10 Barriers to Creativity

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1. Fear of rejection. An idea is not just a thought, it has a person’s feelings attached to it.

2. Environment not willing to risk. Show me an organization not willing to risk and I’ll show you one that’s beginning to rust. Risks are intimate friends with innovation. Make it safe for responsible risks and the ideas will flow. Discovery requires risk. Ask Christopher Columbus.

3. No expectation that ideas are everyone’s responsibility. Improvement thinking is a part of everyone’s job. A manager’s continuous expectation and demonstration how every problem is a candidate for an idea, will keep them coming. An idea a month per employee is achievable.

4. Un-Fun. Ideas flow easier on the fun-side of your brain. Little Amina, the pediatric cancer patient who drew the picture above would say it was fun.

5. Too much time between creation and implementation. Delay in implementation works against the trust that the system is serious about ideas.

6. Neglect. If the supervisor doesn’t communicate the status, and often to the worker, it infers the system doesn’t care. And that wounds future idea generation.

7. No support structure to transform the idea through implementation. If implementation is always an upstream swim, it will dry up the idea flow.

8. Only left brains. You need right brain (high creation) people to generate and left brain (high organization) people to make it work.

9. Acknowledgement. The best acknowledgement for a worker is to see their manager fighting for the idea, or it implemented and making a difference in the workplace.

10. Valuing only BIG ideas. Anyone can come up with a small idea and every idea is a step closer to a more productive work environment.