

# LET'S INNOVATE!

## QUICK ACTIVITIES TO GET INNOVATING

**HAVING THE RIGHT FRAMEWORKS AND CULTURE SETS THE STAGE, BUT IT'S CONSISTENT ACTION THAT DRIVES REAL CHANGE. INNOVATION, LIKE A MUSCLE, NEEDS TO BE EXERCISED, SUPPORTED, AND STRENGTHENED OVER TIME. HERE ARE THREE PRACTICAL STRATEGIES TO HELP YOU ACTIVATE AND SUSTAIN IT ON YOUR TEAM.**

### CREATIVE LABS

Innovation needs space to breathe. A Creative Lab is time intentionally set aside for employees to explore ideas outside their core responsibilities like side quests, “what if” thinking, or untapped solutions. Even just a few hours a month can ignite energy, ownership, and fresh thinking. Research by Teresa Amabile backs this up: people are most creative when they have autonomy, purpose, and intrinsic motivation. When employees are trusted to follow their curiosity, they often uncover the seeds of your next big idea.

### CROSS-FUNCTIONAL SPRINTS

Cross-functional sprints are short, focused projects that bring people together across departments to solve a shared problem. This breaks down silos, encourages fresh perspectives, and helps team members flex new skills. One powerful variation is having a team “adopt” a challenge from another department and propose a solution. These sprints accelerate collaboration, spark learning, and often generate innovative results that wouldn't emerge in isolation. When teams innovate together, especially in ways visible to leadership, engagement and momentum grow.

### REWARD RISK-TAKING

Many organizations say they value innovation, but they often fail to reward the behaviors that actually lead to it. Innovation isn't just the “aha” moment, it's the courage to try something new, take a risk, and learn from the outcome, even if it's imperfect. One effective approach is to create a “Fail Forward Award” that recognizes someone who took a smart, mission-aligned risk and walked away with lessons worth sharing. This shifts the focus from perfection to progress and builds a culture where experimentation feels safe, supported, and valued.

### PILOT PERMISSION:

Choose a low-risk idea you've been thinking about and give yourself (or your team) permission to test it for just one week. The focus is on trying, learning, and adjusting ... not launching something perfect. Track what worked and what didn't, and use those insights to improve. Creating space to “just try it” helps overcome fear and unlocks momentum.

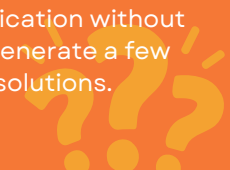
### CURIOSITY SWAP



Pair up with someone outside your usual role or department and exchange one useful tool, process, or mindset you each use. Then reflect on how you might adapt what you learned to improve your own work. It's a simple way to build trust, spark learning, and bring fresh thinking into your everyday routines. Great for hybrid or cross-functional teams.

### “HOW MIGHT WE” CHALLENGE

Team members list a few recurring problems, then reframe each one into a “How might we...” question to spark possibility. For example, “Email is too slow” becomes “How might we speed up communication without losing clarity?” From there, generate a few quick ideas to move toward solutions.





Nomination Form

Nominee Name

**This award celebrates smart risk-taking, curiosity, and learning from failure. Nominate someone who tried something bold (even if it didn't work) because progress is powered by people who dare to try.**

What bold idea or risk did they pursue?

What was the outcome, and what did they (or the team) learn from it?

Why does this matter to our team, culture, or goals?

