

Artists can enhance workplace creativity

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Summary

This paper describes what happened during the Artists In Residence scheme, a project in Sweden that matched artists with business to work together for a 10 month period. The artists involved included musicians, painters, dancers and actors. They were placed with commercial businesses in order to provoke employees to 'think in new and creative ways'. The paper describes the many positive benefits of the scheme while noting that it required employees and managers to be fully invested to reap the full rewards on offer.

The researchers used two different measures of workplace creativity as well as interviews

They asked 20 people from each organisation at the start, middle and end of the artists residency to complete a survey which measured both workplace climate and the amount of defensive routines deployed. They also interviewed the managing director and an employee representative as well as the resident artist at the end of each 10 month period.

A variety of commercial organisations were involved, spanning various industry categories

The aims of the scheme were to bring arts and business together, to enhance the creative capacity of the business involved, and to create employment opportunities for artists. In each setting the artist worked with a set of employees to devise and undertake a creative project together.

People felt the scheme was beneficial, though found it difficult to quantify its effects

Some employees were initially skeptical, suspecting this was a distracting management fad. Consistent support from management was key to the projects succeeding. Managers were very positive about the project, but struggled to identify measurable benefits. The surveys did show an improvement in 'work climate'. There were positive accounts of how people described their attitudes to the project and how they discovered new approaches to their work.

Keywords

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