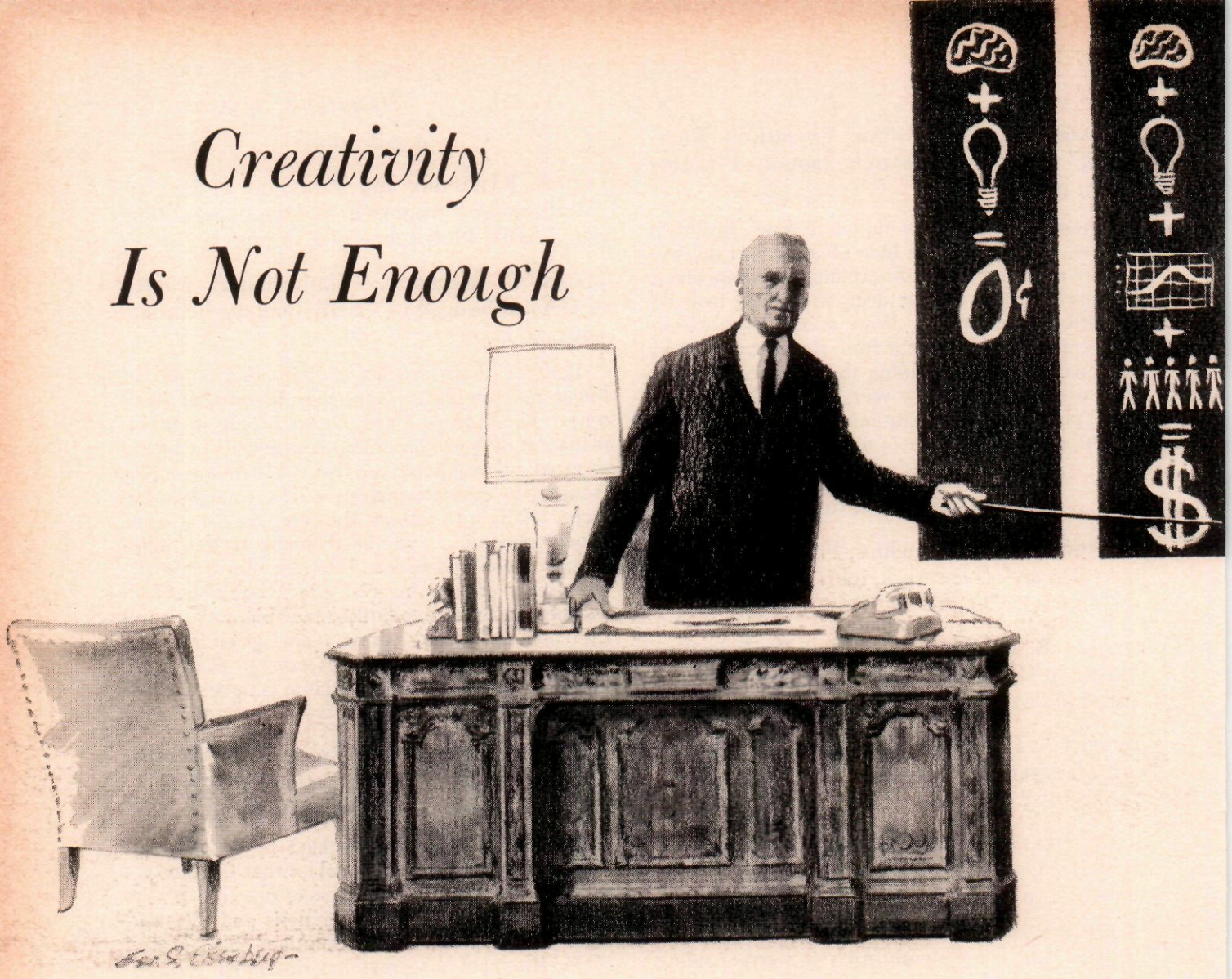
Creativity Is Not Enough



By Theodore Levitt

"Creativity" is not the miraculous road to business growth and affluence that is so abundantly claimed these days. And for the line manager, particularly, it may be more of a millstone than a milestone.

Those who extol the liberating virtues of corporate creativity over the somnambulistic vices of corporate conformity may actually be giving advice that in the end will reduce the creative animation of business. This is because they tend to:

. . . confuse the getting of ideas with their implementation, that is, confuse creativity in the abstract with practical innovation;

AUTHOR'S NOTE: I wish to acknowledge the helpful suggestions, substantive and otherwise, of Professor Raymond A. Bauer and to absolve him of all possible implication of either agreement or disagreement with the ideas or even the facts of this article.

. . . not understand the operating executive's day-to-day problems;

. . . underestimate the intricate complexity of business organizations.

The Great Illusion

The trouble with much of the advice business is getting today about the need to be more vigorously creative is, essentially, that its advocates have generally failed to distinguish between the relatively easy process of being creative in the abstract and the infinitely more difficult process of being innovationist in the concrete. Indeed, they misdefine "creativity" itself. Too often for them "creativity" means having great, original ideas. Their emphasis is almost all on the thoughts themselves. Moreover, the ideas are often judged more by their novelty than by their potential usefulness, either to consumers or to

the company. In this article I shall show that in most cases having a new idea can be "creative" in the abstract but destructive in actual operation, and that often instead of helping a company it will even hinder it.

Suppose you know two artists. One tells you an idea for a great painting, but he does not paint it. The other has the same idea, and paints it. You could easily say the second man is a great creative artist. But could you say the same thing of the first man? Obviously not. He is a talker, not a painter.

That is precisely the problem with so much of today's pithy praise of creativity in business — with the unending flow of speeches, books, articles, and "creativity workshops" whose purpose is to produce more imaginative and creative managers and companies. My observations of these activities over a number of years lead me firmly to this conclusion. They mistake an idea for a great painting with the great painting itself. They mistake brilliant talk for constructive action.

But, as anybody who knows anything about any organization knows only too well, it is hard enough to get things done at all, let alone to introduce a new way of doing things no matter how good it may seem. A powerful new idea can kick around unused in a company for years, not because its merits are not recognized but because nobody has assumed the responsibility for converting it from words into action. What is often lacking is not creativity in the idea-creating sense but innovation in the action-producing sense, i.e., putting ideas to work.

Ideas Not Enough

Why don't we get more innovation?

