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Reports of Imagination's Death Are Greatly Exaggerated

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I'm adapting Mark Twain's famous quote in the title of this post because I feel the need to provide a counterpoint to Mike Shipulski's "obituary" of imagination – in an organizational sense – on the Blogging Innovation website today. Writing as if imagination were a person, Shipulski says,

In recent years (imagination's) health declined as the two new thinking systems, lean and Six Sigma, tricked companies into severely constraining their thinking, and, eventually, there was no longer a place for her.

I'm someone who thinks that regardless of the adoption of a management approach such as the two he lists above, imagination is still alive and well. I think its vitals are especially strong (in keeping with the obit analogy) in small businesses, where because of wavering if not falling consumer confidence and spending, reduced spending by many of the larger companies they serve and are served by, and in many cases insufficient support by lending institutions and the government, and other factors, firms and their leaders and managers have had to get incredibly imaginative in recent years.

The following articles on our website show how imagination factors into the payoff of employee engagement best practices in terms of a more productive workplace:

Ask An Expert - Vacation Days: Real vs. Perceived Time Off

"The GreenPages example shows that organizations' leadership are only limited by their **imagination** in how they approach time off for their workforces."

Success Story - JFK Medical Center

"Many of the programs at JFK, which has been widely recognized for its enlightened workplace approach, are beyond the reach of smaller employers. However, some programs would be feasible for a small workplace with some leadership **imagination** and sensitivity."

Perhaps more to the point of the current relevancy of imagination, the term showed up several times in the qualitative feedback of applicants for our 2010 Top Small Company Workplaces award. In response to our question *How do leaders in your organization foster a sense of community and collaboration among employees?*, TXS Industrial Design in Texas wrote:

*On a personal level, with interaction and interest of management, TXS may sometimes resemble "The Office" with humor and humility, sickness and health, birthdays and weddings, celebration of babies and joyous occasions and an occasional party or FoosBall tourney to spark **imagination**. Our family of employees feel secure in their jobs and the longevity of the workplace.*

In answer to our question asking for an example of an employee learning initiative, Maryland-based Orbit Logic Incorporated wrote:

*We do an annual survey to see how employees feel about their job and the work environment. One of the best suggestions to come out of that survey was an employee lunch and learn. We really liked the idea, so we ran with it. The topics are varied, ranging anywhere from benefits overviews to marketing to software development overview for non-developers. It is very easy for people's **imaginations** to run wild with information.*

Finally, fulfilling our requirement of describing the workplace culture of their organization and the key people practices that support that culture, California-based Perfect Fitness wrote:

*Our company, Team PERFECT, is on a mission to serve everyone who desires a life lived to the fullest extent of their **imagination**, to serve those who realize that's the point of living anything less, and we haven't truly lived. You have nothing to lose but your own self-imposed limitations, and you can gain anything you [Order Generic Accutane Online without Prescription](#) dare to imagine. We believe that by sharing our understanding, you will become as passionate about your potential as we are, this is how we are teammates to all, teachers to some and students of others. We know of no greater reward in life than helping others unlock their success and achieve their dreams.*

Related: The CEO of one of our 2009 award winners, Chicago-based Radio Flyer, explains in this video on our YouTube channel how the company's workplace values of fun and **imagination** allow them to better resonate with their customers – parents – *and* foster greater employee commitment and innovation.

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