



2009 Creativity Survey



**A special report from InnovationTools.com
July, 2009**

Executive summary

The current global recession has had a significant impact on the need for people to be creative in their jobs, according to the results of a recent survey conducted by InnovationTools.com. Nearly one in five respondents (20.9%) indicated that it is "critically important" that they be more creative, while another 31.7% said that it is "much more important" to be creative during the current economic climate.

This suggests that being more creative in your current job position can help to improve your value to your organization, thereby helping to reduce the odds that you will be laid off or outplaced during the recession. In addition, having a well-developed set of creative problem solving skills is critical to addressing the often unpredictable challenges that companies face in today's unstable global markets.

Another significant finding of the survey has to do with compensating creative people: While respondents said that their employers value their creativity, they didn't feel adequately compensated for it. This may have something to do with the intangibility of creativity, which makes it hard to measure, and the current state of the economy – in other words, employers would give their creative employees more compensation if funds were available to do so, but they can't because of the severe economic pressures they are now facing.

When respondents were asked how their organizations celebrate creativity, some people shared some intriguing ideas. But an equal number complained about the total lack of recognition for the importance of this quality. According to some survey respondents, senior management tend to reject or undervalue employee ideas, or simply expect creativity to be part of employees' core competencies.

Just over half of the survey respondents said that they represented small businesses (\$10 million or under in annual revenue). Accordingly, the charts and graphs in the report that follows each contain two sets of data, representing the overall survey results and the answers given by small businesses.

I hope that you find the results of this survey to be of value!



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InnovationTools

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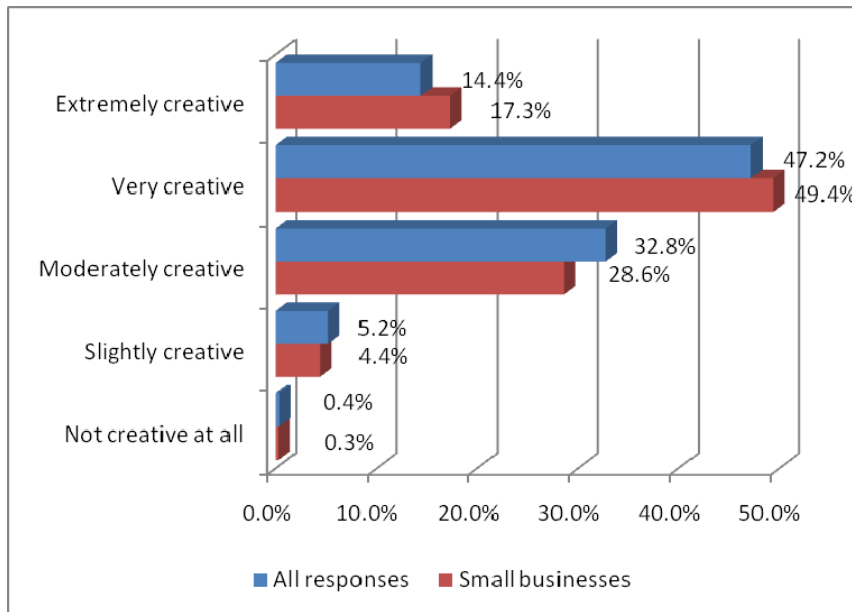
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Survey conducted: July 2009
Number of respondents: 1,461

Personal Creativity

1. How creative you regard yourself as being?

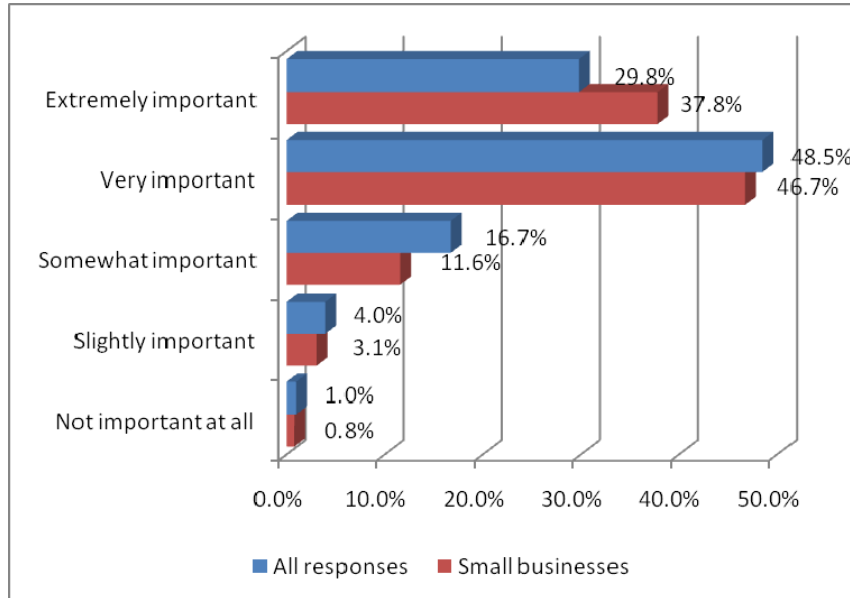


Almost half of the survey respondents (47.2%) viewed themselves as "very creative," which is not surprising, because the people who are creative are also those with the greatest interest in answering this survey. Another third (32.8%) believe that they are "moderately creative."

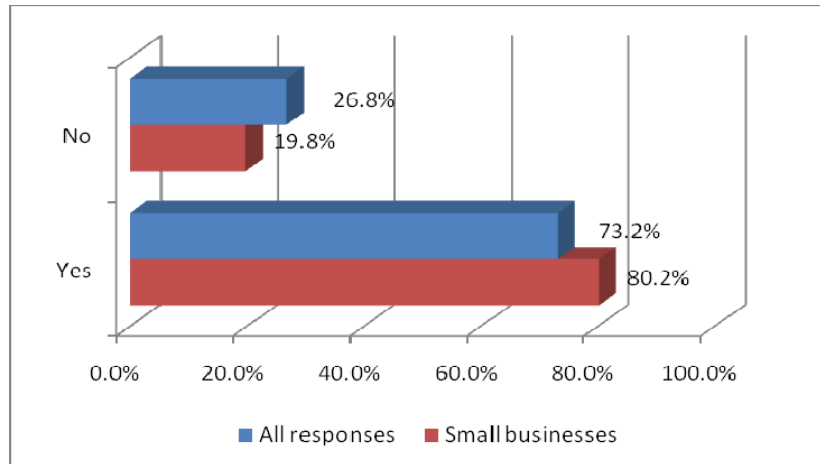
2. How important do you consider creativity to be to your job?