One of the most repetitious and, I am convinced, most erroneous answers we get to this question is that businessmen are not adequately creative and that they are enslaved by the incubus of conformity. It is alleged that everything in American business would be just dandy if industry were simply more creative, and if it would hire more creative people and give them the chance to show their fructifying stuff.

Understanding Innovation

But anybody who carefully looks around in any modern business organization and speaks freely and candidly with the people in it will, I believe, discover something very interesting: namely, there is really very little shortage of creativity and of creative people in American business. The major problem is that so-called creative people often (though certainly not always) pass off on *others* the responsibility for getting down to brass tacks. They have plenty of ideas but little businesslike follow-through. They do not make the right kind of effort to help their ideas get a hearing and a try.

All in all, ideation is relatively abundant. It is its implementation that is more scarce.

Many people who are full of ideas simply do not understand how an organization must operate to get things done, especially dramatically new things. All too often there is the peculiar underlying assumption that creativity automatically leads to actual innovation. In the crippled logic of this line of thinking, "ideation" (or "creativity," if you emphasize the idea-producing aspect of that term) and "innovation" are treated as synonyms. This kind of thinking is a particular disease of advocates of "brainstorming," who often treat their approach as some sort of ultimate business liberator.[1] "Ideation" and "innovation" are not synonyms. The former deals with the generation of ideas; the latter, with their implementation. It is the absence of a constant awareness of this distinction that is responsible for some of the corporate standpatism we see today. (Lest there be any confusion, it is not essential that innovation need be successfully implemented to qualify as innovation. The object of the innovation is success, but to require in advance that there be no doubt of its success would disable its chance of ever getting tried.)

The fact that you can put a dozen inexperienced people into a room and conduct a brainstorming session that produces exciting new ideas shows how little relative importance ideas themselves actually have. Almost anybody with the intelligence of the average businessman can produce them, given a halfway decent environment and stimulus. The scarce people are those who have the know-how, energy, daring, and staying power to implement ideas.

Whatever the goals of a business may be, it must make money. To do that it must get things done. But having ideas is seldom equivalent to getting things done in the business or organizational sense. Ideas do not implement them-

[1] See, for instance, Alex F. Osborn, *Applied Imagination: Principles and Procedures of Creative Thinking* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953).

selves — neither in business nor in art, science, philosophy, politics, love, war. People implement ideas.

A Form of Irresponsibility

Since business is a uniquely "get-things-done" institution, creativity without action-oriented follow-through is a uniquely barren form of individual behavior. Actually, in a sense, it is even irresponsible. This is because: (1) the creative man who tosses out ideas and does nothing to help them get implemented is shirking any responsibility for one of the prime requisites of the business, namely, action; and (2) by avoiding follow-through he is behaving in an organizationally intolerable — or, at best, sloppy — fashion.

The trouble with much creativity today, in my observation, is that many of the people with the ideas have the peculiar notion that their jobs are finished when they suggest them; that it is up to somebody else to work out the dirty details and then implement the proposals. Typically, the more creative the man, the less responsibility he takes for action. The reason is that the generation of ideas and concepts is often his sole talent, his stock-in-trade. He seldom has the energy or staying power, or indeed the interest, to work with the grubby details that require attention before his ideas can be implemented.

Anybody can verify this for himself. You need only to look around in your own company and pick out the two or three most original idea men in the vicinity. How many of their ideas can you say they have ever vigorously and systematically followed through with detailed plans and proposals for their implementation, even with only some modest ball park suggestions of the risks, the costs, the manpower requisites, the time budgets, and the possible payout.

The usual situation is that idea men constantly pepper everybody with proposals and memoranda that are just brief enough to get attention, to intrigue, and to sustain interest — but too short to include any responsible suggestions regarding how the whole thing is to be implemented and what's at stake. In some instances it must actually be inferred that they use novel ideas for their disruptive or their self-promotional values. More specifically:

> One student of management succession questions whether ideas are always put forth seriously. He suggests that often they may simply be a tactical device to attract attention in order to come first to mind when promotions are made. Hence ideas are a form of "public relations" within the organization.[2]

It should be pointed out, however, that something favorable can be said about the relationship of irresponsibility to ideation. The generally effective executive often exhibits what might be called controlled momentary irresponsibility. He recognizes that this attitude is virtually necessary for the free play of imagination. But what distinguishes him is his ability to alternate

[2] See Bernard Levenson, "Bureaucratic Succession," in *Complex Organizations: A Sociological Reader,* edited by Amitai Etzioni (New York, Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1961), pp. 362–375.

appropriately between attitudes of irresponsibility and responsibility. He doesn't hold to the former for long — only long enough to make himself more productive.

Psychology of "Idea Men"

The fact that a consistently highly creative person is generally irresponsible in the way I have used this term is in part predictable from what is known about the freewheeling fantasies of very young children:

> They are extremely creative, as any kindergarten teacher will testify. They have a naive curiosity which stumps parents with questions like: "Why can you see through glass?", "Why is there a hole in a doughnut?", "Why is the grass green?" It is this kind of questioning attitude that produces in them so much creative freshness. Yet the unique posture of their lives is their almost total irresponsibility from blame, work, and the other routine necessities of organized society. Even the law absolves them from responsibility for their actions. But all sources testify to their creativity, even Biblical mythology with its assertion about wisdom issuing from "the mouths of babes." More respectable scientific sources have paralleled the integrative mechanism of adult creativity with the childhood thought process that "manifests itself during the preschool period — possibly as early as the appearance of three-word sentences. . . ." [3]

Clinical psychologists have also illustrated what I call the irresponsibility of creative indi-

[3] See Stanley Stark, "Mills, Mannheim, and the Psychology of Knowledge," mimeographed (Urbana, University of Illinois, 1960), p. 15.

viduals in Rorschach and stroboscopic tests. For example:

One analyst says, "Those who took to the Rorschach like ducks to water, who fantasied and projected freely, even too freely in some cases, or who could permit themselves to tamper with the form of the blot as given, gave us our broadest ranges of movement." [4] In short, they were the least "form-bound," the least inhibited by the facts of their experience, and hence let their minds explore new, untried, and novel alternatives to existing ways of doing things.

The significance of this finding for the analysis of organizations is pointed up by the observation of another psychologist that "the theoreticians on the other hand do not mind living dangerously." [5] The reason is obvious. A theoretician is not immediately responsible for action. He is perfectly content to "live dangerously" because he does so only on the conceptual level, where he cannot get hurt. To assume any responsibility for implementation is to risk dangerous actions, and that can be painfully uncomfortable. The safe solution is to steer clear of implementation and all the dirty work it implies.

