

# DISNEY'S APPROACH TO INSPIRING CREATIVITY

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**I**n today's workplace, change is occurring at an ever-increasing rate. In order to be successful in a climate of constant change and a turbulent economy, organizations must be able to foster an environment where collaboration, innovation and new ideas are not only safe but also expected and encouraged.

Gymnastics organizations are much like any workplace; coaches and leaders need to inspire athletes to constantly achieve goals. Faced with frequent challenges and desires to grow and outperform, innovation is also a cornerstone of growing as an athlete.

## **ENGAGE AND ORGANIZE A CREATIVE CULTURE**

At Disney, engaging and organizing the creative power of our employees, which is not an easy task, gives us a competitive advantage in maximizing our potential. Because of this, Disney follows four guidelines to help managers strengthen the bottom line by encouraging all to start with fresh, undiluted ideas:

### **1. Collaborative Culture**

A successful collaborative culture is built upon genuine relationships among people - one that allows everyone to share ideas that can be expressed honestly and without fear. The result: The generation of incredible ideas.

This concept was put into practice first by Walt Disney himself. One morning while visiting his first theme park, Disneyland, Walt invited some third-shift maintenance workers

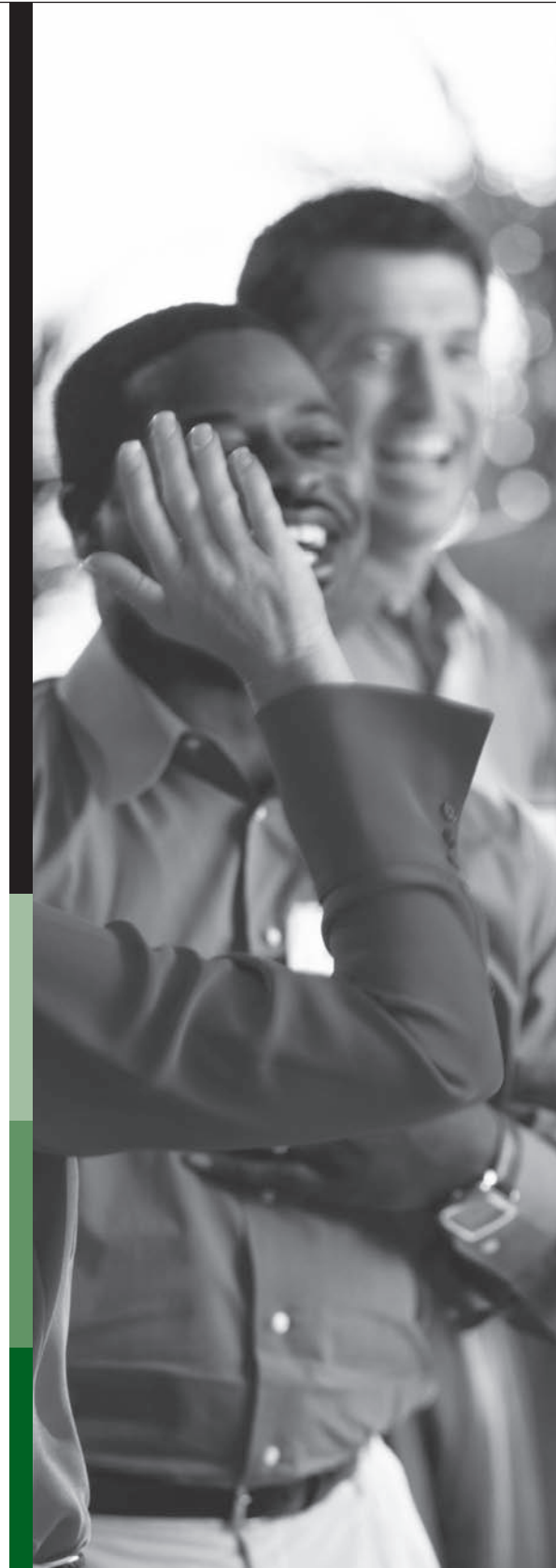
to drop what they were doing and join him for a chat. When their manager found them talking with Walt, he asked Walt if he could have them back to finish their work before the park opened. As they went back to their assignments, the manager felt compelled to ask Walt why he was spending his valuable time talking with third-shift workers. Walt's philosophy was that good ideas come from everyone. His example set the tone for a culture that follows the premise that everyone is creative.

A new Disney employee's (Cast Member's) orientation is the perfect opportunity to the traditions of how creativity and innovation have helped Disney grow. Innately, they understand that their ideas can add new insights and improve what has been accepted and that Disney expects and values their input.

### **2. Organizational Identity**

Disney is committed to maintaining an organizational identity that lets our Cast Members know who we are, what we create, and the people we are creating "magic" for every day.

Disney has never elected to paint the storefronts of Main Street USA purple or made Friday a "dress





casual day” for front-line Cast Members in the Magic Kingdom Park. That’s because creativity must be tempered within the context of an organization’s cultural norms and expectations. Defining organizational identity helps establish parameters, focus creative energy, conserve resources – and reach goals.

### **3. Structural Systems**

When the Walt Disney World Resort opened in 1971, what was then Walt Disney Entertainment was a small department centered on one theme park. More than 30 years later, that same group was dealing with myriad parks, parades, conventions, shows and special events. Its exponential growth resulted in a creative process with delays, high costs, and a disorganized flow of ideas.

To prevent this from happening in the future, leaders designed a new system that included decision-making checkpoints and a clearly defined direction for each idea. This identified reasonable expectations within each phase of a project and held stakeholders accountable to budgets and timelines.

### **4. Leader’s Role**

In the end, the responsibility for success rests on the

entire team. Not everyone has the word “leader” in his or her title, but everyone should be committed to the organizational identity, accept responsibility for the structural systems that enable innovation to happen and be an inspiration to each other. At Disney it is believed that each employee has a leadership role, and we all have a sphere of influence on the organization.

### **TAP A CREATIVE POWER SOURCE**

Creativity is an aspect of business integral to any corporation because it is essential to success. Through Disney Institute, organizations discover ways to tap into the same power source that has fueled more than 80 years of continuous business success. From inspiring the creativity of individuals to capturing the creative power of an entire group, participants study proven methods to explore, and then leverage, the creativity of an entire team.

Disney Institute concepts have traveled to more than 45 countries and touched thousands of large and small businesses, including more than half of the Fortune 100 companies. To learn more about Disney’s Approach to Inspiring Creativity and other key business practices that can help your business excel, visit [www.disneyinstitute.com](http://www.disneyinstitute.com). ✨