Almost half of survey respondents (48.5%) said that creativity is "very important" to their jobs. Another one fourth (29.8%) characterized it as "extremely important" to their jobs.

For small businesses, the results were even more pronounced: 37.8% of respondents indicated that creativity is "extremely important" to their jobs. This is not surprising, considering that most entrepreneurial businesses are dependent upon a steady flow of fresh ideas to keep them vital and growing.



3. Does your employer value your creativity?

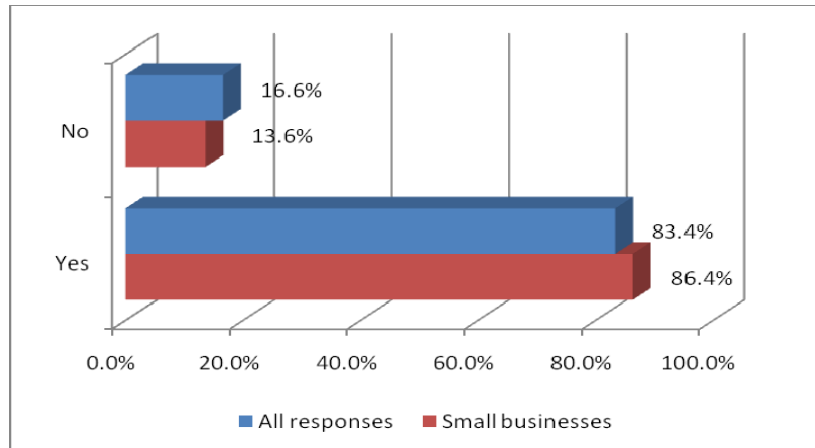


Surprisingly, nearly three-fourths of survey respondents (73.2%) answered yes to this question. Responses for small businesses, those \$10 million in revenue and under, were 7% higher, coming in at 80.2%.

This high percentage of “yes” responses was unexpected, considering the current state of the global economy and the number of organizations that have laid off employees to bring their expenses in line with their sharply reduced revenues. With many employees hunkering down to survive the current economic challenges, it’s encouraging to hear that so many creative people still believe that their employers value their creativity. Perhaps this is because once you cut expenses, one of the only strategies left that companies can use to grow the top line is by uncovering new sources of revenue.

4. Does your current job position provide opportunities to tap into your creativity?

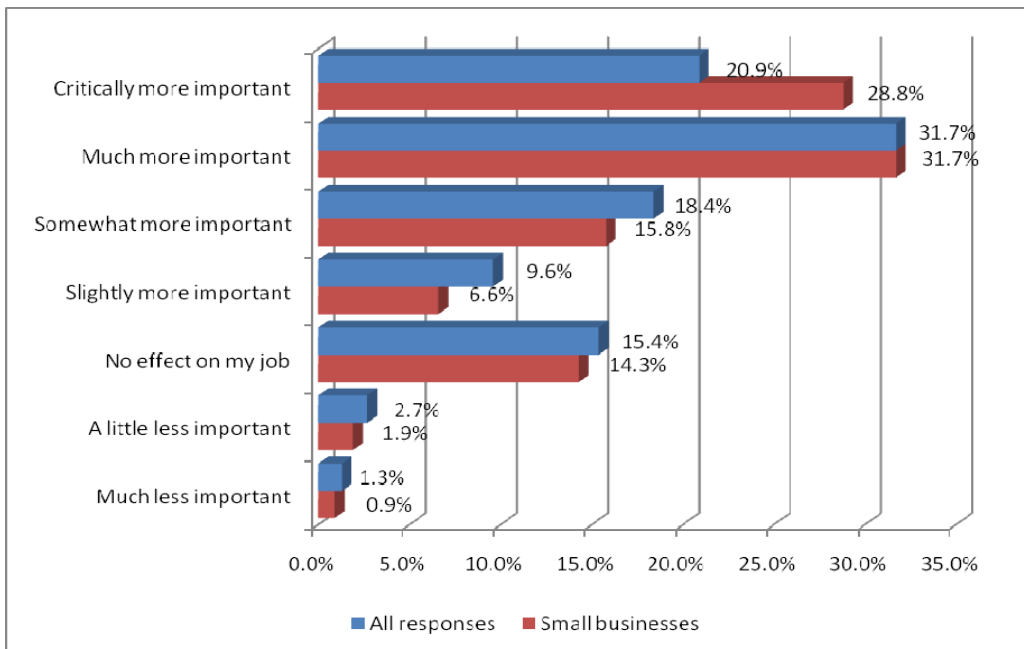
More than four out of five creative people surveyed (83.4%) said that yes, their current job position provides them with opportunities to tap into their creativity. Continuing the theme of the last question, employers are desperate for ideas and suggestions to reduce costs, increase the efficiency of their operations and to uncover new potential sources of revenue. Thus, they are at least willing to listen to employees' ideas, perhaps more than they were before the downturn.



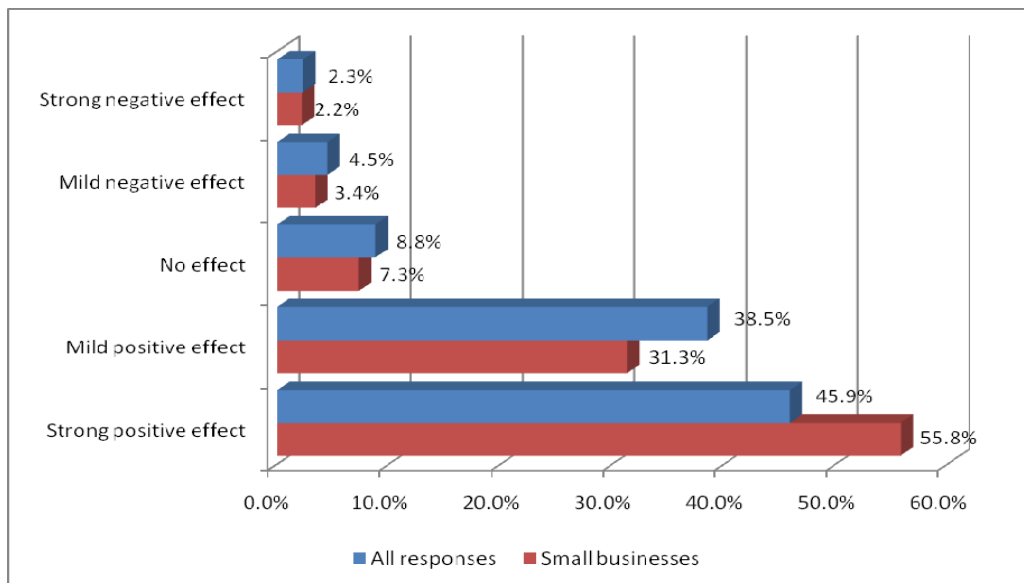
5. What effect has the current economic climate had on the need for you to be creative in your job?

