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Column: Business Insight

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**Sue Martin, principal, Communication Strategies and
Laura Arellano, president, Meta Logia Consulting**

1. Define creative leadership and describe how it differs from the status quo.

Creative leaders are fully engaged, contributing all their creative gifts to making the organization better. They understand that leadership is a shared responsibility and they foster an environment that supports innovation. Contrast this with a leader who has all the answers and wants employees to do exactly as they are told. Some managers fear unleashing employees' creativity, afraid it will take too much time to evaluate and act on their ideas, and employees will be disappointed if their ideas are not adopted. Creative leaders are excellent communicators and know how to interact with employees.

2. Can managers learn how to be creative leaders?

Yes. The skills are learned behaviors, grounded in a mind-set that recognizes the practical benefits of collaboration and innovation. It starts with self-awareness -- an understanding of one's personal strengths and style and knowing how to develop areas in need of balance. Creative leaders then can practice fairly simple skills that will help them be more creative. They also must abandon the mind-set that they always have the right answer, but instead listen with an open mind to the ideas of others, adopt others' ideas, and give credit where credit is due.

3. Describe some of the skills and practices of creative leadership.

Creative leaders set aside old assumptions and patterns of behavior and seek unusual connections. They even might look outside their own industries for best practices and find new approaches in a completely unrelated field. They are willing to explore "what ifs" in playful, even absurd, ways. They have systems for capturing those brilliant, but fleeting, ideas that might be worth examining more closely, and support organizational systems to do the same. They expand their vision and experience through various means and encourage others to follow their example. Creative leaders nurture a sense of play, which reduces the fear of risk and failure. They support policies that tolerate risk-taking by employees without the fear of punishment. They sincerely appreciate diversity, especially the varied creative processes and interests of their employees.

4. Can creative leadership be applied at all levels within an organization? How?

Yes, employees at all levels must be self-leaders even if they don't lead others. Leadership also can be situational. Whether the role is assigned or assumed, the skills are available to anyone, anywhere. In the book, *Creativity, Inc.*, authors Jeff Mauzy and Richard Harriman cite examples of companies that sent employees to creativity training and have witnessed

positive results. Furthermore, employees who are encouraged and recognized for using their creative gifts are happier and willing to invest more of themselves in the success of the organization.

Martin and Arellano will conduct a Creative Leadership Workshop on! Aug. 17. For more information, contact Martin at 801-209-3062, or Arellano at 801-815-1992, or visit <http://www.metalogiaconsulting.com>.

Caption: Sue Martin; Laura Arellano

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