

LEVEL OF AUTONOMY More than 70 percent of the research and development (R&D) scientists who participated in a study of creativity indicated that autonomy was an important factor in instances of creativity that they were involved in or observed in their organizations.⁸¹ Autonomy is the freedom and independence to make decisions and have personal control over one's work on a day-to-day basis. A high degree of autonomy is good for creativity. And when autonomy is low, creativity is unlikely.

FORM OF EVALUATION Imagine how William Shakespeare would have felt when he was writing some of his masterpieces if a supervisor had been standing over his shoulder critiquing scenes or bits of dialog that didn't sound quite right ("A hero who believes in ghosts, talks to himself a lot, and kills his girlfriend's father? I don't think so, Will") and criticizing him when he took too long to complete a play. In all likelihood, these kinds of actions would have hampered some of Shakespeare's creativity.

Creative people and employees like to know how they are doing and to receive feedback and encouragement. But overly evaluative feedback and criticism can hamper creativity because it can make employees afraid to take risks.⁸² If there is a strong likelihood that your boss will criticize the far-out idea you come up with, you may not risk expressing it. However, if your boss is interested in your ideas, provides constructive comments about how they may be improved, and points out some of their pros and cons, you may be encouraged to come up with an even better idea.

REWARD SYSTEM People who come up with creative ideas like to be rewarded for them. But what happens if employees think that their salaries, bonuses, and chances for promotion hinge on their almost always being right, rarely or never making mistakes, and always being efficient in their use of time? Their creativity may be hampered, and they may be unlikely to take risks to come up with and choose creative responses to problems and opportunities.⁸³ By definition, creative responses are new, and there is always the potential that they may fail.

To help promote creativity, an organization's reward system should recognize and reward hard work and creativity. Creative employees and others in the organization need to see that hard work and creativity are recognized, appreciated, and rewarded—for example, through bonuses and raises. It is important, however, that these rewards not be seen as an attempt to control behavior and that employees do not feel they are closely watched and rewarded based on what is observed.⁸⁴ It also is important that employees are *not* punished when some of their creative ideas do not pan out. Indeed, if employers want creativity, they need to encourage organizational members to take reasonable risks and be willing to accept failure.

By now it should be clear to you that OB Mod should *not* be used for behaviors that involve creativity or when creativity is desired. OB Mod assumes that desired behaviors can be objectively determined in advance; this is impossible for any kind of creative activity, which, by definition, is novel or new. Moreover, the relatively rigid matching of behavior and consequences in OB Mod ensures that any out-of-the-ordinary behavior (which could be creative) is discouraged. More generally, principles of operant conditioning, which are useful for learning desired behaviors that can be determined in advance, should not be used for creative kinds of work and tasks. However, even when creativity is desired, principles from operant conditioning can be used to promote the learning of certain kinds of behavior, such as using safety equipment, which can be objectively specified in advance. For example, suppose a welder is trying to come up with a way to join thin steel cylinders so that the place where they are joined together is invisible to the naked eye. In order to come up with the new procedure or process, the welder should have autonomy to experiment, and consequences such as rewards should not be directly linked to his or her current behaviors or else his or her creativity will be hampered. However, a priori, her supervisor knows that she must wear safety goggles and follow certain safety procedures—for these kinds of behaviors, operant conditioning can be beneficial.

IMPORTANCE OF A TASK Being creative is intrinsically rewarding, but it also can be hard work. Creativity is enhanced when members of an organization feel that what they are working on is important.⁸⁵

The Interaction of Personality and Situational Factors

Recall from Chapter 2 how behavior is often the result of the interaction of personality and the situation. Recent research suggests that this is the case for creativity. For example, one study found that whether or not openness to experience was related to creativity in jobs that do not necessarily entail creative work depended on the extent to which the employees' tasks provided them with the opportunity to be creative, or entailed some degree of flexibility and uncertainty, and the extent that