Sparkitivity

LEADING FOR POSSIBILITY

SELF-ASSESSMENT

DOES YOUR LEADERSHIP INSPIRE YOU AND OTHERS TOWARD POSSIBILITY?

A recent MIT-IBM Watson AI Lab Study found that once job tasks are taken over by artificial intelligence, skills like creative thinking are **most valued** and **most highly paid.**

This makes sense. To think creatively is to solve problems in new ways. It is the superpower that we need to not only survive, but to successfully **lead** in the face of rapid change.

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BECOME IRREPLACEABLE IN THE AGE OF AI...

When you are operating at your peak creative thinking capacity, you will create more value, make more impact, and experience deeper satisfaction.

You will be less likely to become obsolete because your thinking is agile enough to see new possibilities and find new solutions under any circumstance.

You will be able to lead in a way that values growth in yourself and others.

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DON'T LET STRENGTHS GO UNDERUTILIZED

Effective change leaders create possibility ecosystems--cultures that support the sustained growth that results in positive change at the right time. You can master the three intertwining elements that work together to create possibility ecosystems:

1. **How You View Yourself as a Change Agent**
2. **How You View and Interact with Other People and Ideas**
3. **How You Solve Problems**

The better you are at creating a possibility ecosystem, the more impactful your work and your teams's work will be in this era of exponential change.

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CREATE A POSSIBILITY ECOSYSTEM

Sparkitivity founder Kathryn P. Haydon developed this toolkit based on her book, *The Non-Obvious Guide to Being More Creative, No Matter Where You Work*, to help you identify your present strengths and pinpoint areas of practice that will help you lead for possibility like a pro.

Becoming an effective possibility leader is your insurance against disruption; it's your ticket to surviving and thriving in this ever-shifting world. It's based on a natural process that becomes easier with practice.

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HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

Take some time to sit down with the three sections of questions on the following pages. Answer them honestly.

Jot down the letter of each of your responses on a scrap paper or in a blank document. When you're finished with each section, follow the instructions to tally your points. Add your three totals together for a cumulative number.

Then, turn to the final pages for immediate steps you can take to develop your own effective possibility leadership.

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ELEMENT 1: HOW YOU VIEW YOURSELF AS A CHANGE AGENT

1. I solve problems in new ways . . .

a. multiple times per day.

b. at least once a day.

c. at least once a week.

d. rarely.

2. When faced with a challenge I . . .

a. turn the problem into a possibility question.

b. think of one way to solve it and implement my solution.

c. am afraid of getting stuck.

d. get frustrated about how hard life is.

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3. I can name . . .

a. 5 of my creative thinking strengths.

b. 2 of my creative thinking strengths.

c. none of my creative thinking strengths, but I know I have them.

d. none of my creative thinking strengths because I have none.

4. When I'm thinking creatively, I'm . . .

a. using a combination of ideation and analysis to solve problems.

b. brainstorming.

c. doing art.

d. I don't think creatively because Picasso, Steve Jobs, and Maya Angelou have it covered.

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5. How I feel about change:

a. I embrace it with open arms.

b. I need a nudge to get started and then I'll face it.

c. I try to ignore it and keep doing what I'm doing.

d. I do NOT like change.

6. When I have an idea, I . . .

a. can't wait to tell people about it.

b. wait until it's fully formed to share.

c. only tell people who I know will like it.

d. keep it to myself.

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7. I am . . .

a. creative.

b. sometimes creative.

c. unsure.

d. not creative.

Add up your points!

For each “a”, give yourself 4 points.

For each “b”, give yourself 3 points.

For each “c”, give yourself 2 points.

For each “d”, give yourself 0 points.

How You View Yourself Point Total: _____ (out of 28)

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POSSIBILITY ECOSYSTEM ELEMENT 2: HOW YOU VIEW AND INTERACT WITH OTHER PEOPLE AND IDEAS

1. When other people pose new ideas, I am . . .

a. most often open to considering them.

b. sometimes open to considering them.

c. usually critical at first but then I come around.

d. usually resistant.

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2. When running a meeting that requires new thinking, I . . .

a. most often use strategies to elicit team members' insights and ideas.

b. sometimes use strategies to elicit team members' insights and ideas.

c. ask for other people's input but go ahead with my own decision.

d. never ask for input.