The Advice Business

It is to be expected, therefore, that today's most ardent advocates of creativity in business tend to be professional writers, consultants, professors, and often advertising agency executives. Not surprisingly, few of these people have any continuing day-to-day responsibility for the difficult task of implementing powerful new business ideas of a complex nature in the ordinary type of business organization. Few of them have ever had any responsibility for doing work in the conventional kind of complex operating organization. They are not really practicing businessmen in the usual sense. They are literary businessmen. They are the doctors who say, "Do as I say, not as I do," reminiscent of the classic injunction of the boxer's manager, "Get in there and fight. They can't hurt us."

The fact that these people are also so often outspoken about the alleged virulence of conformity in modern business is not surprising. They can talk this way because they themselves have seldom had the nerve to expose themselves for any substantial length of time to the rigorous discipline of an organization whose principal task is not talk but action, not ideas but work.

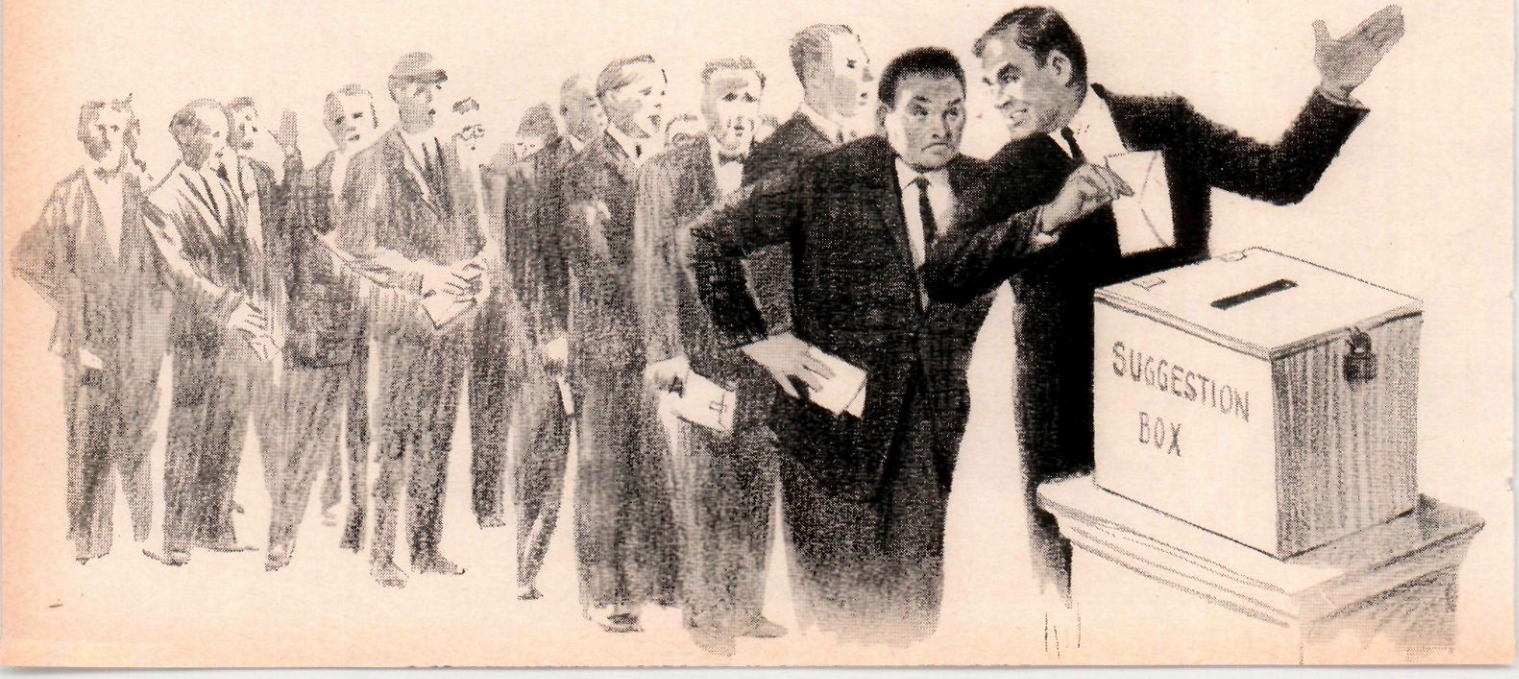
Impressive sermons are delivered gravely proclaiming the virtues of creativity and the vices of conformity. But so often the authors of these sermons, too, are "outsiders" to the central sector of the business community. Thus, the best-known asserters that American industry is some sort of vast quagmire of quivering conformity — the men who have turned the claim into a tiresome cliché — are people like William H. Whyte, Jr., author of *The Organization Man*,[6] who is a professional writer, Sloan Wilson, author of *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*,[7] who was a college English professor when he wrote