Clearly, based on the answers to this question, the current economic crisis has made it much more important for employees to be creative in their jobs. Nearly one-third of respondents said that it is "much more important" that they be creative in their jobs today (31.7%), while another one in five creative people (20.9%) said that it is "critically important" that they be more creative in their jobs today.

The results for small businesses were significantly higher: 28.8% said that the current economic climate makes it "critically more important" that they be creative in their jobs. That sounds like a survival issue to me!



6. What has been the direct effect of creativity on your career advancement?



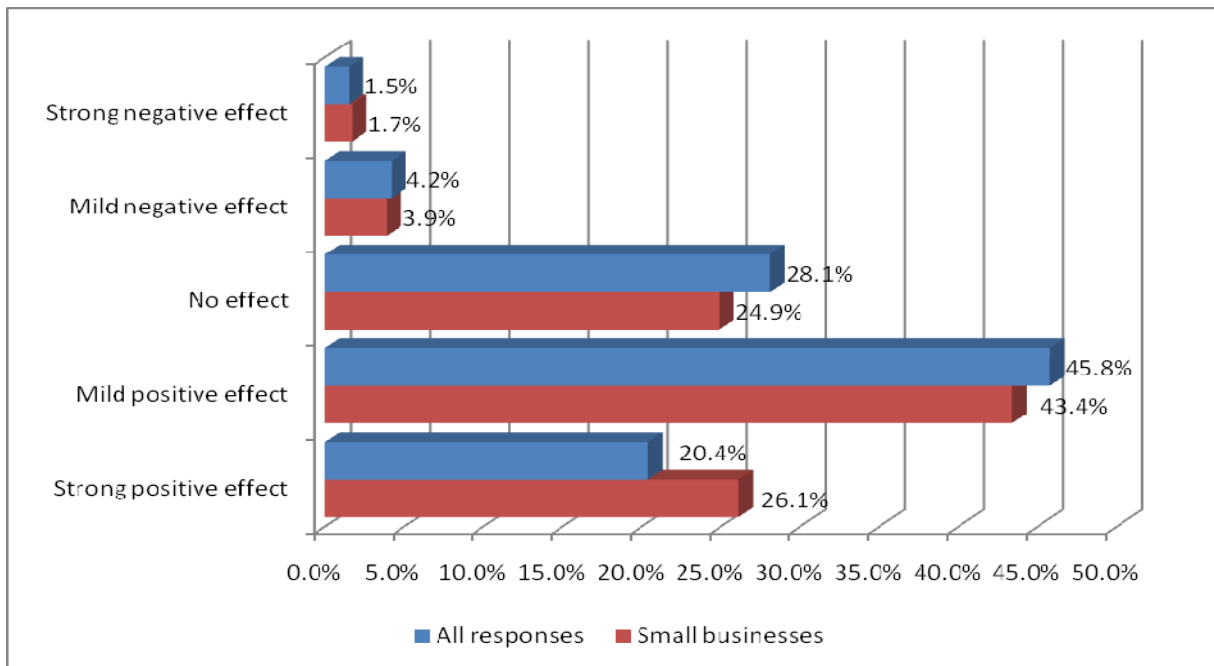
Survey respondents said that being creative can be a real plus when it comes to making themselves worthy of being promoted. Nearly half of respondents (45.9%) indicated that being creative has a "strong positive effect" on their career advancement, while another 38.5% characterized it as a "mild positive effect." Only 7% of respondents viewed creativity as having had any kind of a negative affect on their careers. Employees of small businesses were even more convinced that it has a strong positive effect – to the tune of 10% more, or 55.7%.

Being creative – or more specifically, being an excellent creative problem solver – is a differentiating factor, something that sets you apart from your colleagues and coworkers. Thus, it is not surprising that survey respondents view this factor as a key driver in their career advancement.

7. What has been the effect of your creativity on your financial compensation?

Almost half of survey respondents (45.8%) responded that being creative has had a "mild positive effect" on their financial compensation, while one in five respondents (20.4%) characterized it as a "strong positive effect." Significantly, nearly one-third of respondents said that being creative has had no effect upon their financial compensation (28.1%).

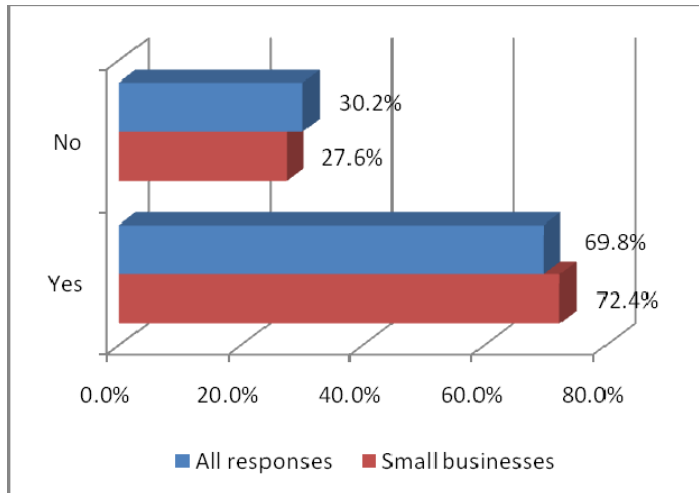
The responses to this question and the several previous ones point to some sort of connection between creativity and compensation, but not necessarily a strong one. Employers value this quality in their employees, but aren't necessarily willing to compensate them for it. One other possible interpretation: perhaps employers are willing to compensate their employees for being creative, but are unable to do so because of the current financial pressures they face.



Small-business respondents were much more confident about the affect of creativity upon their financial compensation: 6% more, or 26.1%, said that creativity has a strong positive effect. This is not surprising, because in small companies, individual contributions are more visible to the firm's leaders, and are therefore more likely to be rewarded.

