

Creative Climate

Internal Conditions for Creative Behavior & Performance

What are the dimensions of a creative climate?

Swedish researcher Göran Ekvall identified 10 climate dimensions (nine positively correlated, and one negatively correlated) that affect creativity in organizations. His conception has been validated by repeated studies in the United States and internationally.

Dimension	Description	Your Rating
Challenge	<i>The degree to which members of the organization are involved in its daily operations and long term goals.</i> In a high challenge climate, people are intrinsically motivated to make contributions, and find joy and meaningfulness in their work and invest much energy.	
Dynamism and Liveliness	<i>The eventfulness of the life of the organization.</i> A highly dynamic situation is when new things occur often and alternations between ways of thinking about and handling issues often occur. The atmosphere is lively and full of positive energy, "full speed," "go."	
Playfulness and Humor	<i>The spontaneity and ease that is displayed.</i> A relaxed atmosphere with jokes and laughter characterize the organization which is high in the dimension.	
Freedom	<i>The independence of behavior exerted by the people in an organization.</i> In a climate with much freedom, people are given autonomy to define much of their own work. People are able to exercise discretion in their day-to-day activities, and people take the initiative to acquire and share information.	
Risk Taking	<i>The tolerance of uncertainty and ambiguity exposed in the workplace.</i> In the high risk-taking climate, bold new initiatives can be taken even when the outcomes are unknown. People feel as though they can "take a gamble" on some of their ideas. People will often "go out on a limb" to put ideas forward.	
Idea Time	<i>The amount of time people can use (and do use) for elaborating new ideas.</i> In the high idea-time situation, the possibilities exist to discuss and test impulses and fresh suggestions that are not planned or included in the task.	
Idea Support	<i>The way new ideas are treated.</i> In the supportive climate, ideas and suggestions are received in an attentive and kind way by bosses and workmates. People listen to each other and encourage initiatives. Possibilities for trying out new ideas are created. The atmosphere is constructive and positive.	
Trust and Openness	<i>The emotional safety in relationships.</i> When there is a strong level of trust, everyone in the organization dares to put forward ideas and opinions. Initiatives can be taken without fear of reprisals and ridicule in case of failure. The communication is open and straightforward.	
Debate	<i>Encounters, exchanges, or clashes among viewpoints, ideas, and differing experiences and knowledge.</i> In debating organizations, many voices are heard and people are keen about putting their ideas forward. Where debates are missing, people follow authoritarian patterns without questioning. Debate focuses on issues and ideas.	
Conflict (negatively correlated)	<i>The presence of personal, interpersonal, or emotional tensions (in contrast to idea tensions in the debate dimension) in the organization.</i> When a level of conflict is high, groups and individuals dislike or hate each other and the climate can be characterized as "warfare." Plots and traps are common, gossip and back-stabbing occur.	

Source: Ekvall, G. (1996). Organizational climate for creativity and innovation. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 5 (1), 105-123.

Questions to ask about your climate

- How important is creative behavior and performance in our organization?
- How does my team rate on the ten facets? (Use the right-hand column, above)
- What happens in our environment now that is helpful and supportive to our creativity?
- What happens in our environment now that is hindering our creativity?
- How might we improve the climate for creativity?