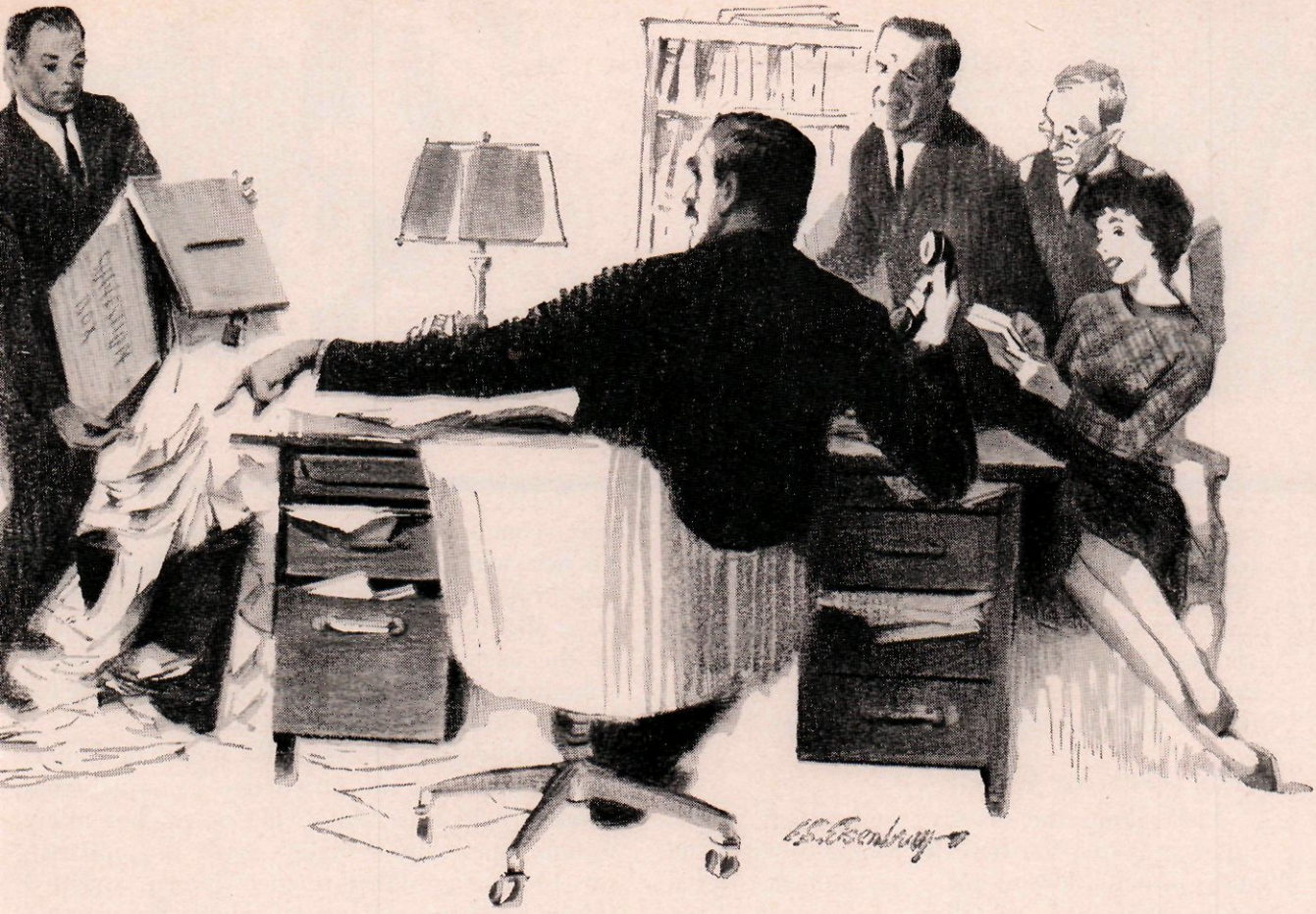
[4] G. S. Klein, "The Personal World Through Perception," in *Perception: An Approach to Personality*, edited by R. R. Blake and G. V. Ramsey (New York, The Ronald Press, 1951), p. 343. For further research evidence and commentary on "the creative personality," see Morris I. Stein and Shirley J. Heinze, *Creativity and the Individual* (Glencoe, Illinois, The Free Press, 1960).

[5] Herbert Feigl, "Philosophical Embarrassments of Psychology," *American Psychologist*, March 1959, p. 126.

[6] New York, Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1956.

[7] New York, Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1955.





the book, and C. Northcote Parkinson (more on him later), also a professor.

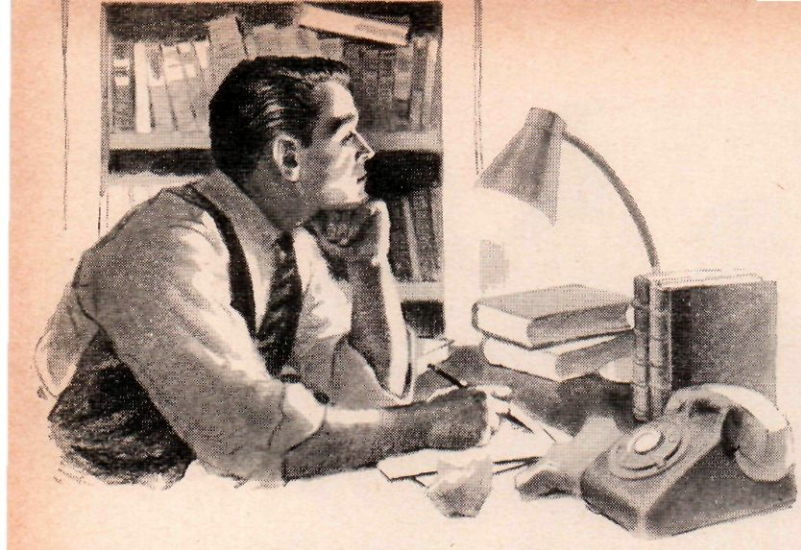
Actually, it is not totally fair to condemn this gratuitous crusade of consultants, writers, professors, and the like. American business appears generally to benefit from their existence. Harm is done, however, when the executive fails to consider that the very role of these men absolves them from managerial responsibility. It is hard to accept uncritically the doleful prophesy that so many U.S. companies are hypnotically following each other in a deadly conformist march into economic oblivion. It is hard to accept the tantalizing suggestion that their salvation lies so easily in creativity and that from this will automatically flow profit-building innovation. Perhaps the source of these suggestions should be kept in mind.

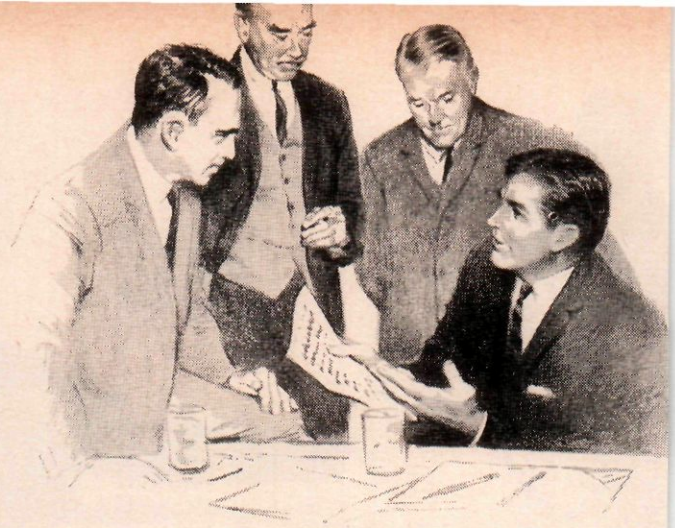
The Chronic Complainers

As I have said, ideation is not a synonym of innovation, conformity is not its simple antonym, and innovation is not the automatic consequence of "creative thinking." Indeed, what some people call conformity in business is less related to the lack of abstract creativity than to the lack of responsible action, whether it be the implementation of new or old ideas.