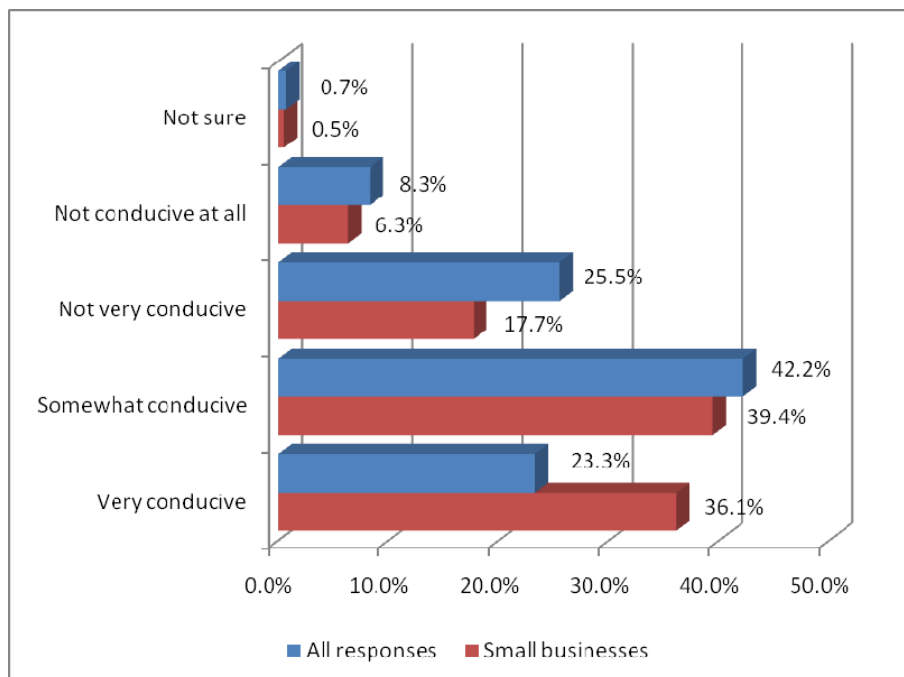
8. Would you consider changing jobs – even if it meant less money – to be more creative at work?

Almost three-fourths of survey respondents (72.4%) answered "yes" to this question. The response to this question demonstrates how deeply embedded the creative spirit is in workers today. They must express it, and will change jobs if necessary in order to do so.



Organizational creativity

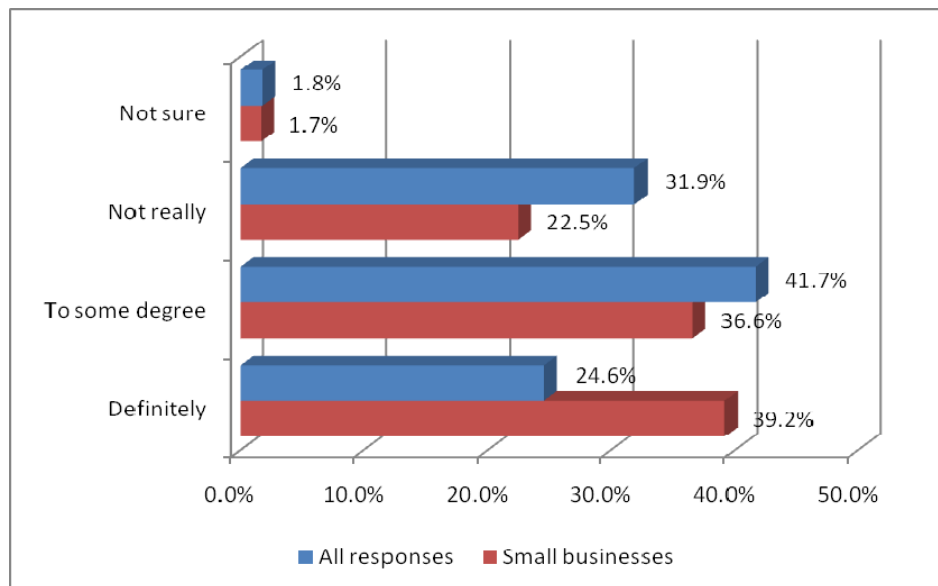
9. How conducive is your organization's culture for encouraging creativity?



The largest percentage of respondents, 42.2%, said that their corporate culture is “somewhat conducive” to creativity – not terribly surprising, because it is a middle-of-the-road answer. What is a bigger concern is that one-fourth of respondents (25.5%) indicated that their organization's culture is "not very conducive" to creativity. Most companies today are struggling just to get their existing work done, much less be able to generate, evaluate and implement new ideas. So perhaps the 25% of respondents who said that their environment is not very conducive to creativity are reflecting today's austere times and the heavy workloads placed on the survivors of corporate downsizings.

Small businesses appear to be much more conducive to creativity. Respondents from companies under \$10 million in revenue and who believe that their corporate culture is “very conducive” to creativity leaped by 13%, to 36.1%. Again, no surprise here: Smaller company cultures tend to be more entrepreneurial and therefore are more supportive of creativity.

10. Do you feel your organization's management places a premium on people who are creative?



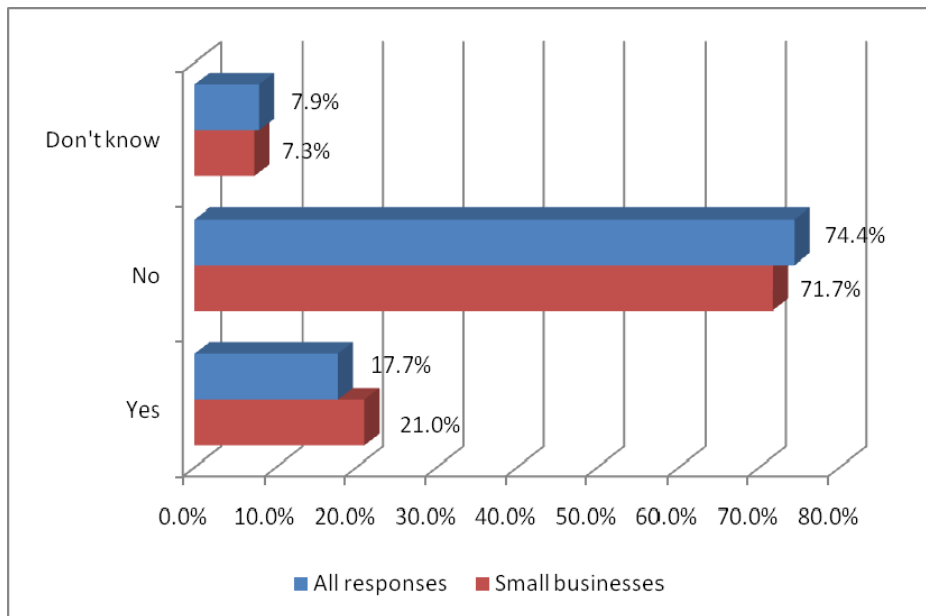
Once again, the answers to this question were predominately middle-of-the-road, with 41.7% of respondents saying that their organization's management placed a premium on creativity "to some degree." Significantly, almost one-third of respondents (31.9%) indicated that their company's management "doesn't really" place a premium on creativity. This would seem to indicate that leaders in many companies view creativity is a desirable trait, but that they are unwilling or unable to fully support it or compensate their employees for it.

