., Hüttermann, H., *cit.*, p.840

¹¹² Chang, C. M. "New Organizational Designs for Promoting Creativity: A Case Study of Virtual Teams with Anonymity and Structured Interactions" in *Journal of Engineering and Technology Management*, 28, 2011, p.271

¹¹³ Humala, I., *cit.*, p.211

¹¹⁴ *Idem*, p.213

Transformational and transactional leaders, above all, have demonstrated to be the most adequate to support virtual teams since they advocate cooperation, reciprocal support, constructive criticism and active participation¹¹⁵. Still, virtual communication establishes particular difficulties due to the nature of virtuality itself: transformational leaders, for example, focus their efforts on becoming charismatic leaders able to inspire, stimulate and encourage their followers. But the lack of face-to-face contact reduces the amount of information conveyed, which results moreover more confusing and less rich. The channels used in virtual interactions are far less than the ones employed during frontal communications (which include, among the others, eye contact, proximity, tone of voice etc.) and therefore inspirational motivation, idealized influence and the other constituting processes of transformational leadership require more time and effort to be implemented. Additionally, technology is seen as an useful tool to complete tasks, but not to establish social relationships; which are a fundamental point in transformational leadership¹¹⁶. Still, according to social-deterministic theories, this is the type of environment that gives leaders the best opportunities to influence their followers' attitude, work and outcomes.

Climates of uncertainty sure bring difficulties but, if leaders are able to recognize and appeal to the problems that the members of their virtual team experience, the performance of the whole group will result as outstanding. E-leaders must not try to adapt old customs to fit the new technology, but create a new social, virtual dimension taking into consideration the advantages and disadvantages that these new tools bring¹¹⁷. More specifically, Malhotra, Majchrzak and Rosen in their study on virtual teams have identified six successful leadership practices:

1. *Establish and maintain trust*

To overcome the lack of communication channels, and avoid members to take arbitrary actions based on each own's personal habits, leaders must establish clear

¹¹⁵ Avolio, B. J., Kahai, S. S., Sosik, J. J. "Effects of Leadership Style, Anonymity, and Rewards on Creativity-Relevant Processes and Outcomes in an Electronic Meeting System Context" in *The Leadership Quarterly*, 14, 2003, p.503

¹¹⁶ Bono, J. E., Purvanova, R. K. "Transformational Leadership in Context: Face-to-Face and Virtual Teams" in *The Leadership Quarterly*, 20, 2009, pp.344-345

¹¹⁷ *Idem*, p.346

norms that allow each and every team member to know how to use the communication tools that virtuality offers. Similarly, rules have to be set regarding the handling of information outside the team. All members must agree on if, when and how dispatch information, in order to promptly identify transgressors while, at the same time, building trust among the members that respect the established norms. Finally, leaders must assure that burdens are equally shared and that decisions are made to alternatively favor all members of the team, regardless of their geographic position. Fairness, clarity and a periodic review of the norms are the key elements for establishing trust in virtual teams.

2. *Value diversity*

Since most individuals in virtual groups come from very different backgrounds and, at the same time, do not physically know each other, it is important for leaders to foster reciprocal knowledge and understating. Leaders may exhibit skills and backgrounds of the various members, in order to create familiarity with the rest of the team; or they can assign two or more members to the same task, in order to make them work and learn together.

3. *Manage virtual work*

Virtual meetings require far more effort from the team leader to be managed correctly, since virtual conferences are less controlled and members often feel less committed. Virtual meetings need to be meticulously planned and supervised by leaders, whose role is crucial since it requires both practical skills, such as the ability to organize and manage the meeting, and the social and leading attitudes necessary to create and maintain members' engagement and participation.

4. *Monitor team progress*

Technology offers multiple tools to check a team's performance both synchronously and asynchronously: leaders can easily determine whether and individual is contributing to the project or not, or control the usage of various communication devices. Leaders can use this information to identify underperformers, or simply to notice if some members are experiencing difficulties in the use of virtual instruments,

and eventually help them. Technology provides a wide number of tools, and both team leaders and followers are called to experiment with them in order to find the best setting for the team itself.

5. *Enhance external visibility*

Virtual team members often do not receive by executives the same amount of attention given to their “physical” colleagues. For this reason, leaders have to frequently report to managers each member’s duty, contribution and status. The diversity in functional and geographical areas requires different members to be referred to different managers, in order to be evaluated by the proper business unit; thus, leaders must assure that all team members receive an adequate level of attention.

6. *Ensure individual benefits*

Lastly, leaders must not forget the importance of inclusion and rewards. Virtual tools can be used to “host parties”, organize award ceremonies for the best employees or communicate to the executives the positive results obtained by the team. Moments of recognition and fun are fundamental to increase members’ engagement and morale¹¹⁸.

One final mention concerns virtual teams where the members participate anonymously. A study by Avolio, Kahai and Sosik identifies different moderating effects of anonymity when two different leadership styles are employed:

Under transformational leaders, who foster the free expression of opinions, ideas and feedback, anonymity increases the level of individual commitment since individuals feel “protected” and are less afraid to hide their criticisms, fearing fewer social repercussions. On the other hand, since transactional leaders are supposed to reinforce motivation by recognizing each member’s individual contribution, anonymity may hinder the effects of transactional leadership since individual appraisal is more difficult to implement under anonymous circumstances¹¹⁹. The same study observes that anonymity, due to social loafing, reduces the impact of rewards on individual

¹¹⁸ Majchrzak, A., Malhotra, A., Rosen, B. “Leading Virtual Teams” in *Academy of Management Executive*, 2007, pp.61-68

¹¹⁹ Avolio, B. J., Kahai, S. S., Sosik, J. J., *cit.*, pp.503-504

performance as well¹²⁰. Leaders should thus employ particular attention when managing leadership styles and rewards in virtual teams where anonymity is employed¹²¹.

