"Organizations thrive on creativity, yet not all of them know how to encourage or use it. To spark more innovation from your workers, and yourself, take some lessons from the genius of creativity, Thomas Edison:

1. Question all assumptions.
Don't accept the conventional wisdom without first examining and challenging it. It's said that Edison, when hiring a new employee, would invite person to have some soup with him. If the candidate salted the soup before tasting it - assuming it would require salt before testing the assumption - he didn't get the job.

2. Generate as many ideas as possible.
The more ideas you test, the more likely you'll find one that works. Edison conducted over 50,000 experiments before perfecting the alkaline storage cell battery.

3. Analyze your failures.
Even when an idea falls apart, take some time to consider what you can learn from it. Keep notes so that your next idea works, you can go back and re-examine your efforts in light of your success.

4. Adapt other ideas.
Edison often used the inventions and ideas of other people as a mental springboard. Keep up with what's going on in your organization and industry - what people are doing, where others have failed.

5. Record all your ideas.
Keep a notebook for writing down ideas whenever they occur to you. Go back over the notebook regularly, looking for connections between ideas or new ways of thinking about the same problem (Positive Leadership, 1999, p.3)."

-Adapted from "Three lessons in creativity from Thomas Edison," by Michael Michalko, in Executive Edge.

How creative are you?
A listing of all the Leadership Center's resources is available on our website www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~leaders
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