Small businesses rated this question significantly higher. The percentage of respondents who said that their companies "definitely" place a premium on creative people increased by 15%, to 39.2%. This would seem to imply that employees who are creative are more highly valued in smaller companies than in larger ones.

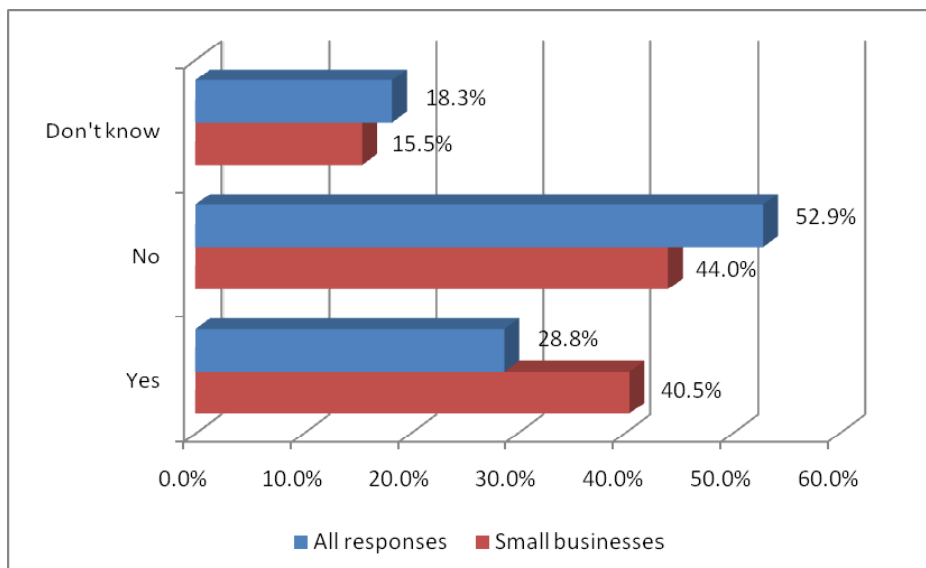
11. Is creativity measured in your organization?

Nearly three-fourths of respondents (74.4%) said that their organization does not measure creativity. Perhaps this is because it is somewhat intangible, or that corporate leaders aren't sure how to measure it. Also, the culture of many companies tends to focus upon tangible bottom-line results, such as sales, margin and throughput. If creativity isn't being measured, then it's safe to draw the conclusion that the leaders of these organizations don't view it as something that is strategically important.

Surprisingly, the opinions of all respondents didn't differ much from those expressed by small businesses. They're apparently not measuring creativity, either.



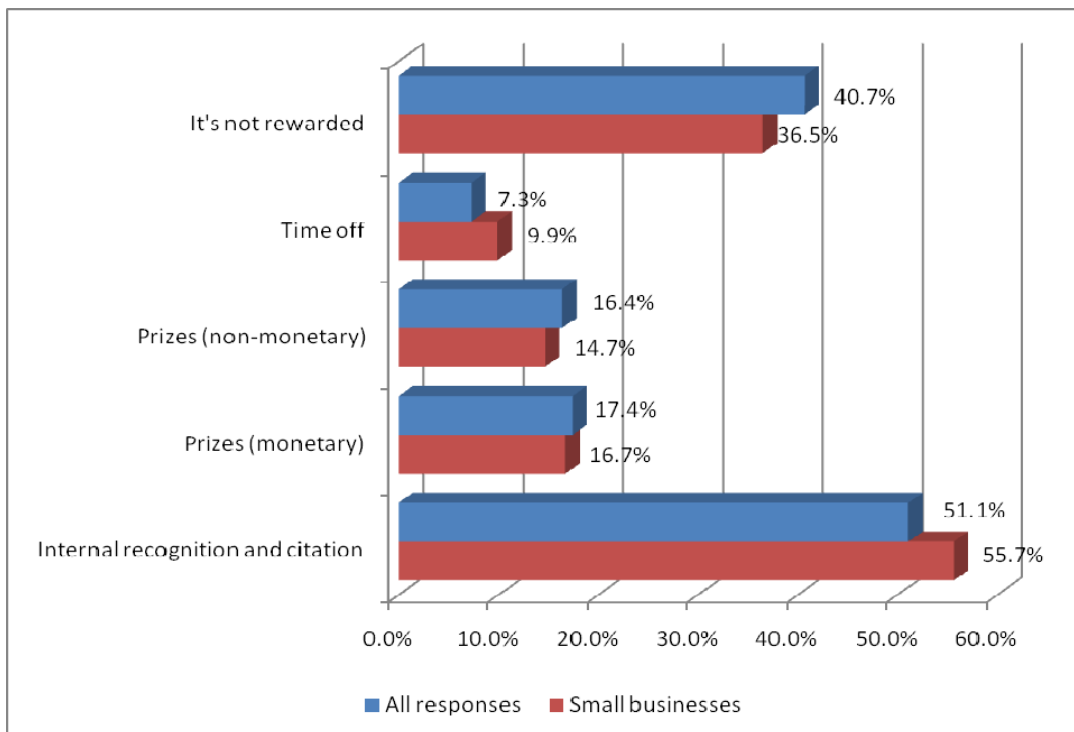
12. Is creativity fairly and adequately rewarded in your organization?



Just over half (52.9%) of survey responses said that their companies do not fairly and adequately reward creativity. This would seem to be consistent with answers to the earlier questions. Companies reward what they value; in order to do so fairly, they must measure results in some way. So it is not surprising that the majority of companies are neither measuring creativity, nor are they compensating employees for it.

For small businesses, the percentage of respondents who said that their creativity is fairly and adequately rewarded jumped by 12%, to 40.5%. It's not hard to understand why: When you work for a small company, your contributions are much more visible to its leadership and are therefore you are more likely to be rewarded for your efforts.