Nominated by:

# Empowerment Readiness Quiz for Managers & Leaders

## Instructions

This quiz will help you evaluate how well you're creating the conditions for team empowerment. Rate yourself on a scale of 1-5 for each statement:

1 = Never | 2 = Rarely | 3 = Sometimes | 4 = Often | 5 = Always

## Empowerment Quiz Questions

1. I regularly give my team decision-making authority in their roles. [ 1 ] [ 2 ] [ 3 ] [ 4 ] [ 5 ]
2. I encourage team members to share new ideas, even if they challenge the status quo. [ 1 ] [ 2 ] [ 3 ] [ 4 ] [ 5 ]
3. I respond to failure with curiosity and learning rather than blame. [ 1 ] [ 2 ] [ 3 ] [ 4 ] [ 5 ]
4. I recognize and celebrate effort, experimentation, and initiative. [ 1 ] [ 2 ] [ 3 ] [ 4 ] [ 5 ]
5. I ask my team for feedback on how I can support their growth. [ 1 ] [ 2 ] [ 3 ] [ 4 ] [ 5 ]
6. I make it clear that psychological safety is a priority on our team. [ 1 ] [ 2 ] [ 3 ] [ 4 ] [ 5 ]
7. I coach rather than control - guiding more than directing. [ 1 ] [ 2 ] [ 3 ] [ 4 ] [ 5 ]
8. I create space in our team's workflow for reflection and idea generation. [ 1 ] [ 2 ] [ 3 ] [ 4 ] [ 5 ]
9. I am transparent about goals, challenges, and decision-making processes. [ 1 ] [ 2 ] [ 3 ] [ 4 ] [ 5 ]
10. I trust my team to deliver and do not micromanage their work. [ 1 ] [ 2 ] [ 3 ] [ 4 ] [ 5 ]

## Scoring

Add up your scores:

40-50: Empowerment Champion - You're creating a culture where people thrive.

30-39: Almost There - A few key shifts could supercharge your leadership.

20-29: Growth Opportunity - Focus on trust, recognition, and autonomy.

Below 20: Rethink & Rebuild - Time for a reset and realignment with your team.

## Reflection Prompt

What's one small action you can take this week to foster more empowerment on your team?



**The Empowered Team:**  
Fostering a Culture of Innovation and  
Ownership

# Employee Empowerment Self-Evaluation Tool

## Instructions

Use this tool to reflect on how empowered you feel in your role. For each statement, rate your agreement on a scale of 1 to 5: 1 = Strongly Disagree | 5 = Strongly Agree

This is for personal insight or team discussion.

## Self-Reflection Statements

1. I feel confident taking initiative without needing permission. [ 1 ] [ 2 ] [ 3 ] [ 4 ] [ 5 ]
2. I am trusted to make decisions that affect my work. [ 1 ] [ 2 ] [ 3 ] [ 4 ] [ 5 ]
3. I can share ideas or concerns without fear of judgment. [ 1 ] [ 2 ] [ 3 ] [ 4 ] [ 5 ]
4. I know how my work connects to the bigger picture. [ 1 ] [ 2 ] [ 3 ] [ 4 ] [ 5 ]
5. I am encouraged to take smart risks, even if they don't always work. [ 1 ] [ 2 ] [ 3 ] [ 4 ] [ 5 ]
6. I receive recognition for effort and creative thinking. [ 1 ] [ 2 ] [ 3 ] [ 4 ] [ 5 ]
7. I have the freedom to explore better ways of doing things. [ 1 ] [ 2 ] [ 3 ] [ 4 ] [ 5 ]
8. I feel supported when I try something new. [ 1 ] [ 2 ] [ 3 ] [ 4 ] [ 5 ]
9. I get feedback that helps me grow. [ 1 ] [ 2 ] [ 3 ] [ 4 ] [ 5 ]
10. I feel like a valued contributor to the team's success. [ 1 ] [ 2 ] [ 3 ] [ 4 ] [ 5 ]

## Add up your scores:

40–50: I Feel Empowered: I'm trusted, supported, and inspired to do my best work.

30–39: I'm Getting There: Most days, I feel seen and supported, but a few changes could make a big difference in how empowered I truly feel.

20–29: I'm Holding Back: I want to contribute more, but I need more trust, recognition, and freedom to thrive. There's room to grow together.

Below 20: I'm Disconnected: It's hard to stay motivated or engaged. I need a reset in how we work together

## Personal Reflection

What's one way I feel empowered in my work?

What's one area where I'd like more support or freedom?

What conversation could I start to grow my impact?



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