3. When we don't agree on my team . . .

a. we most often have healthy debates to reach solutions.

b. we sometimes have healthy debates to reach solutions.

c. we rarely have healthy debates to reach solutions.

d. our debates always become personal and result in negativity.

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4. How I tend to give feedback:

a. most often point out the positives first and encourage continued thinking.

b. sometimes point out the positives first and encourage continued thinking

c. occasionally point out the positives first and encourage continued thinking.

d. most often jump in with my criticisms first.

5. For my employees or teammates, I tend to . . .

a. most often try to match tasks and assignments with individual strengths.

b. sometimes try to match tasks and assignments with individual strengths.

c. rarely match tasks and assignments with individual strengths.

d. almost never match tasks and assignments with individual strengths.

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6. Most of my colleagues are . . .

a. often creative.

b. sometimes creative.

c. occasionally creative.

d. not at all creative.

7. At meetings, people share in genuine laughter:

a. just the right amount.

b. so much that we lose focus.

c. once in a while, but not enough.

d. no joking is allowed.

Add up your points!

For each "a", give yourself 4 points.

For each "b", give yourself 3 points.

For each "c", give yourself 2 points.

For each "d", give yourself 0 points.

How You View/Interact with Others

Point Total: _____ (out of 28)

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POSSIBILITY ECOSYSTEM ELEMENT 3: HOW YOU VIEW AND SOLVE PROBLEMS

1. To solve a problem, I . . .

a. use tools and strategies from a problem solving process like creative problem solving or design thinking.

b. sometimes hold brainstorming meetings.

c. make up a solution and get it done.

d. don't follow any particular process.

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2. When I'm working on a project, I tend to . . .

a. play around with various possibilities before I take action.

b. think of an idea and run with it.

c. do whatever is most efficient to finish.

d. criticize many of the new ideas I or others think up.

3. When brainstorming with a group . . .

a. we follow the specific guidelines and professional facilitator best practices.

b. we usually come up with one to five ideas.

c. we tend to get stymied by discussion and criticism, but ultimately can reach new solutions.

d. we tend to leave the meeting without new ideas.

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4. To vet ideas, we. . .

a. use the POPIT (or POINt/PPCO tool).

b. find pros and cons.

c. criticize new ideas first so we don't get bad ideas.

d. have a hard time finding new solutions because every idea is inferior.

5. I've received the following training in creative process tools:

a. workshops or certification in creative process like Design Thinking/creative problem solving process or facilitation.

b. on-the-job experience and practice in creative process and/or facilitation.

c. have watched videos or read books or articles about Design Thinking/creative problem solving process.

d. What's creative process?

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6. When a problem or challenge arises, I . . .

a. gather contextual information and look at root causes to be sure I'm solving the right problem.

b. give myself a few minutes to think about the problem and that's enough.

c. immediately start thinking of ideas to solve it.

d. do whatever our competitors are doing.

7. I have strategies and tools (like Paired Comparison Analysis, Converging Questions, Reverse Brainstorming) that I can use for various stages of solving a problem. Without notice, I can employ:

a. 10 or more tools.

b. 5 or more tools.

c. 1 or 2 tools.

d. I have no idea what you are talking about.

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Add up your points as follows:

For each “a”, give yourself 4 points.

For each “b”, give yourself 3 points.

For each “c”, give yourself 2 points.

For each “d”, give yourself 0 points.

How You Solve Problems Point Total:

_____ (out of 28)

Overall Point Total: _____ (out of 84)

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UNDERSTANDING YOUR SCORE:

This back-of-the-napkin assessment will help you pinpoint what you're already doing well so you can do more of it. You can also learn how to improve in weaker areas.

Scores of 22-28: Possibility Leader

You are clear on what creativity means, you practice essential problem solving strategies that bring you and your team toward new thinking, and you have a growth-oriented view of yourself, others, and change itself. Keep your skills sharp with continuous learning and practice. Make sure your team members get the training in these areas and know how to apply it to their daily tasks as well.

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Scores of 15-21: Primed for Growth

You already have some important foundational mindsets to thrive with change and you use elements of creative problem solving strategies. Build on what you are already doing well and expand your knowledge of process, tools, and strategies.