13. How is creativity rewarded in your organization (please check all that apply)?



The number one way in which companies reward creativity is through internal recognition and citation (51.1%). The second highest response, at 40.7%, is that creativity is not rewarded. This was followed at a much lower level by monetary prizes (17.4%) and non-monetary prizes (16.4%). Respondents were also invited to share any other ways in which their organizations reward creativity. Over 180 people submitted comments. Here is a sampling of what they had to say:

- If an individual supervisor is attuned or you hit a “creative home run” from a product viewpoint, you can be rewarded with promotion or cash. But the day-to-day improvements (the base hits) are sometimes ignored.
- Monthly showcases of creative work.

- External recognition programs.
- Part of our annual evaluations.
- Creativity should not be rewarded. If it is not intrinsically motivated it isn't creativity.
- It's often rewarded with being given more work!
- Raises.
- Verbal recognition.
- Recognized if there is an immediate ROI. Internal process creativity that could lower overhead is discouraged.
- It is expected as part of our development.
- If they would allow focusing on creativity, it would really bloom, but they are too short sighted, in my opinion.
- Not sure if it overtly rewarded. However, it is regarded as important.
- Hall of Fame.
- Verbal recognition from boss at the time and during annual appraisal. This is also reflected in our raises.
- Customer satisfaction and project success.
- Whatever recognition there is comes from individual managers and is private, not public.
- It's expected but not rewarded.
- \$500 for patent application and \$1,000 for a granted patent.
- Four hours each Thursday morning for personal creative projects on the clock.
- Creative people get involved in the development of new projects and participate in the most exciting projects.
- Reward is often found when next assignment is about to start. Being creative can make turn you into a candidate (for new projects).
- It's core to the job.
- Outside of jobs which are deemed "creative" (i.e., the graphics department), creativity in one's approach, or quality of one's research or insights is rarely, if ever, noted let alone recognized.
- It is just starting to be rewarded by peer recognition.
- Bonus based on client's satisfaction and returning business.
- What's fair? If you love being creative on the job, every day is a joy.
- Submission of ideas is nominally rewarded; but the level of creativity is not.
- You may get a favorable evaluation and a small raise.
- Creative people naturally respond better to change and continue to do well in spite of non-conducive external/market conditions. They are able to keep revenues coming in

and also cut costs and keep their teams happy. While they may not get a “Most Creative Person” reward per say, rewards such as compensation/promotion/recognition come their way because of the overall results.

- The top management is ignorant of the industry and business trends in creativity and innovation and hence is not in a position to recognize, appreciate and acknowledge the contribution of an employee by his/her creativity. Hence there is no system of recognizing and rewarding creativity among employees.
- Even internal recognition has tapered off.
- It isn't overtly recognized unless it has a positive bottom-line impact – then it isn't recognized as creativity but productivity and innovation... Word nuances, but significant from a behavioral standpoint.
- Regular free lunch or dinner.
- Results (are) really what's rewarded; creativity helps generate results. Although I personally believe creativity breeds enthusiasm, which breeds pride, which breeds results.
- Intrinsic rewards of meaning, purpose, fulfillment, satisfaction, flow states.
- I think some promotions may have been linked to the degree of creativity shown by that person.
- Inclusion in “think tank” style initiatives.
- It's actually penalized. For instance, last year's employee of the year got the award for rigidly adhering to 19th-century, Dickensian-style processes and a refusal to even consider altering or improving her work processes.
- Creativity isn't rewarded at all apart from verbal recognition.
- Our organization has a top-down management, so that while creativity is given lip-service, most of the staff are scared to speak up or offer their own ideas. Especially if they are not in line with boss's. Our organization recognizes achievement (# of people at an event, # of responses to an email), but not creativity.

14. What creative ways does your organization use to celebrate and recognize creativity?

There are some neat ideas here, but also an undercurrent of disappointment and bitterness from respondents whose companies are not recognizing their creativity. Here's a sampling of the more than 600 responses to this question:

- There is no organized way to celebrate creativity.
- Give opportunity to participate in various competitions, seminars that open a window or avenue for exhibiting our creativity. Various group competitions like TQM meet, suggestion schemes, 5s awards are conducted to bring out creativity in all employees.

