



WAY OUTSIDE THE BOX

Creativity is a hot commodity in the corporate world.

A 2010 survey of 1,500 chief executive officers from 60 countries and 33 industries showed that more than rigor, integrity, discipline, or vision, creativity is the key to navigating the rapidly changing and increasingly complex economy.

But is there such a thing as being too creative? Although creativity is largely associated with positive work outcomes, our research shows that, in excess, creativity can be a powerful roadblock to career success.

 **HOGAN**

WHEN GOOD IDEAS GO BAD

To understand how creativity can harm an individual's career, we must look at personality from two perspectives: bright-side personality and dark-side personality.

Bright-side personality describes the strengths and weaknesses people display when they are at their best. Dark-side personality describes personality characteristics that are strengths under normal circumstances. Under the increased stress, pressure, or boredom of most work environments, people tend to overuse those strengths, and they can become powerful career derailers.

Creative people often have parents who emphasize their uniqueness and favor creative expression over convention. As adults, their ability to comfortably work outside of societal norms makes creative individuals valuable sources of potentially important ideas. However, highly creative individuals also tend to focus too much on thinking outside the box, often at the cost of their ability to clearly explain their ideas or follow through.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

Hogan measures excessive creativity using the Imaginative scale of the Hogan Development Survey (HDS), a personality assessment that measures dark-side personality characteristics.

Individuals with no-risk and low-risk scores on the HDS Imaginative scale tend to be pragmatic and task-oriented. On the one hand, they are often quiet and unassuming, willing to speak out only when they have something specific and functional to add to the group discussion. On the other hand, they have trouble thinking outside the box or offering creative or innovative solutions to business problems.

Moderate-risk scores on the HDS Imaginative scale indicate individuals who tend to be dependable and down-to-earth. They are good communicators who present ideas intelligibly and with good attention to implementation. However, they tend to be conservative in their response to business opportunities and challenges and reluctant to embrace ideas that are not supported by data or logical arguments.

Individuals with high-risk scores on the HDS Imaginative scale are often creative, insightful, and even innovative. However, their preoccupation with innovative ideas tends to come at the cost of implementation. They can be eccentric and easily distractible, changing focus quickly and often lacking the capacity for effective follow-through.

Dr. Jeff Foster, director of the Hogan Research Division, and Dr. Joyce Hogan, co-founder and former vice president of Hogan Assessment Systems, analyzed data from the more than 750 research studies in the Hogan archive. They found strong negative correlations between high scores on the HDS Imaginative scale and individuals' ability to perform along several competencies:

Interpersonal Skills (-0.18)

Dependability (-0.26)

Detail Orientation (-0.19)

Professionalism (-0.15)

DIAL IT BACK

Highly creative individuals' belief in their own uniqueness often makes them relatively immune to feedback or criticism. It is important to emphasize that recommendations are intended to enhance the value of the employee's ideas and the capacity of the organization to profit from them fully.

Recognize that visionary ideas are often difficult for others to understand. Having a strategy for implementation will give creative ideas greater credibility.

Focus efforts on ideas that seem most interesting to others; this will allow for a greater number of ideas to be acted upon.

Check frequently with superiors and colleagues to ensure understanding of their expectations for performance.

Partner with a colleague who may be less creative but better at implementation; by working together, ideas are more likely to be turned into action.

Seek feedback from trusted colleagues who can offer insight and constructive strategies for interacting more effectively with others.

Creativity is essential to navigate today's fast-moving, complex business environment. Armed with the strategic self-awareness of Hogan's personality assessments and the proper coaching, you can help your creative employees harness their abilities and avoid going too far outside the box. ■

***Founded in 1987**, Hogan pioneered the use of personality assessment to improve workplace performance. Hogan's assessment solutions help businesses reduce turnover and increase productivity by hiring the right people, developing key talent, and evaluating leadership potential.*

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