

speed read

soapbox

Paul Sloane

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If you want to crush creativity in your organisation and eliminate all the unnecessary bother of innovation then here are nine steps guaranteed to succeed.



Illustration by Warwick Cadwell

Criticise

When you hear a new idea, criticise it. Show how smart you are by pointing out some of the weaknesses and flaws which will hold it back.

Ban brainstorm

Treat brainstorming as old-fashioned and passé. All brainstorming does is throw up lots of new ideas that then have to be rejected.

Hoard problems

The CEO and senior team should take on the responsibility for solving all the company's major problems. Strategic issues are too complicated and high-level for ordinary staff. Don't involve staff in serious issues, don't tell them the big picture and above all don't challenge them to come up with any of their own solutions.

Focus on efficiency not innovation

Focus solely on making the current business model work better. After all, if the makers of horse drawn carriages had improved quality they could have stopped automobiles from stealing their market.

Overwork

Establish a culture of long hours and hard work. Encourage the belief that hard work alone will solve the problem. Make sure that the working day

has no time for learning, fun, lateral thinking, wild ideas or testing of new initiatives.

Adhere to the plan

Plan in great detail and then do not deviate from it, regardless of circumstances. Say: 'We cannot try that idea because it is not in the plan and we have no budget for it.' Keep to the vision that was in the plan and ignore fads like market changes and customer fashions – they will pass.


Punish mistakes

If someone tries an entrepreneurial idea that fails then blame and retribution must follow. Reward success and punish failure. This will reinforce the existing way of doing things and discourage dangerous experiments.

Don't look outside

We understand our business better than outsiders. Other industries are fundamentally different and just because something works there does not mean it will work here. Consultants are generally overpriced and tell you things you could have figured out anyway. We need to find the solutions inside the business by working harder.

Don't waste money on training

Talent cannot be taught. It is a rare thing possessed by a handful of gifted individuals. So why waste money trying to turn ducks into swans? Hire good people and let them learn your business' system. Work them hard and they can emulate the success of the CEO as he or she leads the company forward into the future 

Paul Sloane is the author of *The Leader's Guide to Lateral Thinking Skills* published by Kogan-Page. He gives talks and workshops on innovation and leadership.