The proof of this is that in most business organizations the most continually creative men in the echelons below the executive level — men who are actively discontent with the here-and-now and are full of suggestions about what to do about it — are also generally known as corporate malcontents. They tend to be complaining constantly about the standpat senility of the management, about its refusal to see the obvious facts of its own massive inertia. They complain about management refusing to do the things that have been suggested to it for years. They often complain that management does not even want creative ideas, that ideas rock the boat (which they do), and that management is interested more in having a smoothly running (or is it smoothly ruining?) organization than in a rapidly forward-vaulting business.

In short, they talk about the company being a festering sore of deadly conformity, full of decaying vegetables who systematically oppose new ideas with old ideologies. And then, of course, they frequently quote their patron saint, William H. Whyte, Jr., with all his misinformed





moralizing and his conjectural evidence about what goes on inside an operating organization. (Whyte's fanciful notions of such operations have recently been demolished by the careful studies of the veteran student of social organization, W. Lloyd Warner, in his *The Corporation in the Emergent American Society*.[8])

Why Doors Are Closed

The reason the creative malcontent speaks this way is that so often the people to whom he addresses his flow of ideas do, indeed, after a while, ignore him and tell him to go away. They shut their doors to his endless entreaties; they refuse to hear his ideas any longer. Why? There is a plausible explanation.

The reason the executive so often rejects new ideas is that he is a busy man whose chief day-in, day-out task is to handle an ongoing stream of problems. He receives an unending flow of questions on which decisions must be made. Constantly he is forced to deal with problems to which solutions are more or less urgent and the answers to which are far from clear-cut. It may seem splendid to a subordinate to supply his boss with a lot of brilliant new ideas to help him in his job. But advocates of creativity must once and for all understand the pressing facts of the executive's life: every time an idea is submitted to him, it creates more problems for him — and he already has enough.

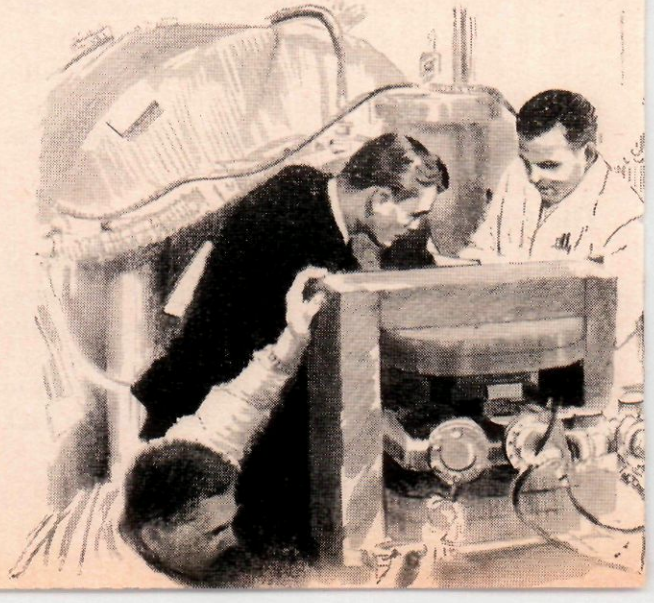
My colleague, Professor Raymond A. Bauer, has pointed out an instructive example from another field of activity. He notes that many Congressmen and Senators have the opportunity to have a political science "intern" assigned to "help" them. However, some Congressmen and Senators refuse this "help" on the grounds that these interns generate so many ideas that they disrupt the legislator's regular business.

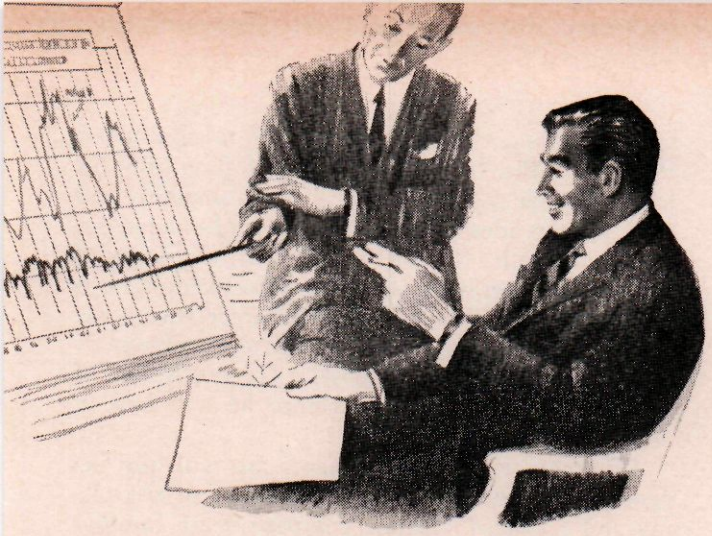
Making Ideas Useful

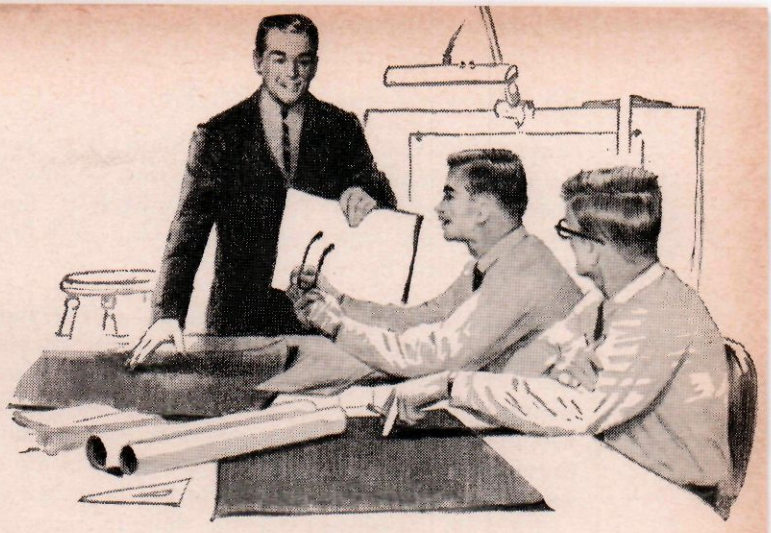
Yet innovation is necessary in business — and innovation begins with somebody's proposal. What is the answer for the man with a new idea? I have two thoughts to offer:

1. *He must work with the situation as it is.* Since the executive is already constantly bombard-

[8] New York, Harper & Brothers, 1962; see pp. 47–64.







ed with problems, there is little wonder that after a while he does not want any more new ideas. The "idea man" must learn to accept this as a fact of life and act accordingly.

