Title: "Turn your workplace into a creative space"
An HBR Channel Management Tip
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Review draft

Video caption: Thomas Wedell-Wedellsborg, co-author of the HBR Press book *Innovation as Usual*, explains how managers can use the physical work environment to foster innovation.

TWW NOTE: In choosing the advice, I have aimed to complement the ideas you give in the ManageMentor text on the topic (instead of just restating them). I have also tried to write it so it works as a stand-alone text (e.g. for use on the regular HBR channel).

-- TEXT FOLLOWS --

In the early days of the study of behavior, the psychologist Kurt Lewin coined what's been called the most famous equation in the social sciences: **Behavior = Personality x Environment.** In other words: the way people act depends both on who they are and where they are. Yet when managers try to foster innovation in their employees, they often focus only on the personality side of the equation – trying to change how people think – and forget about the influence of the workplace.

That can be a mistake. As an academic, I've spent the last seven years studying innovative leaders, and in the research Paddy Miller and I did for our book "Innovation as Usual", we found that using the environment as a tool can make a tremendous difference in stimulating innovation. Here are some tips for how you can turn your office into a creative space.

GFX: BUILD 'INTERSECTIONS' INTO THE WORKPLACE
Original ideas come when people are regularly exposed to new input. As a leader, your job is to create what innovation author Frans Johansson calls 'intersections', that is, informal gathering places where people can regularly access new ideas. Working in a cubicle or private office can be stifling; intersections promote sharing and the exploration of new ways of thinking. When Steve Jobs designed Pixar's office, he deliberately placed the restrooms in a central location. But even minimal tweaks can achieve the same effect. By using water coolers, coffee machines, or strategically placed sofa groups, you can create 'watering holes' where people can interact with colleagues from other departments.

GFX: START SMALL: EXPERIMENT, TEST AND ITERATE
While building intersections into the workplace is critical, It may take several tries to figure out what works best for you. So instead of making big, permanent changes, start with something small that's easy to tweak — like a new coffee machine. It can also help to position the changes as experiments – the word makes people try things they otherwise wouldn't, and makes it clear that it's a work in progress.

GFX: DON'T CONFUSE CREATIVE SYMBOLS WITH CREATIVE BEHAVIORS
I sometimes see companies that put up things that *look* very creative – football tables, artwork, multicolored Post-It notes – but they're really just empty symbols that do little to change people's behaviors. There's no point in having a 'creative' meeting room if people use it just like they use any other meeting room. If you introduce something new to the office, think about how it can be part of creating new habits and routines.

GFX: INVOLVE YOUR TEAM IN MAKING THE CHANGES
Be careful about top-down decisions. If you're looking to change your workplace, consider involving your employees in the decision-making process, explaining what you're trying to do and why. Then ask for their help in figuring out how to get it done. When a 60-person subsidiary we followed moved into a new building, the management team allowed their employees to decide everything about how the new office

should work. As a result, the company saw a huge increase in employee satisfaction, innovative ideas, and profitability, and was eventually rated as the best place to work in the country.

Promoting innovation requires more than just nurturing individual personalities. It requires a sharp focus on your company's physical environment. Change that, and you're likely to find your workplace a more creative and productive space.