



## Stanford eCorner

### Talking About Creativity Isn't Enough!

Bob Sutton, *Stanford University*

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Video URL: <http://ecorner.stanford.edu/videos/1191/Talking-About-Creativity-Isnt-Enough>

Too often, when companies realize they need to innovate and bring creativity into their company, they spend time discussing it but not implementing it. Sutton talks about some examples of that type of situation.



#### Transcript

And then the last main idea that I want to talk about is something that comes more from the work that I did with my colleague Jeff Pfeiffer on the Knowing-Doing Gap. This sort of comes from the realization that we had that in innovation and whole bunch of other management practices that we kept running into situational where people would seem to know what to do to make the organizations more creative but it wouldn't actually happen. And they would act like talking about it was enough. They wouldn't actually have to do it. And the way that I got especially interested in this was, I guess about ten or 11 years ago, after they made me a full professor in Stanford and there was only so many things they could do to me, I started doing a little bit more consulting and I actually did my first consulting job with the top management team of the Fortune 100 companies. It was a big company and they were doing this amazing thing that was actually even worse than what the Stanford faculty do typically. Like, we don't have no real deliverables, we have ridiculous amount of job security, and we tend to make decisions and not implement them at times. But these folks, they kept making decisions, and not implementing them. And they were big decisions. One of these decisions was putting the name of the product on the product which seems like an important thing to do.

The other one more related to creativity is that their product development organization was organized into functional silos. So, things like industrial design, engineering, design for manufacture ability, marketing, things like that. And, say when these functional silos are huge teams of like 70 or 80 people in every project. The definition of being on a team was, he was sort of to return half of your emails. So the decision was made to move to more project- based, smaller, focused teams where people are there a hundred per cent of the time, devoted to it or at least 50%. They kept making those decisions over and over again and then they never actually implemented them. And I think it was no accident by the way, that not all members, but many members of the senior team of this organization were populated by people who used to be managements consultants. Because, with all due respect to companies like McKinsey and Bain and the like, sometimes those people make good managers, but for the most part, the way you make money in McKinsey and Bain is you don't implement stuff, you actually just help people to do it and hope that it gets done when you leave. And the clients, of course you can blame them for not implementing it. When you become a manager, you actually have to make sure that things get done.

Of course in the style if you don't do stuff, you're dead like immediately. So this becomes when you're running a huge company. So why does this thing happen? Why does thought substitute for action? Sort of the big reason, the headline is thought happens now, you can tell whether somebody is a smart talker. Whether they're any good at actually turning knowledge into action is whole another sort of thing and a different set of skill sets. And then, some organizations, especially

organizations by the way that move people around too much, make this problem worse by simply promoting the smart talkers as opposed to the people who actually make sure that things get done.