2. *When he suggests an idea, the responsible procedure is to include at least some minimal indication of what it involves in terms of costs, risks, manpower, time, and perhaps even specific people who ought to carry it through.* That *is* responsible behavior, because it makes it easier for the executive to evaluate the idea and because it raises fewer problems. That *is* the way creative thinking will more likely be converted into innovation.

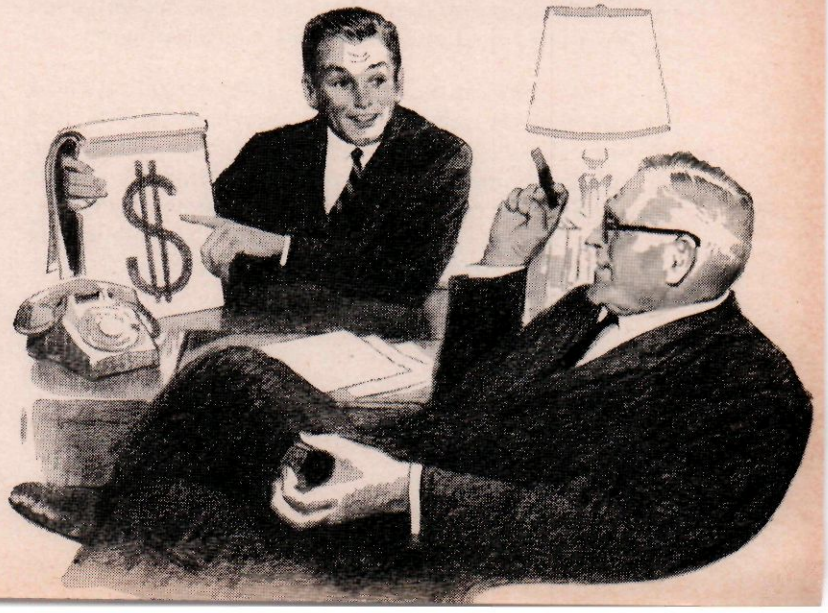
It will be argued, of course, that to saddle the creative individual with the responsibility of spelling out the details of implementation would curb or even throttle his unique talent. This is probably true. But this could be salutary, both for him and for the company. Ideas are useless unless used. The proof of their value is their implementation. Until then they are in limbo. If the executive's job pressures mean that an idea seldom gets a good hearing unless it is responsibly presented, then the unthrottled and irresponsible creative man is useless to the company. If an insistence on some responsibility for implementation throttles him, he may produce fewer ideas, but their chances of a judicious hearing and therefore of being followed through are greatly improved. The company will benefit by trying the ideas, and the creative man will benefit by getting the satisfaction of knowing he is being listened to. He will not have to be a malcontent any more.

Deciding Factors

This is not to suggest that every idea needs a thoroughly documented study before it is mentioned to anyone. Far from it. What is needed will vary from case to case depending on four factors:

(1) *The position or rank of the idea originator in the organization* — How "responsible" a man needs to act for an idea to get a hearing clearly depends on his rank.

The powerful chief executive officer can simply instruct subordinates to take and develop one of his ideas. That is enough to give it a hearing and perhaps even implementation. To that extent talk *is* virtually action. Similarly, a department head



can do the same thing in his domain. But when the ideas flow in the opposite direction — upward instead of downward — they are unlikely to "flow" unless they are supported by the kind of follow-through I have been urging.

(2) *The complexity of the idea* — The more complex and involved the implications of an idea, and the more change and rearrangement it may require within the organization or in its present way of doing things, then obviously the greater is the need to cover the required ground in some responsible fashion when the proposal is presented.

But I do not suggest that the "how to" questions need be covered as thoroughly and carefully as would be required by, say, a large corporation's executive committee when it finally decides whether to implement or drop the suggestion. Such a requirement would be so rigid that it might dry up all ideas because their originators simply would not have the time, competence, or staff help to go to that much effort.

(3) *The nature of the industry* — How much supporting detail a subordinate should submit along with his idea often depends on the industry involved and the intent of the idea.

One reason there is such a high premium put on "creativity" in advertising is because the first requisite of an ad is to get attention. Hence "creativity" frequently revolves around the matter of trying to achieve visual or auditory impact such that the ad stands out above the constantly expanding stream of advertising noise to which the badgered consumer is subjected. To this extent, in the advertising industry being "creative" is quite a different thing, by and large, from what it is, say, in the steel industry. Putting an eye patch on the man in the Hathaway shirt is "no sooner said than done." The idea is virtually synonymous with its implementation. But in the steel industry an idea, say, to change the discount structure to encourage users of cold, rolled sheet steel to place bigger but fewer orders is so full of possible complications and problems that talk is far from being action or even a program for action. To get even a sympathetic first hearing, such an idea needs to be accompanied by a good deal of factual and logical support.

(4) *The attitude and job of the person to whom the idea is submitted* — Everybody knows that some bosses are more receptive to new ideas than others. Some are more receptive to extreme novelty than others. The extent of their known receptiveness will in part determine the elaborateness of support a suggested new idea requires at its original stage.

But, equally important, it is essential to recognize that the greater the pressures of day-to-day operating responsibilities on the executive, the more resistance he is likely to have to new ideas. If the operating burden happens to fall on him, his job is to make the present setup work smoothly and well. A new idea requires change, and change upsets the smooth (or perhaps faltering) regularity of the present operation on whose effectiveness he is being judged and on which his career future depends. He has very good reason to be extremely careful about a new proposal. He needs lots of good risk-reducing reasons before he will look at one very carefully.

What his actual requirements are will also depend on the attitudes of his superiors to risk-taking and mistakes. In one company I am familiar with, the two most senior officers have a unique quality of enormous receptivity to novelty — sometimes the wilder the proposal, the better. The result is that new ideas, no matter how vaguely stated or extreme, get quick and sympathetic hearings throughout all levels of the company. But this is a rare organization:

¶ The chairman is now about 40 years old. He became president when he was 28, having been selected by his predecessor as the heir apparent when he was about 24. He vaulted quickly from one top job to another, never really having to spend very much time "making good" in the conventional sense in a difficult day-to-day operating job at a low level. Virtually his entire career was one of high-level responsibility where his ideas could be passed down to a corps of subordinates for detailed examination and evaluation. These experiences taught him the value of wild ideation without his having to risk his rise to the top by seeming to suggest irresponsible projects.

