

Creativity, Inc: Building an Inventive Organization



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Harvard Business Review Press. Hardback. Book Condition: new. BRAND NEW, Creativity, Inc: Building an Inventive Organization, Jeff Mauzy, Richard A. Harriman, To survive and prosper in the long term, people in companies need to create and innovate. And they need to do so as regularly and reliably as they breathe. We begin our discussion of the need for creativity with a look at a successful company that recognized and met a serious new challenge by installing effective creative practices. In the late 1980s, Steelcase Inc., one of the largest U.S. manufacturers of office furniture, like its competitors was investing heavily in research and development in the hot area of its business, modular furniture units. "We had all evolved to the same perspective," says Mark Greiner, senior vice president of R&D at Steelcase. "There was an accepted framework in the industry, defined by three points on a triangle: high design, low cost, and customer relationship." Furniture companies had been differentiating themselves along the points of that triangle for some time. Steelcase was proudest of its customer relationships and placed most of its emphasis on maintaining that edge. "But in fact," Greiner says, "all the manufacturers, by watching each other, had gravitated over time toward safer and safer ground in the middle of the triangle defined by those three points." Thus, the differences between Steelcase and its rivals had grown almost nonexistent. "We were supposedly the most advanced office furniture company in the world, but in fact we were looking pretty much like our competition," he says. Worse, the customer was in motion. The exciting technological liberties of computing and communications made office design and furniture seem less urgent, even less relevant to some businesses. This realization didn't come suddenly, says Greiner. "But it started creeping more often into our conversations. Where's the difference?...

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