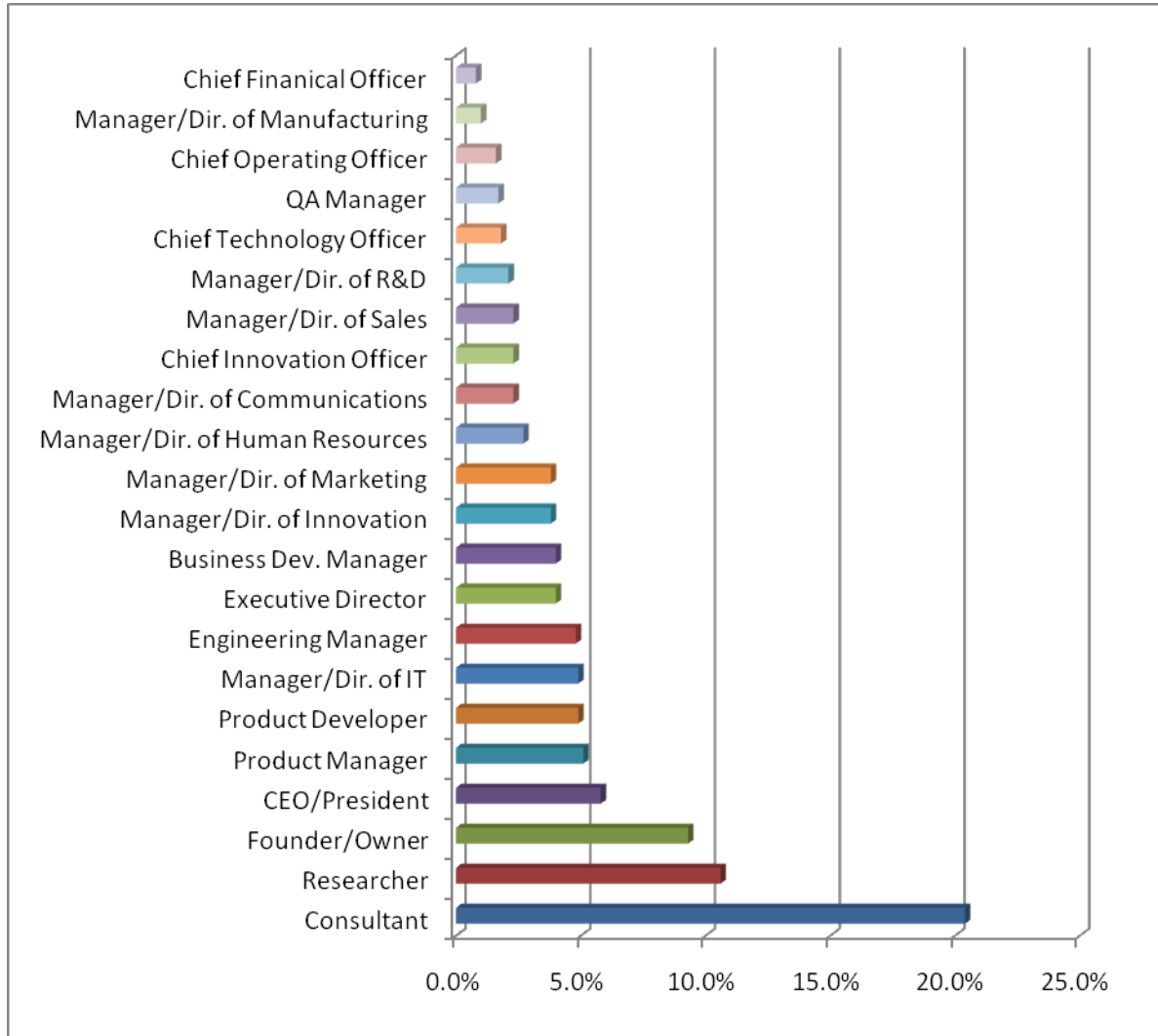
- Profiling through publication in internal magazines 2. Special mention in speeches for annual dinners, conventions, etc. 3. Imitation and copying of ideas when developing proposals or delivering solutions.
- Awards at different levels: team, unit, location, division, organization 2. Mix of monetary and non-monetary rewards 3. Mix of self-initiated and suggestion scheme-driven harvesting of ideas
- All talk, but no follow through. Creativity as long as it fits within the current structure and thinking.
- We have the idea submitter of the month that gets the prime parking place in our rainy city of Gothenburg, Sweden. We also have an annual innovation day.
- Praise and job security.
- Flexibility, opportunity for creative assignments
- Staff submitting ideas to the "Idea Bank" receives a stress ball shaped like a light bulb and a note thanking them for submitting the idea. I didn't hear back on my idea, but later observed that it had been implemented. As a manager, I have given Starbucks cards, time off, and taken team members to lunch to thank them for their creativity and proactivity.
- Creativity is the norm in my organization. The rewards are intrinsic - when you hear about other's creativity and how much fun and positive response they get - you want it too.
- Noted at staff meetings. Recognized as "creative" or "innovative."
- Present creative projects on a monthly basis to the company; "lunch and learn" sessions to expose our clients and employees to creative projects and case studies;
- Submit stories to leadership team for recognition.
- T-shirts, stupid songs and memorabilia.
- Corporate Innovation Award, but nothing at the business unit level.
- (You) get asked to share your idea in on-line newsletters, present in meetings for reapplication, (and) may be put in a more high profile role.
- Patents that have been granted are posted on intranet news site quarterly. There is an innovation prize for the whole of the vast international group of companies, but only the winning entry is recognized.
- Efforts that have a positive impact on the organization, including creativity, are publicly recognized, both at the individual and group level.
- Annual industry co-sponsored "Innovation Exposition."
- Usually person who had a good idea/creative way to solve a problem is mentioned in the internal newsletter and when it is a really outstanding idea, it is submitted to a international forum where it is evaluated and can win among all other countries/ideas.
- Recognition is given through a quarterly magazine.

- Annual dinner - awards for different categories.
- We have the opportunity to get money to develop a new project we think of (however, to be chosen it doesn't need to be necessarily creative...)
- Employee Achievement Day
- No process to celebrate creativity
- Invited to join interesting projects
- (Our company) awards the boss at the main office, not the person who put it together.
- Weekends away in other cities.
- (Our company) has an annual technology fair where selected projects are showcased for clients and internal staff.
- Checks and recognition awards, time off.
- Award ceremonies, smaller group recognitions.
- They don't. Creative people are just supposed to do their jobs. The org leaders think coming up with this stuff is easy.
- We do various events and activities and have fun creative brainstorming sessions.
- "Bravo" cards are given as a reward, sometimes with a small financial reward (£50 to £250).
- We have a special recognition committee. Sometimes creative ideas are rewarded with what we call a "Team Spirit Award."
- My organization gives reward points for successfully implemented creative ideas. Receivers of maximum reward points are recognized at the end of each year.
- Send us on incentive trips (to different) destinations.
- Certificates with small rewards which is not enough to inspire an employee to be creative.
- Participate in creativity and innovation day and other celebrations.
- Points system according to the impact of the idea.
- Weekend trips, days off in lieu, gift certificates from a luxury goods store, training opportunities, attendance at conferences.
- Public and internal publicity and profit participation.
- Idea Bubble Board.
- REEP Awards - Recognition of Employee Excellence Commissioner's Award for Excellence Various Engineering Awards (National and State level)
- "That's not how we do things here." is the typical response to creative ideas.
- Giving back to the community, like cooking for Ronald McDonald House!