¶ The present president of this same company came in as a vice president, also at 28, and directly from an advertising agency. His career experiences were similar to the chairman's.

It is easy for both of these men to be permissive, in part because they have never really had to risk their climb up the hierarchical ladder by seeming to shoot wild. They always had teams of subordinates to check their ideas and willing superiors to listen to them. Anybody who has not had this history or conditioning will find it extremely hard to change once he gets very far up the corporate pecking order.

In short, a permissive, open, risk-taking environment cannot be created simply by the good intentions of the top management. The reason is either that high-level executives who have got to their top posts by a lifetime of judicious executive behavior are incapable of changing their habits or that, if their habits are changed, their subordinates will not believe they really mean it. And in lots of

small ways they will see the justification of their disbeliefs.

Need for Discipline

Writers on the subject of creativity and innovation invariably emphasize the essential primacy of the creative impulse itself. Almost as an afterthought they talk about the necessity of teaching people to sell their ideas and of stimulating executives to listen to the ideas of subordinates and peers. Then they often go on casually to make some "do-gooder" statement about the importance of creating a permissive organizational climate for creative people. They rarely try to look at the executive's job and suggest how the creative genius might alter his behavior to suit the boss's requirements. It is always the boss who is being told to mend his ways. The reason for their one-sided siding with the creative man is that they are often hostile, just as he is, to the idea of "the organization" itself. They actively dislike organizations, but they seldom know exactly why.

I think I know the reason. It is that organization and creativity do not seem to go together, while organization and conformity do. Advocacy of a "permissive environment" for creativity in an organization is often a veiled attack on the idea of the organization itself. This quickly becomes clear when one recognizes this inescapable fact: one of the collateral purposes of an organization *is* to be inhospitable to a great and constant flow of ideas and creativity.

Whether we are talking about the United States Steel Corporation or the United Steel Workers of America, the U.S. Army or the Salvation Army, the United States or the U.S.S.R., the purpose of organization is to achieve the kind and degree of order and conformity necessary to do a particular job. The organization exists to restrict and channel the range of individual actions and behavior into a predictable and knowable routine. Without organization there would be chaos and decay. Organization exists in order to create that amount and kind of inflexibility that are necessary to get the most pressingly intended job done efficiently and on time.

Creativity and innovation disturb that order. Hence, organization tends to be inhospitable to creativity and innovation, though without creativity and innovation it would eventually perish. That is why small, one-man shops are so often more animated and "innovationary" than large ones. They have virtually no organization (precisely because they are one-man shops) and often are run by self-willed autocrats who act on impulse.

Organizations are created to achieve order. They have policies, procedures, and formal or powerfully informal (unspoken) rules. The job for which the organization exists could not possibly get done without these rules, procedures, and policies. And these produce the so-called conformity that is so blithely deprecated by the critics of the organization and life inside it.

Parkinson's Flaw

It is not surprising that C. Northcote Parkinson and his *Parkinson's Laws* enjoy such an admiring following among teachers, writers, consultants, and professional social critics. Most of these people have carefully chosen as their own professions work that keeps them as far as modern society lets anyone get from the rigorous taskmaster of the organization. Most of them more or less lead a sort of one-man, self-employed existence in which there are few make-or-break post-mortems of their activities. They live pretty much in autonomous isolation. Many of them, I suspect, have avoided life in the organization because they are incapable of submitting to its rigid discipline. Parkinson has provided them a way in which they can laugh at the majority, who *do* submit to the organization, and feel superior rather than oppressed, as minorities usually do.

It is also not surprising (indeed it is quite expected) that Parkinson himself should be anything but an organization man — that he is a teacher of history, a painter, and, of all things, a historian on warfare in the Eastern Seas. This is about as far as you can get from the modern landbound organization. Parkinson's writings have in recent years brought him into such continuing contact with business that he has now decided to go into business himself. In doing so he has proved the truth of all that I have been saying; the business he has decided to enter is, of course, the consulting business!

Parkinson is very entertaining. The executive who cannot laugh along with him probably is too paranoid to be trusted with a responsible job. But most of today's blithe cartoonists of the organization would be impoverished for material were they not blessed with an enormous ignorance of the facts of organizational life. Let

me put it as emphatically as I can. A company cannot function as an anarchy. It must be organized, it must be routinized, it must be planned in some way in the various stages of its operation. That is why we have so many organizations of so many different kinds. And to the extent that operations planning is needed, we get rigidity, order, and therefore some amount of conformity. No organization can have everybody running off uncoordinated in several different directions at once. There must be rules and standards.

Where there are enough rules, there will be damn fool rules. These can be mercilessly cartooned. But some rules which to an expert on ancient naval history look foolish are far from foolish if he bothers to become an expert in the problems of the business, or the government, or whatever group the particular organization is designed to deal with.

Conclusion

All this raises a seemingly frightening question. If conformity and rigidity are necessary requisites of organization, and if these in turn help stifle creativity, and furthermore if the creative man might indeed be stifled if he is required to spell out the details needed to convert his ideas into effective innovations, does all this mean that modern organizations have evolved into such involuted monsters that they must suffer the fearful fate of the dinosaur — too big and unwieldy to survive?

The answer to this is *no.* First, it is questionable whether the creative impulse would automatically dry up if the idea man is required to take some responsibility for follow-through. The people who so resolutely proclaim their own creative energy will scarcely assert that they need a hothouse for its flowering. Secondly, the large organization has some important attributes that actually facilitate innovation. Its capacity to distribute risk over its broad economic base and among the many individuals involved in implementing newness are significant. They make it both economically and, for the individuals involved, personally easier to break untried ground.

What often misleads people is that making big operating or policy changes requires also making big organizational changes. Yet it is precisely one of the great virtues of a big organization that, in the short run at least, its momentum is irreversible and its organizational structure is, for all practical purposes, nearly impenetrable. A vast machinery exists to get a certain job done. That job must continue to get the toughest kind of serious attention, no matter how exotically revolutionary a big operating or policy change may be. The boat can and may have to be rocked, but one virtue of a big boat is that it takes an awful lot to rock it. Certain people or departments in the boat may feel the rocking more than others, and to that extent strive to avoid the incidents that produce it. But the built-in stabilizers of bigness and of group decision making can be used as powerful influences in *encouraging* people to risk these incidents.

