



## Helping Your Team Embrace Humility

Here are three simple exercises that will help you increase innovation by avoiding the traps of ego-driven bias.

### Put Leaders into Humbling Situations

There's a good deal of science that shows that employees admire leaders who are open about what they don't know and admit their foibles over leaders who provide strong, decisive answers — even when those answers are consistently right. Many leaders have trouble believing this at a gut level and continue to put on a show of being strong and competent in all situations. One way to loosen this up: require leaders in your company to do things they just aren't good at. Ask a left-brain, non-artistic exec to take visual, illustrated meeting notes and distribute them to the group. Have your CFO spend a day working with your creative design group. One particularly [brave CEO](#) of a multi-billion dollar company even did incompetent Bollywood dances in front of thousands of staff members before engaging them in conversations about how to shift their business model. These subtle acts make projecting an air of competence at all times seem less urgent, opening the door for more creativity and collaboration.

### Get People Out of Their Domains of Expertise

Today's jobs tend to be highly specialized. Doing a single type of thing all day means it's difficult for insights to leak in from unexpected places. And the learning curves we're on after years of doing specialized work tends to be very shallow. Make it a practice for employees to spend at least a few hours a week at work honing a new, and truly challenging skill unrelated to their current duties. It's great when these new skills wind up being useful to the company. But even those that don't will get people out of fixated ways of thinking, provide unexpected insights and stops even the most competent people from avoiding the important experience of occasional failure. The creativity and cultural benefits that will follow should more than make up for the time your people would otherwise be doing the same old thing.

## Do What You Suck At

If you want to enhance your own innovative thinking, pick that one thing you've always believed you were awful at (math, singing, writing, coding...we know you've got one). Now, put yourself on a six-week program to dive into building that skill. You can do this the old fashioned way by hiring a coach or taking a class or you can try e-learning sites like Khan Academy or Udemy. An hour a day is great but it can be done in as little as 15 minutes. There are a couple of things that might happen if you do this. 1) You may make surprisingly significant progress, realizing that your fear of trying this skill, and maybe other fears of learning, was unfounded. 2) You may realize you will *never* make progress on this skill. This is a rare outcome but if you can laugh about it, the experience will contribute to a healthy state of humility that, as we've seen, helps you become more innovative. 3) You may make some, slow progress. This is the most likely outcome and it too has benefits. Observing yourself learning as a beginner helps you see, often for the first time since school, your brain in action. You'll learn a lot more about how you learn than you would in years of practicing what you're already good at.