

Creativity and innovation need to talk more, study says

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Creativity and innovation are not sufficiently integrated in either the business world or academic research, according to a new study by Rice University, the University of Edinburgh and Brunel University.

The findings are the result of the authors' review of the rapidly growing body of research into [creativity](#) and [innovation](#) in the workplace, with particular attention to the period from 2002 to 2013.

"There are many of us who study employee creativity and many of us who study innovation and idea implementation, but we don't talk to each other; we're siloed," said Jing Zhou, the Houston Endowment Professor of Management at Rice's Jones Graduate School of Business. "The review's goal is to integrate both." Zhou co-authored the paper with Neil Anderson, a professor of [human resource management](#) at Brunel, and Kristina Potocnik, a lecturer in human resource management at Edinburgh. The paper will be published in the *Journal of Management's* annual review issue.

The authors said creativity and innovation are complex, multilevel phenomena that pan out over time and require skillful leadership to maximize the benefits of new ways of working. However, Zhou said, the vast majority of companies operating today are "not doing a good job in translating creative ideas so they have an impact on the firm's performance. Management needs to pay attention to capture employee creativity and implement the creative ideas."

Zhou said companies focus too specifically on current goals and don't take the risks creativity requires. She said two companies that have found a way to incentivize, encourage and institutionalize employee creativity are 3M and Google, which allow employees time to explore [creative ideas](#).

"We need to better train managers to see an idea and run with it," Zhang said. "If you wait for the idea to be ready to be implemented, it might be too late. Managers need to capture promising ideas and then translate them into products, processes and improved customer service."

The study proposes 60 specific research questions for future studies as well as 11 themes that warrant greater attention from researchers. They include the roles of customers, the Internet and social media, organizational culture and climate in creativity and innovation, and

leadership style in the creativity-innovation cycle.

The authors said addressing these questions and themes would generate a "quantum leap" forward in understanding the complex phenomena comprising workplace creativity and innovation. "Researchers active in this diverse field need to embrace these challenges," the authors concluded. "Without innovation, few organizations can hope to survive and prosper; we believe that precisely the same holds true for research into creativity and innovation research in the future."

This *Journal of Management* article comes on the heels of a 2013 article titled "Core Knowledge Employee Creativity and Firm Performance: The Moderating Role of Riskiness Orientation, Firm Size and Realized Absorptive Capacity" by Zhou and co-authors in the journal *Personnel Psychology*. That first-of-its-kind study found that employee creativity did not directly lead to company performance and that only when firms made an effort was creativity channeled into performance.

"Firms all say they want their employees to be creative," Zhou said. "The assumption is that once the employees demonstrate creativity, firms can translate it to firm-level performance. Our study proved otherwise." The study suggested managers need to cultivate, recognize and channel their employees' creativity into actual firm performance.

More information: "Innovation and Creativity in Organizations: A State-of-the-Science Review, Prospective Commentary and Guiding Framework," *Journal of Management*, 2014.

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