Adding Flexibility

Finally, the large organization has an organizational alternative to the alleged "conservatizing" consequences of bigness. There is some evidence that the relatively rigid organization can build into its own structure certain flexibilities which would provide an organizational home for the creative but irresponsible individual. What may be required, especially in the large organization, is not so much a suggestion-box system as a specialized group whose function is to receive ideas, work them out, and follow them through in the necessary manner. This would be done after the group has evaluated each idea and, preferably, spoken at length with its originator. Then when the idea and the required follow-through are passed on to the appropriate executive, he will be more willing to listen. To illustrate:

- An organizational setup that approximates this structure has been established in the headquarters Marketing Department of the Mobil Oil Company.[9]

- A similar approach exists at the Schering Corporation under the name "Management R & D." Its purpose is to nurture and develop new ideas and methods of decision making.[10]

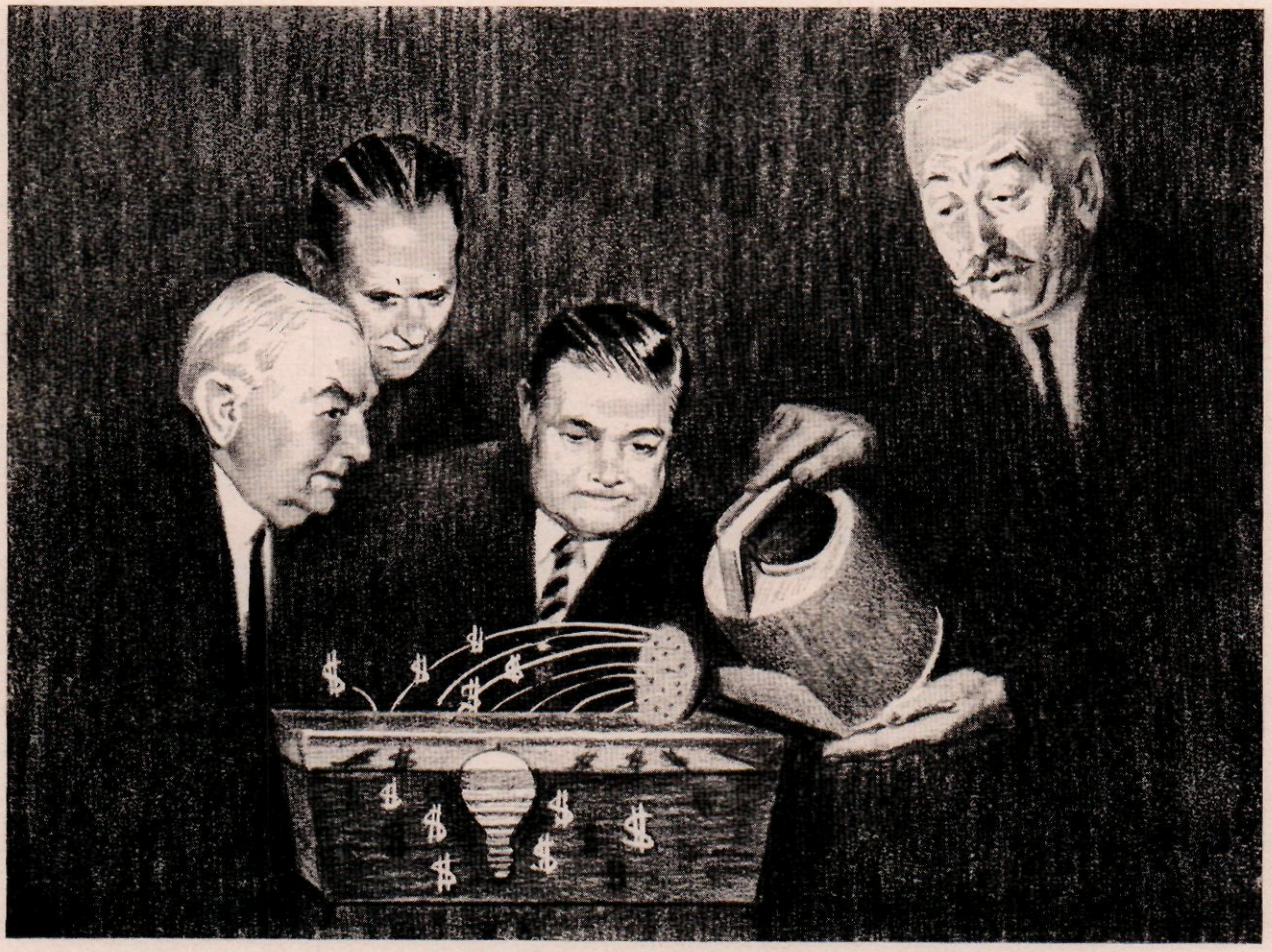
- Another suggestion which takes less solidly tangible organizational form in practice has been made by Murray D. Lincoln, president of Nationwide Insurance Co. He makes a plea for the notion of a company having a *Vice President in Charge of Revolution.*[11]

[9] For a detailed discussion of how such a setup might operate and be organized, see my *Innovation in Marketing* (New York, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1962), p. 159.

[10] See Victor M. Longstreet, "Management R & D," HBR July–August 1961, p. 125.

[11] New York, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1960.

Beyond these, the problems and needs of companies differ. To this extent they may have to find their own special ways of dealing with the issues discussed in this article. The important point is to be conscious of the possible need or value of some system of making creativity yield more innovation.

Some companies have greater need for such measures than others have. And, as pointed out earlier, the need hinges in part on the nature of the industry. Certainly it is easier to convert creativity into innovation in the advertising business than it is in an operating company with elaborate production processes, long channels of distribution, and a complex administrative setup.

For those critics of and advisers to U.S. industry who repeatedly call for more creativity in business, it is well to try first to understand the profound distinction between creativity and innovation, and then perhaps to spend a little more time calling on creative individuals to take added responsibility for implementation. The fructifying potentials of creativity vary enormously with the particular industry, with the climate in the organization, with the organizational level of the idea man, and with the kinds of day-in, day-out problems, pressures, and responsibilities of the man to whom he addresses his ideas. Without clearly appreciating these facts, those who declare that a company will somehow grow and prosper merely by having more creative people make a fetish of their own illusions.