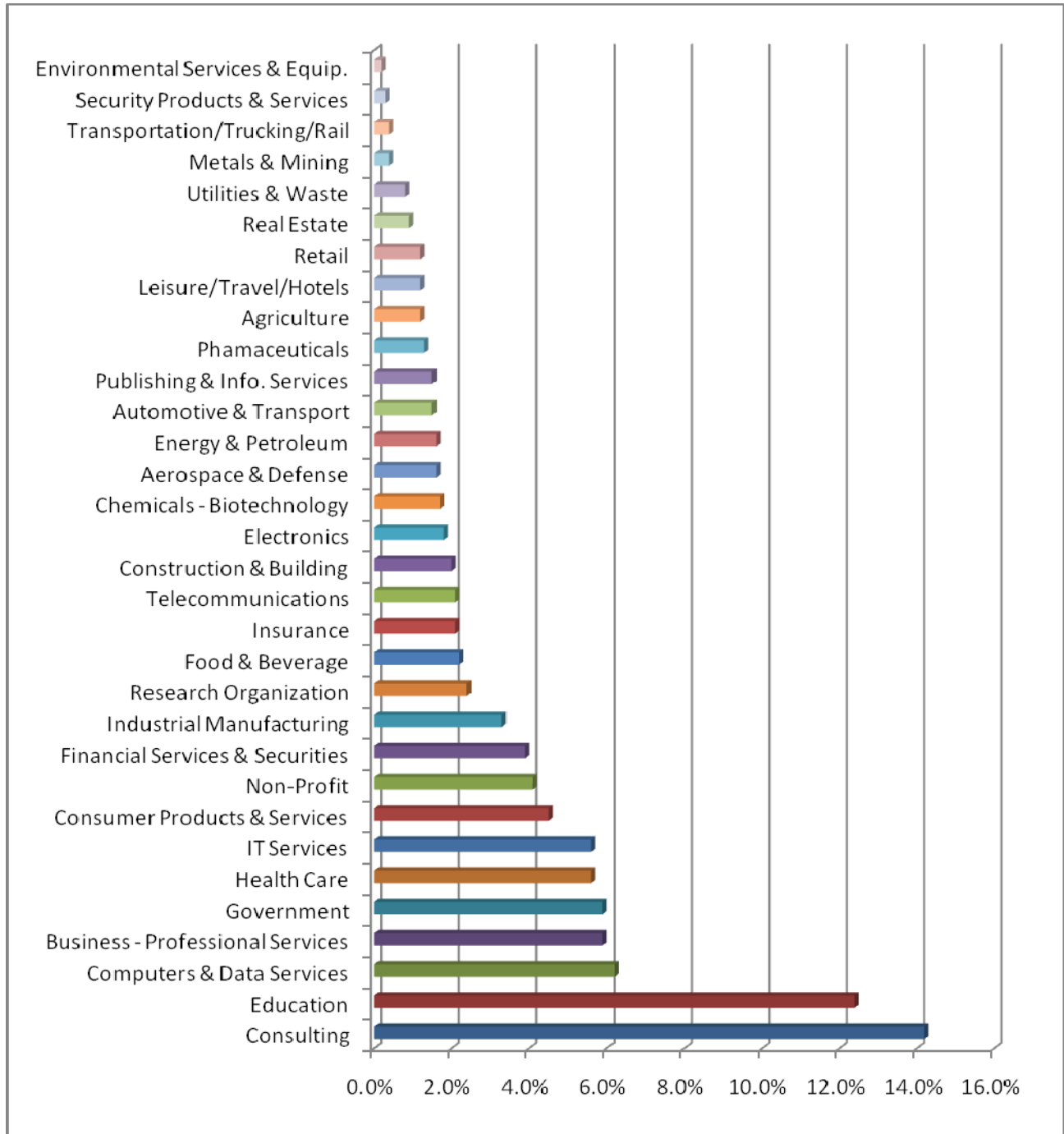
- One of our internal annual employee awards is focused on innovation and personal development. Nominations tend heavily towards individuals who have demonstrated creativity in innovation, problem solving, marketing, etc.
- Bravo points that can be used toward purchases of items.
- Letter of appreciation (and showing) appreciation in front of (the) entire group.
- We have a festival called "Imagine RIT" in which students, faculty and staff create hundreds of exhibits for 25,000 visitors.
- "Your ideas count" web site, annually rewarding the best projects based on narrow criteria.
- Holding "innovation days" devoted to idea generation with prizes.
- Sends out a newsletter monthly telling about what people have done.
- They just implemented an award that can be nominated by peers.
- Have internal idea competition to come up with solutions which are (the) most weird.
- George Costanza Day (a character from the TV show "Seinfeld" – this contest emphasizes doing things in opposites); the employee with the most points at the end of the day wins certificates to local eateries.
- "SLA Games" is a yearly event where teams are formed across all departments to solve a fun technical challenge. It is a combination creativity, team building and recreation exercise. One challenge was to build a self-powered model car from materials that could be found on a beach like CDs, sticks and wire.
- Brick awards, a miniature brick handed out to people that are nominated by their peers/management, etc. Candy bars for random acts of kindness (not very creative!).
- As a self-employed person, it might be very useful to be more creative. If I had some better ideas I might be more profitable.

Demographics

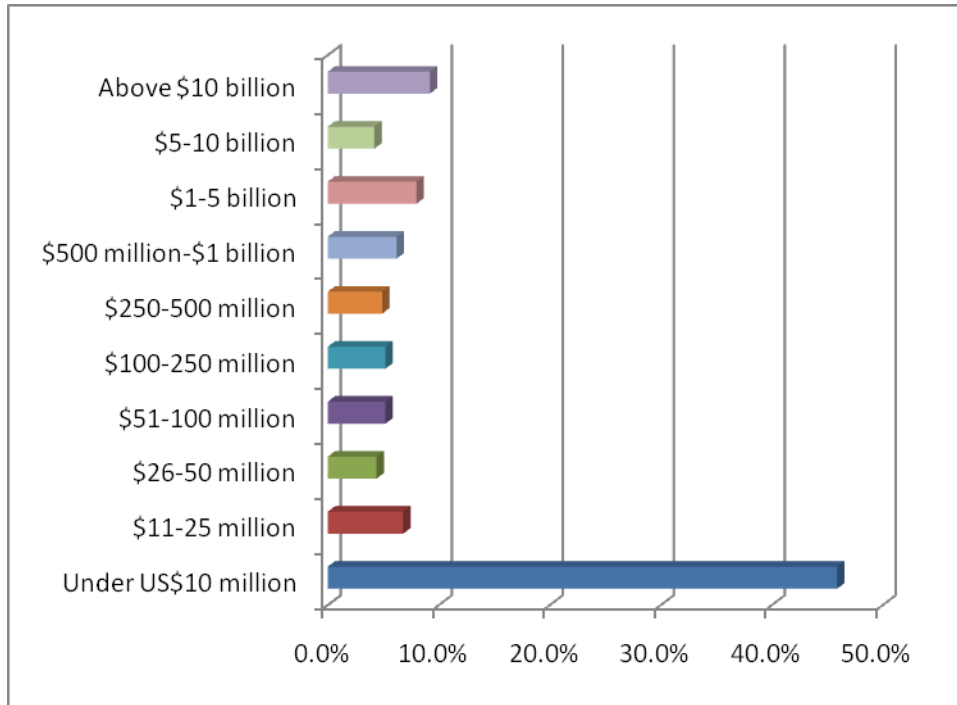
15. What is your role in your company?



16. What primary industry does your company do business in?



17. What is the approximate size of your firm, in terms of annual sales?



Questions about this survey?

Please contact Chuck Frey at chuck@innovationtools.com.

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