3.3.4. *Managing Rewards*

When dealing with teams, the distribution of rewards may be more complex than the attribution of incentives to single individuals. As we have already seen, rewards are strictly linked to motivation and their employment may bring different consequences, varying from person to person.

In groups, moreover, compensations must be balanced between the separate members and the team as a whole. In particular, if both individuals and the group are recognized for their successes, motivation to exert effort both for themselves and for the group's success will increase in a double, positive way: employees are encouraged to cooperate with one another, helping the teammates that seem in difficulty as well as share knowledge and information; and, at the same time, single members receive incentives based on their single performance, thus reducing the possibility that individual employees would fall into social loafing¹²².

When distributing rewards among the different team members, two different allocations are possible:

Rewards can be assigned basing on *equality*, meaning that all the members of the team will receive the same compensation, depending on the overall group performance but regardless of the individual one; or *equity*, which signifies that the reward given is proportionate to the quality of a single member's work. Both methods have their own advantages and disadvantages: equality has been demonstrated to increase collaboration and focus on group goals, but at the same time it fosters groupthink while reducing individual effort.

¹²⁰ *Idem*, p.517

¹²¹ *Idem*, p.521

¹²² Avolio, B. J., Kahai, S. S., Sosik, J. J., *cit.*, pp.504-505

On the other hand, equity leads to increased competition and a greater interest in extrinsic rewards, but it reduces individual intrinsic motivation. In both cases, managers should decide which approach is the more suitable for their teams, keeping in mind that motivation (especially intrinsic) is strictly linked to creativity¹²³. Moreover, a study has showed that teams rewarded with equity were less likely to rely on common, easily available solutions, thus demonstrating more creativity¹²⁴; in addition, incentives that do not promote competition lead to increased group cohesiveness which¹²⁵, in turn, has positive effects on creativity¹²⁶.

Lastly, when intra-group competition is encouraged, the desire of a member to maximize his or her own performance may cause struggle with the desire to socialize and maintain good relationships with the teammates, therefore creating inner conflicts that may negatively affect group performance¹²⁷. Anyway, even if equally distributed rewards seem to be most common, it seems that employees feel more satisfied when incentives are distributed with equity¹²⁸.

To conclude, Table 4 shows the results of a study conducted by McClurg about the diffusion of the team rewarding systems and its features. Even if companies seem to follow certain trends, McClurg herself asserts that, given the great variability among individuals, teams and processes, sometimes managers can have considerable difficulties when handling rewards, even when they thought to know what their employees wanted¹²⁹. There is no fixed method: it is a leader's duty to observe, understand and learn from his/her followers what works best for them, for their teams, and for the entire organization.

¹²³ Hao, G. J. *Role of Reward Structure in Creativity and Idea Fixation*, Singapore Management University, 2016, pp-3-4

¹²⁴ *Idem*, p.14

¹²⁵ Eisenberg, J. *The Effects of Reward Schemes, Individualism-Collectivism, and Intrinsic Motivation on Teams' Creative Performance*, Colorado State University, 2001, p.99

¹²⁶ *Idem*, p.98

¹²⁷ *Idem*, p.104

¹²⁸ McClurg, L. N. "Team Rewards: How Far Have We Come?" in *Human Resource Management*, 40-1, 2001, p.75

¹²⁹ *Idem*, p.81

Table 4: Summary of the Findings of McClurg’s Study on Team-Based Rewards

Question	Present Findings
1. Extent of team-based rewards?	26% of respondent firms use team rewards
2. Individual or team rewards?	89% of respondent firms used both individual and team; 63% allocate team rewards equally to all members
3. Financial or nonmonetary incentives?	Recognition, prizes, and noncash gifts used most frequently
4. How to measure performance of team?	Team productivity and improvement in team performance more often used
5. Determine success of team reward program?	Success of plan in meeting goals of team productivity and improved work procedures most frequently used

Source: McClurg, L. N., *cit.*, p.82

CONCLUSION

Just as every other trait of human personality, creativity is determined by a real huge number of facets. It is, moreover, embedded on each aspect of our lives, everyday or professional. Even if this work mainly dealt with organizational creativity, the benefits of being able to develop an inventive, original mind do not limit themselves to working environments.

At the same time, being a leader does not mean that an individual must employ some behaviors only at the working place; leaders do not (only) work with machines, papers or computers: they work with people, they establish relationships with them, and leader themselves are influenced by the very same followers they are influencing. Creativity works the same: it permeates environments, people and organizations, giving birth to a positive cycle that can spread its effects inside and outside the professional environment.

In a climate of crisis, where job is uncertain, markets constantly change and politics is ambiguous, leaders must be able to create an environment of safety inside which workers feel able to express themselves without undesirable consequences. Of course, this is far from easy, but the opportunities that such an environment offers are worth the effort.

Companies understand more and more the importance of supporting their employees, of caring and rewarding; and even if not every firm is concerned with creativity, its importance is growing from day to day, from business to business; and leaders and their followers are the first promoters of this change.

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