Scores of 8-14: On the Launchpad

You are aware of creativity and know it's important, but you're not 100 percent sure what it means, how to develop it in yourself and others, and how to apply it at work. You're somewhat uncomfortable with change and need to move the needle on openness to new ideas. The good news is that effective creative thinking at work is not chaos and has a clear structure that you can apply in small steps. Start with the tips at the end of this workbook. Choose a few that inspire you most to keep learning.

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Scores of 0-7: Ready to Stretch

Like the scene from the cult classic movie *Wayne's World*, you might "fear change." (Look up the clip—it's funny!) That's okay, because now you know what's holding you back and you can take deliberate steps to build your skills. Start by learning the basics about creative thinking, what it means (hint: it's not limited to art), and how you already apply it, which we guarantee you do. Choose any of the tips in the following section to get started.

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Powering-Up Your Possibility Leadership:

Take it to the Next Level:

The following suggestions correspond with the numbered questions in each of the three self-assessment sections. If you'd like, target your next steps by taking the suggestions that match the questions on which you received fewer points. Free resources are hyperlinked to help you out. If you'd like a comprehensive resource that you can turn to for all tools and strategies, check out *The Non-Obvious Guide to Being More Creative, No Matter Where You Work* by Sparkitivity founder Kathryn P. Haydon.

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Possibility Ecosystem Element 1: How You View Yourself as a Change Agent

1. Learn about the inertia of no. Once you are aware of it, you can identify ways in which it blocks new thinking at work so that you may find ways to break through.
2. Turn problems into possibilities using possibility questions.
3. Complete the innovator strengths workbook. (For a detailed look at your cognitive creativity strengths, see Chapter 3 of *The Non-Obvious Guide to Being More Creative*).
4. Learn how to separate your thinking.
5. Make small changes in your daily routines to start inching toward more openness to change.
6. Embrace the concept of "prototype mode".
7. Understand what creativity really is.

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Possibility Ecosystem Element 2: How You View/Interact with Other People/Ideas

1. In one day or one week, count the number of times you immediately criticize a new idea that is brought to you. Then, think up different ways to respond than flat-out "no."
2. Use the Torrance Incubation Model to make meetings more engaging and productive.
3. Add more structure to your meeting processes to elicit better thinking. Here's the first one to try.
4. Learn POPIT in *The Non-Obvious Guide to Being More Creative*.
5. Complete the strengths spotter for your team members so you can more deeply spot their strengths.
6. Complete the workbook pages in #5 to help you pinpoint specifics about how people are creative. Think about this fresh perspective on how to describe people.
7. Revisit this article from #2.

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Possibility Ecosystem Element 3: How You View and Solve Problems

1. Understand the universal creative process.
2. Learn how to develop your own creative momentum--how you can harness your strengths to make your own approach to solving problems more powerful and productive.
3. Read "How to Exercise Divergent Thinking" here.
4. Learn POPIT in *The Non-Obvious Guide to Being More Creative* read why it beats out Pros and Cons.
5. Take a training in creative problem solving (CPS) or design thinking. If you already use Agile, Lean, or other similar processes, integrating tools and strategies from CPS or design will enhance your potential for genuine innovation.

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6. Focus on asking detailed questions in the first stage of the universal creative process—the clarification or understanding stage—before you start thinking up ideas to solve it.
7. Start collecting tools to help you conquer each stage of the creative process. The most useful and basic are outlined in the third section of *The Non-Obvious Guide to Being More Creative*. Many creative process tools are versions of the basic principles. For example, Reverse Brainstorming is just one way to aid ideation.

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Lead for Possibility: Next-Level Leadership

Being an effective possibility leader begins with practicing your own creativity more deliberately and consistently. This practice equips you to model and help others do the same. Like any skill, it is a life's work of learning, application, and improvement. The key is to take small steps that you can start to quickly adopt as regular practices in your mindset and in daily application. Then, the learning and proving process becomes more and more natural until it's second nature. Remember: If you and your teammates are not using creative thinking every day at work, you are being underutilized. You've already taken the first step forward to highest-level thinking, leadership, and contribution.

If you'd like tailored support for your or your team, please reach out to Kathryn Haydon at inspired@sparkitivity.com or 805-798-1041.

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