

Business Trends

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Creativity made easy

Flicking switch on ideas

Paula Beauchamp

IF YOU see business people clenching their left fists or raising their eyebrows to the heavens, don't be alarmed.

Most likely they aren't working off anger or frustration or releasing work stress.

Instead, they may just have joined the growing ranks of blue-chip employees who are turning to innovation consultants to boost creativity.

Or, maybe, they've picked up *The Creativity Formula: 50 scientifically proven creativity boosters for work and for life*, a new book by Inventium's Amantha Imber.

The book describes how a range of simple acts have been proven to boost your creativity.

Potted plants in an office, for example, help replicate nature, reducing workers' barriers to creativity.

Among other ideas, the book suggests you paint a wall red — something research has shown to make you feel happier — cranking information to flow more freely around your brain.

Dr Imber says she felt forced to launch Inventium in 2007 after struggling, during a job search, to find a training or innovation company with "amazing intellectual property" and a good cultural fit.

With a doctorate in organisational psychology, Dr Imber turned to science to develop her line of innovation training.

She travels scientific studies to find methods that have been proven to boost creativity and uses the research to create tools for her creativity-boosting sessions.

"I wanted to de-stuff the field of creativity," she said.

"No one was really applying a scientific underpinning to innovation training."

"This gives us an evidenced-based edge."

Over the past two years Inventium has serviced the likes of Lexo, Kimberly-Clark, Ogilvy & Mather, BP, Deloitte, Qantas, Vodafone and Foster's, working to boost creativity in their teams.

Kimberly-Clark's head of strategy, Cameron Ainslie, said Inventium's tools were easy to teach workers and easy to apply day-to-day as work "without thinking too hard about it".

"People get a real joy out of unleashing their creativity and coming up with creative ideas," he said.

Mr Ainslie said innovation training helps bring back a lot of the creativity that schools help destroy.

Kimberly-Clark has long been committed to creativity training and offers it to employees in functions across the business.

"It isn't simply the domain of product developers," he said.

Inventium typically works with a company on a particular problem —

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for example, staff engagement — and helps to solve it in one of two ways.

Dr Imber and her colleagues teach the team a range of creativity-boosting tools they can then use themselves to solve the problem.

Or Inventium will facilitate a workshop, where staff use creativity-boosting tools to think and solve the problem at hand.

"We basically only work with companies that approach us," Dr Imber said.

"We don't want to work with companies that we have to sell the concept of innovation to."

Austrade is seeking expressions of interest from companies to develop a contemporary national brand for Australia.

The successful bidder will articulate Australia's brand position in the global marketplace and develop associated creative materials.

The tender closes on October 13.



Now there's an idea: Amantha Imber wants to break down the walls to creativity.