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In today's rapidly changing world, there's a growing emphasis on creating more human-centric workplaces. But being human at work involves far more than empathy, compassion, or even sustainability. It's about tapping into deeper aspects like curiosity, creativity, and the power of imagination. As leaders, we need to shift our focus from what's wrong to what's right with people, embracing our innate capacity for creativity, resilience, and innovation.

The New Dimensions of Being Human at Work

Humans are inherently *Homo prospectus* – we thrive on envisioning the future. This involves not just conscious logical thinking, but also the subconscious mind, daydreaming, and social imagination. These elements allow us to innovate, connect intuitively, and build upon each other's ideas in ways that machines simply cannot replicate. Yet, in many workplaces, we're failing to leverage this unique human potential.

Reimagining Creativity and Play in the Workplace

Corporations often miss the mark when it comes to fostering environments that truly encourage diverse creativity. Instead, many workplaces are rigid, risk-averse, and focused on efficiency, leaving little room for organic creativity and play. When was the last time you or your team had the space to dream, explore, and imagine without constraints? How often do we create time for genuine play, allowing ideas to flow and evolve naturally?

The reality is that in today's fast-paced environments, we're constantly pressured to stay "switched on," driven by deadlines, growth targets, and performance metrics. But this relentless focus on productivity stifles innovation. True creativity requires mental space, unstructured time, and the freedom to explore without the fear of failure or judgment.

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Creating Conditions for Courage, Connection, and Creativity

It's not just about diversity in demographics; it's about encouraging diverse ways of thinking and fostering environments where every voice feels heard and valued. The perception of psychological safety is just as critical as actual safety. Leaders are in a privileged position to create these conditions – cultivating spaces where people can connect, play, and lift each other's spirits.

Consider the concept of "social dreaming" as a potential cure for modern workplace burnout. It's about tapping into collective imagination, encouraging employees to dream together and envision shared futures. But are we making time for this in our organisations? Are we too busy with back-to-back meetings, emails, and metrics to let people pause, think, and innovate?

The Responsibility of Leadership and HR

HR and leaders face a crucial challenge: how to unlock human creativity intentionally and skillfully. This is especially urgent as generative AI transforms how we communicate and create. Yet, while AI can generate content, it cannot replace the human ability to dream, intuit, and connect in ways that foster true innovation.

So, what can we do? It starts with empowering people to lean into their intuition, helping them recognise their unique strengths, and giving them the courage to speak up. We must intentionally create platforms that allow for rich, diverse contributions. It's about creating the right conditions – spaces where human creativity isn't just a nice-to-have but a central part of how we operate.

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Practical Steps to Foster Creativity

1. **Make Space for Play:** Encourage unstructured time for brainstorming and daydreaming. This can be as simple as scheduling "thinking breaks" or dedicating a portion of team meetings to open-ended exploration.

2. **Promote Psychological Safety:** Ensure that all team members feel safe to express their ideas without fear of judgment. This involves active listening, asking open-ended questions, and celebrating diverse perspectives.

3. **Leverage Social Imagination:** Create opportunities for teams to engage in "social dreaming" sessions, where they can collectively envision innovative solutions to current challenges.

4. **Reconsider Flexibility and Discipline:** Too much choice can be overwhelming. Organisations should rethink how they offer flexibility, balancing freedom with clear guidance to maximise creativity.

5. **Encourage Deep Listening and Focus:** In a world of constant distractions, encourage single-tasking and deep listening. This can improve not only individual wellbeing but also the quality of collaboration and innovation.

Moving Forward: A Call to Action

The future of work is not just about technology; it's about harnessing the full spectrum of human potential. As we rethink our organisational practices, let's focus on what makes us uniquely human – our creativity, our dreams, and our ability to connect in meaningful ways. Let's design workplaces that inspire, empower, and bring out the best in everyone.

It's time for leaders to take action, creating the conditions that allow people to thrive, innovate, and reimagine what's possible. The fight for a more human workplace is one we can win – but only if we embrace the full potential of our humanity.